



**CATHOLICS
AND UNITED
METHODISTS
TOGETHER:**

**shared
prayers and
resources**

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

What is the purpose of the United Methodist–Catholic dialogue? The scholars, pastors, and bishops of the dialogue are on a pilgrimage of faith, longing for the unity to which the Lord calls us: a full and visible communion as disciples. After fifty years of dialogue between bishops and theologians of the United Methodist Church and bishops and theologians of the Catholic Church, this most recent round of dialogue (2014-2020) focused on reception by Catholic parishes and United Methodist congregations of the fruits of our half-century of theological conversation. For that reason, the members of the dialogue have produced two sets of user-friendly documents in the hope of their adoption by local congregations and by ecumenical gatherings of United Methodists and Catholics in shared prayer, study, and service.

During these years, we have searched for practical ways in which we can pray and worship together with fresh appreciation for our shared Christian beliefs. In addition, we identified numerous examples of our shared mission work with those experiencing poverty, natural disasters, incarceration and disability. Our collaborating has been a sign of God’s Spirit working among us to spread the love of Jesus Christ in the world.

The texts we offer for shared prayers, traditions, and liturgies contain materials drawn organically from the lives and churches of Catholics and United Methodists. The writers have discovered the pastoral need for these ecumenical devotions and services through their experiences in local churches and the witnesses of interchurch families. The resources are intended to strengthen the bonds of Christian faith, hope, and charity between us. We hope that readers are pleasantly surprised by our similarities.

The faith materials appear in the time-honored format of baptismal catechesis with commentaries on the Lord’s Prayer, the Creed and the Love Commandment. We, bishops and theologians, offer these texts as material for study groups, sacramental preparation, religious education programs and ecumenical gatherings of Methodists and Catholics. The ecumenical movement is entering a new phase. While theological dialogues may and should continue for some time to come, it is now time for the dialogue to take on new life within and between our respective communities. The unity of Christ’s church must take root in our hearts and bear fruit in shared learning, prayer, worship, and service within our faith communities.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Bishop David P. Talley, Roman Catholic Diocese of Memphis
Bishop Peggy Johnson, Philadelphia Area of The United Methodist Church

Catholics and United Methodists Together: Shared Prayers and Resources is a dialogue statement between representatives of the Catholic Church and the United Methodist Church. While it is not a statement of the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and it has no authority beyond that of the dialogue commission itself, it has been received as a reference point for scholars and pastors in promoting unity and understanding. This document has been received by Bishop Joseph C. Bambera, chairman of the Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, and authorized for publication by the undersigned.

Rev. Msgr. J. Brian Bransfield
General Secretary

CATHOLICS AND UNITED METHODISTS TOGETHER: shared prayers and resources

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The importance of this work

This resource springs from two primary motivations--*a pastoral need to accompany* Catholics and United Methodists in their sharing of life together, and *a deep desire for growth toward full, visible communion* between us. The longing for greater unity between Christians, which Jesus expressed in his prayer “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:20), is called *ecumenism*. At the heart of everything United Methodists and Catholics do together, it is vital to talk openly and directly about the importance of sharing our prayers, traditions, and spirituality. Some of the prayer practices in this book are shared because both United Methodists and Catholics already do them. Others are used by one of our churches but can be adopted by the other. Some are used by one church while members of the other church are welcome to join in these practices. Finally, some are only used by members of one tradition, yet are offered so that members of the other can more fully and sympathetically understand them. All these types of sharing are ways for Christians to participate in the work of ecumenism by appreciating one another’s spiritual lives and building one another up.

A shared resource is important because our lives are intertwined with one another. In our families, congregations, neighborhoods, and workplaces we encounter each other. Our starting point together is probably much further advanced than most couples and families living in interchurch circumstances realize.¹ We share in a common Baptism into the life of Jesus Christ and a common mission of being his disciples in the world.² United Methodists and Catholics marry each other, grieve for each other, and raise children together. We meet together frequently in service to those in need. We work together naturally out of shared values when responding to the basic needs of people who are sick, homeless, in prison, crossing borders, or facing tragedy. Persons from both traditions are with each other daily in work, volunteering, parenting, and elsewhere. Sharing together in faith deepens our understanding of one another as well as our self-understanding. Our goal is that the prayers and practices contained in this resource become a resource for shared prayer life and be understood as not only permissible, but encouraged.

All around us people are caught up in the busy-ness and distraction of daily life. This has made it more difficult to enter into conversation with one another, especially slow, deliberate conversation around what is truly real—our deepest values and our commonality across differences. As silence sometimes speaks more loudly than what is spoken, doing nothing to encourage connections can reinforce and perpetuate a separation among us that is, perhaps, unintended but nonetheless damaging. The less we talk together, the more we lose the ability to do so.

¹ We use the term “interchurch” throughout to describe families in which one or more members are United Methodist and one or more members are Catholic.

² For more information on recognition of one another’s Baptism, see the companion text to this prayer resource, *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§3-26. We will periodically offer cross-references to enhance our presentation.

Residing together in society, we also are confronted by crises affecting diverse individuals and communities of many faiths or no faith, during which our ability to respond is hampered by our lack of shared conversation and experiences helping to bridge our differences. Our continued efforts to foster deeper relationships amid our diversity will be enhanced by familiarity with common wellsprings on which we can draw to sustain us when tragedy strikes.

All of us are products of the faith we have received, and we have received it differently in different contexts. Though differences are often cited as causes of division—some of these wounds are centuries old—we invite you to see in them opportunities to embrace the fullness of the Body of Christ in its beautiful diversity.³

One of the most surprising discoveries of faith is that, when it is shared in common, people are more open to look respectfully at differences, not as obstacles but as contributions. Prayer helps a great deal—even Jesus’ own prayer to his Father on the night before he died for us and for our salvation, that we might be one, just as the Father and he are one (Jn 17:20-21). As we can learn from his prayer, we can also learn from each other’s practices of holiness and faithfulness. We do not lose our identity by joining together in devotions and rites of worship. Rather, we expand our appreciation of the beauty of how each other’s faith is celebrated. This helps to make the energy needed to embrace our religious differences worthwhile.

The question is, then, where to begin together? It is difficult to find resources for families, ministers, and congregations that provide a starting point. As a response to this need, we offer this resource as a gift from the richly stocked “storehouse” (Mt 13:52) of our shared Christian tradition as Catholics and United Methodists, as well as the storehouses of each tradition. We hope that families, congregations, ministers, and all Christians may feel welcome to draw upon it for some of the old and new treasures that can enhance our shared faith journeys today.

shared prayers and resources

Our ability to respond to crises is hampered by our lack of shared conversation and experiences helping to bridge our differences.

³ If you have experienced strong resistance in yourself or among others to dialogue, you may want to skip to Appendix A to reflect on common challenges to interchurch dialogue and strategies for addressing these. Also, the “Lund Imperative” is an important source of inspiration for dialogue among Christians. Formulated by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, it holds that we “should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced” (*From Conflict to Communion*, 239 [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt/Bonifatius, 2013], <https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf> [Internet search: lund imperative from conflict to communion]).

Using *Shared Prayers and Resources*

This resource includes several sections:

“Shared Prayers and Traditions,” a variety of prayers and prayer traditions that are encouraged for the use of United Methodist and Catholic families and congregations.

“Shared Liturgies,” providing pastoral considerations for creating worship services that Catholics and United Methodists can celebrate together, along with examples from our respective traditions that can be easily shared, and templates for designing new, ecumenically shared services.

Appendices, addressing particular questions and needs that arise in United Methodist-Catholic ecumenical efforts, such as obstacles to sharing our traditions (Appendix A), special pastoral considerations in our respective celebrations of sacraments (Appendix B), and brief summaries of national Catholic–United Methodist dialogues over the past fifty years (Appendix C).

Relevance

Families

Both United Methodist and Catholic congregations include many interchurch families composed of both Catholic and United Methodist members. These families often long for “everyday” ways to express their faith together through the use of shared prayers and traditions. The first part of this resource, “Shared Prayers and Traditions,” offers many possibilities for such expression.

Our interchurch families also desire rites observing significant life occasions for immediate and extended family members that can be celebrated by all members. These are times of life when celebrations should touch the heart of every person gathered, not only some. If we are open, these times can be moments of powerful grace. The way we come together as one Body of Christ is a witness to the presence of the triune God in all of these congregational acts.

A primary example of such a Christian celebration is Baptism. Baptism in either the United Methodist Church or the Catholic Church is a true adoption as children of the Father, a true participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, a true rebirth in the Holy Spirit. It also initiates the baptized person into the universal church of Christ, and in addition grants them membership in their own (United Methodist or Catholic) communion. Family members of one tradition should have no reservations about participating in the Baptism conducted in a congregation of a different Christian tradition.⁴

⁴ For more discussion of these topics, see the respective Catholic and United Methodist sections in Appendix B, as well as the “Common Baptism” section of *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§3-26.

Interchurch families also wish for rites to celebrate together the key occasions of marriage and Christian burial. At these important moments in the lives of families and congregations, we experience profound joy, grief, and other deep feelings that we long to share fully with those closest to us. Thus we continue to seek opportunities for interchurch participation. The good news is our marriages and funerals have a lot in common, and so there is plenty of room for participation and shared liturgies. Additionally, all of them may be performed without the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. While both United Methodists and Catholics consider it a sacrament, at this point in our ecumenical journey we cannot celebrate the Eucharist/Lord's Supper in common.⁵

Congregations

Both the United Methodist Church and the Catholic Church are discerning how to provide better support for our interchurch families and to be present together to offer the blessing and comfort of both faith traditions in crucial moments of life. Interchurch families strengthen our local congregations and the entire church by witnessing to the breadth of Christian practice and showing us the depth of their love for one another.

Another pastoral reason it is important to strengthen the Christian bonds of faith, hope, and charity is that, too often, when people do not feel comfortable in each other's worship spaces and are unfamiliar with each other's prayers and practices, it is easier for a couple or family to drift away from both. Differences which are not properly understood may seem to become insurmountable or, on the other hand, be disregarded as irrelevant.

Accordingly, the "Shared Liturgies" section of this resource is intended to provide adaptable templates for ministers, congregations, schools, and other groups to use in developing worship services that transcend particular practices to address current circumstances and needs of congregations in an ecumenical fashion. Four sample themes are incorporated into templates for communal prayer: for times of crisis, for those in greatest need, for Christian unity, and for peace. Several previously created liturgies are also offered as resources: a *Tre ore* or "Three Hours" service (based on the Seven Last Words of Jesus) for Good Friday, and Stations of the Cross.

Those with disabilities

People with disabilities often have limited options for community and accessibility. Denominational ties or theological preferences sometimes take a back seat to wherever it is that a person can physically worship or is able to have communication and social needs met. For United Methodists and Catholics, however, ministering with those with disabilities is a vital commitment. For years, the disability communities of United Methodists and Catholics have worked together because of the overwhelming priority of providing access to the central components of worship and the particularities of doctrine and practice. Together they not only strive to provide for spiritual needs to be met in accessible ways, but they also work

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⁵ For explanations of why this is our current situation, see Appendix B, as well as *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§18-21.

together to do vitally important advocacy that calls the church to better forms of accessibility, inclusion and empowerment.

A note to Catholic and United Methodist ministerial colleagues

Accompanying families in the crucial moments of the lifespan is a cherished and holy task of those authorized to preside over the rites connected to these occasions. Cooperating across faith communities strengthens family bonds in vulnerable moments of faith development and can foster experiences of unity among colleagues and congregations. Though many of the rites in this resource may be led by either a Catholic or United Methodist minister, it is preferable for leadership to come from both communities, offering the distinct witness of each faith community and the foretaste of ecclesial unity.

Meeting interchurch couples, families, and communities at life's crossroads is essential to a common witness to Jesus Christ in our modern world. Whether due to the relative lack of ecumenical formation provided to ministerial colleagues in their seminary training or simply limited experience, interchurch celebrations are often not considered or encouraged by those who preside over United Methodist and Catholic faith communities. It is true, sadly, that we are less likely to become neighbors with people who are different than we are—even with other Christians. Some ministers have put together shared liturgies as best they can, “making it up as they go along,” despite the lack of official resources from both traditions. However, most clergy are not comfortable with that practice since, while they may “get it right,” they also risk omitting elements that might be required for validity.

Despite these and other difficulties, the present resource recognizes such work as essential for moving toward greater unity and serving our interchurch families most effectively. Once they begin to co-preside at family celebrations and other shared occasions, Catholic and United Methodist ministers will be pleasantly surprised by the similarities of the rites of the two faith communities. After all, we share centuries of the same early Christian resources, and in the liturgical renewal following Vatican II, many traditions sought to make their texts more familiar to each other.⁶ Still, there needs to be careful explanation and sensitive respect about the varying aspects of both United Methodist and Catholic liturgies along with, as in the case of marriage celebrations, the prayers, family roles, and required canonical permissions and completion of official forms that render a celebration valid for both bride and groom.⁷

Besides these important occasions, ongoing congregational life offers numerous opportunities for pastoral ministers to foster mutual understanding. Ministers and lay leaders focusing on faith formation/Christian education for families and particular age groups, pastoral care such as ministry to the homebound and sick, outreach and justice activities, and other forms of congregational service can draw upon shared prayers and other resources to increase unity.

⁶ The Second Vatican Council, convened by the Catholic Church in 1962-65, resulted in newly energized work for ecumenical sharing and Christian unity. See *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§13-17, for more discussion of these shared practices.

⁷ For more information, see the respective sections on marriage in Appendix B.



*I call upon you, O LORD; come quickly to me;
give ear to my voice when I call to you.
Let my prayer be counted as incense before you,
and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice. (Ps 141:1-2)*

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Ac 2:42)*

SHARED PRAYERS AND TRADITIONS

Introduction

Paul exhorts the Christians of Thessalonica, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Th 5:16-17). Prayer in its rich variety and long history is integral to the Christian life. United Methodists and Catholics both pray in many ways, including memorized prayer, such as the Lord’s Prayer; set prayers for liturgy, as in the Eucharist; and spontaneous prayer for help or praise. Some prayers of another tradition may be familiar, whereas others are not known. While this may make Catholics and United Methodists hesitant at times to pray together or to pray from one another’s traditions, such shared prayer is powerfully life-giving and conducive to fostering our unity in faith. As we seek and live toward greater unity among the followers of Jesus, prayer is an essential part of our common journey.

This resource section is thus offered to United Methodists and Catholics to draw upon freely and creatively in families and congregations, and among ministers to enhance participation in shared prayer. It would not be possible to provide a complete listing of all options. Rather, this resource seeks to highlight prayer forms that are especially significant for each tradition and most relevant for sharing with members of both, and those which are easily accessible through standard sources and weblinks.

The resources are presented as follows:

Sunday worship: a brief summary of the central significance of Sunday worship and its key elements as common to United Methodists and Catholics

Traditional prayers: those shared by Catholics and United Methodists, and other prayers that each tradition offers for the other’s use

Christian liturgical year: highlighted worship occasions during the Christian year that are especially conducive to shared worship

Scripture-centered prayer: forms of prayer focused on the Word of God that can be celebrated as individuals, families, prayer groups, and congregations

Everyday prayers: types of prayer that naturally lend themselves to the daily rhythm of life

Other shared prayer forms: a variety of other prayer forms and occasions for prayer, individual and communal, that can be used by Catholics and United Methodists

Brief introductions and suggested resource weblinks are provided in each section.⁸

Sunday worship

Gathering for worship as faith communities on the Lord's Day is the central practice for Christians. As emphasized in an important Catholic teaching, "all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pt 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their Baptism."⁹

United Methodists and Catholics follow a similar Sunday worship structure:

Gathering: The assembly comes together with singing and prayers, experiencing themselves as *ekklesia* ("those who are called out," the gathered people of God).

Proclamation: Scripture readings are proclaimed and a sermon or homily is preached, usually by the minister, priest, deacon, or bishop. We offer our intercessions for one another and the world.

Thanksgiving: We offer our gifts to God and community. Our praise and thanksgiving to God reaches its climax as we pray the Lord's Prayer, exchange peace with one another, and partake in the Lord's Supper/Communion (every Sunday for Catholics, more occasionally for United Methodists).

Sending Forth: Strengthened through our gathering in worship, we go forth to bring the Good News and actions of love for the neighbor to the world.¹⁰

United Methodists and Catholics may participate in one another's Sunday worship. United Methodists welcome all Christians to share in the Lord's Supper at their services. However, Catholics may not share in reception of Communion at United Methodist services, and non-Catholics are instructed not to receive Communion at Catholic Mass. They are invited to come forward during the Communion Rite for a blessing.¹¹

⁸ Using the Internet as a depository and source for rich resources, as well as a site for networking and dialogue, has become indispensable for most Christian communities. Therefore, *Shared Prayers and Resources* includes a number of weblinks current at the time this resource was produced. However, since weblinks may break or be discontinued, suggestions for search keywords on the various prayer forms are also included in parentheses after each link.

⁹ *Sacrosanctum concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963) §14, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html (Internet search: sacrosanctum concilium).

¹⁰ *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 15, abbreviated UMBW.

¹¹ See the respective sections in Appendix B for more information, and *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§18-21.

Traditional prayers

Catholics and United Methodists, as well as many other Christians, have traditional prayers that are central to each tradition and that can be prayed together. While there are some variations in the translations we are used to, an interchurch family, group, or congregation can simply decide which version to use. Most of the prayers in the section include one or two “traditional translations” used by United Methodists and Catholics, as well as an “ecumenical translation” developed by a group including Methodists, Catholics, and other Christians.

All Catholic versions can be accessed via weblinks on <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/basic-prayers.cfm> (Internet search: usccb essential catholic prayers [insert name of prayer]). United Methodist prayers are drawn from *The United Methodist Hymnal* and *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.¹² Ecumenical texts are from English Language Liturgical Consultation, *Praying Together* (1988) <https://www.englishtexts.org/ellc-texts> (Internet search: praying together english language liturgical consultation).

Traditional prayers shared by Catholics and United Methodists

*The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)*¹³

Christians pray the Lord's Prayer out of affectionate trust in the God whom Jesus called “Abba” (“Father” or “Papa,” in an intimately loving sense) and in imitation of him. It is based on Jesus' instructions to his disciples for how to pray (Mt 6:9-15 and Lk 11:2-4). Different versions of the prayer exist for historical reasons that involve varied biblical manuscripts and translations, used by Christians in different times and places as they formed their prayer traditions. New versions and interpretations continue to be produced today. The traditional versions are almost identical, except that Catholic books do not usually include the doxology “For thine is the kingdom...”¹⁴

Catholic Version

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.**

¹² *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), abbreviated UMH; see n. 10 above regarding *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.

¹³ For a United Methodist and Catholic commentary on the Lords Prayer, see “Together We Pray: A Commentary on the Lord's Prayer,” *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§68-105.

¹⁴ “In private or family settings, Catholics often do not recite the doxology, but it is still part of the Lord's Prayer for Catholics. In an ecumenical setting, it makes sense to include the doxology in whatever translation is most familiar to the group. Sometimes these differences in private practice and in translation make praying the Lord's Prayer ecumenically awkward or uncomfortable, but working through these temporary difficulties is a worthy practice in ecumenical relationships. Acknowledging the awkwardness and continuing to work at praying together, as with other aspects of ecumenism, will pay rich dividends in mutual love.” *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §104.

**Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

In the Catholic Mass, a prayer is inserted here, recited by the presider:¹⁵

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Then, all continue with the final doxology:

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

*United Methodist Version*¹⁶

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.**

*Ecumenical Text*¹⁷

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

¹⁵ “This priestly prayer collects the assembly’s recital into one, and restates and elaborates the themes of the Lord’s Prayer.” *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §104.

¹⁶ UMH, 895.

¹⁷ UMH, 894.

*The Apostles' Creed*¹⁸

This creed is a treasure of Christian tradition, expressing the central tenets of our faith. Praying it together is an affirmation of our shared convictions and the unity of belief achieved in the early centuries of Christianity, and a recommitment to our Baptism.

shared prayers
and resources

Catholic Version

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

*United Methodist Traditional Version*¹⁹

**I believe in God the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;*
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,**

¹⁸ “Traditionally, the church has expressed its faith in creedal form. The Apostles’ Creed is a gift handed on to the baptized as a symbol or mark of their active participation in the believing community. Because the Spirit provides the church such abundant gifts of communion and understanding, the recitation of the Creed engenders in every age both unity of faith and diverse reflections upon that faith. This Creed gathers together God’s gift of self-revelation and the church’s response. It names the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as God, and it places the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus at the center of the faith that we believe.” For more shared reflection on the Creed, see “Together We Believe: A Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed,” *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§27-67 (33 quoted here).

¹⁹ UMH, 881.

and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic** church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Traditional use of this creed includes these words: "He descended into hell."

**universal²⁰

*Ecumenical Version*²¹

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Gloria Patri/Glory Be (Doxology)

This is an expression of praise to the Holy Trinity that is regularly repeated within the Liturgy of the Hours and thus can be helpful for Catholics and United Methodists to pray together.²² United Methodists often sing the *Gloria Patri* during Sunday worship.

The traditional translations are again very similar, and some Catholics will be familiar with the ecumenical version from praying the Liturgy of the Hours.

²⁰ These asterisk notations are from UMH, 881 to indicate that "catholic" here does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church.

²¹ *Praying Together*, p. 22.

²² See the description of Liturgy of the Hours below, p. 23.

*Traditional United Methodist Wording: Gloria Patri*²³

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be:
world without end. Amen.**

Traditional Catholic Wording: Glory Be

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning
is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.**

*Ecumenical version*²⁴

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be forever. Amen.**

*Traditional prayers offered from the United Methodist and Catholic traditions
for use by other Christian traditions*

Even if we do not pray these prayers in our own Christian faith tradition, we may freely pray them with those from other traditions.

Act of Contrition

This traditional Catholic prayer exists in several English versions. It may be used at any time, but a form of it is typically used during the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Penance or Confession).

**My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.**

²³ UMH, 70 and 71.

²⁴ *Praying Together*, p. 31. This ecumenical text is used in the Roman Catholic Liturgy of the Hours.

*Confession and Pardon in A Service of Word and Table I*²⁵

All:

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have failed to be an obedient church.
We have not done your will,
we have broken your law,
we have rebelled against your love,
we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us, we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

All pray in silence.

Leader to people:

**Hear the good news:
Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;
that proves God's love toward us.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!**

People to leader:

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

Leader and people:

Glory to God. Amen.

Collect Prayers

“Collect” prayers are used in Catholic and United Methodist worship, as well as other Christian traditions. This prayer is called a “collect” because it serves as a conclusion to a period of silent prayer that has gone immediately before. The presiding minister or priest literally *collects* the many prayers and presents them to the Father in a summary prayer. For that reason, it is appropriate to pause for individual silent prayer after the “Let us pray” and before the text of the collect.

There are three “presidential prayers” during the Mass: one concluding the introductory rites, which is referred to as the collect; one over the gifts prepared at the altar; and one after Communion before the concluding rites begin.

In United Methodist practice the use of collects varies by congregation. However, the standard “Word and Table I” liturgy uses as the opening prayer the “Collect for Purity” that has as its source a medieval English Catholic prayer:

²⁵ UMH, p. 8.

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.²⁶

The collect structure is very helpful to frame spontaneous or prepared short prayers for many occasions. A collect has five basic parts, summarized below with sample language in quotation form:

1. We address God, often with a divine title: “Almighty God.”
2. We ground our confidence in God’s help by remembering who God is or what God has done in the past: “unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.”
3. We ask God to do likewise for us in our current time of need: “cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit.”
4. We may add the result we hope will come from God’s care: “that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name.”
5. We ask through Christ our Lord: “through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

The Christian liturgical year

Catholics and United Methodists have rich opportunities to pray together as families and congregations by means of the annual cycle of the Christian year. Some of the services below are regularly celebrated ecumenically by congregations. Others are particular to each tradition’s liturgies, but are welcome opportunities for interchurch families to share together. Some are devotional practices that may be practiced by individuals and groups outside congregational worship.

Advent: liturgies and other practices

Many Christians anticipate the celebration of the Lord’s birth at Christmas with a preparatory season. This season, called Advent, includes the four Sundays prior to Christmas. It marks the beginning of the liturgical year for Catholics and United Methodists.

A central symbol for family Advent prayer is the four-candle Advent wreath. Three purple (or sometimes blue) and one rose candle are used. Catholics light purple candles on the first, second, and fourth Sundays of Advent, and the rose candle on the third Sunday (known as *Gaudete* Sunday for “Rejoice”). With the increase of light each week, we experience the heightening of our joyful thanks for Christ’s presence among us now, growing anticipation for his coming as one of us in Bethlehem, and hope of his coming at the end of time.

²⁶ UMH, p. 6.

Catholic congregations typically have a wreath in the sanctuary during Advent and include a short ritual of blessing and a sequential lighting of the candles during Sunday worship.

Another popular Advent symbol is the “Jesse Tree.” Families, Sunday School classes and other groups may create images from paper or other materials to symbolize important events and forerunners to Jesus in salvation history (for example, a piece of fruit for Adam and Eve, ark for Noah, ladder for Jacob, Ten Commandments for Moses, harp or star for David, etc.). United Methodists often decorate a tree in church with “chrismons,” Christ-symbols, and display the “Chrismon Tree” during Advent and Christmas seasons.

Advent Lessons and Carols

Advent Lessons and Carols is a form of congregational worship that focuses attention on the prophets as messengers of God’s covenant and anticipates the coming of Christ.²⁷ The hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” often figures prominently. A simplified form of this service may be planned around this hymn and accompanying antiphons.²⁸

Lent: liturgies and other practices

Lent is traditionally a time for opening our hearts to repentance, renewal, and more fully receiving and living the Good News. It begins with Ash Wednesday and is composed of forty days (not counting Sundays and the three days of the Sacred Triduum—Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday). During Lent, Christians recall Jesus’ own forty days in the desert before beginning his public ministry and the forty years spent by God’s chosen people between their liberation from slavery in Egypt and their entry into the promised land. Lent leads into the profound commemorations during Holy Week of the Last Supper (often including a foot-washing ritual), Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross, and finally the joyful celebration of Easter: the central liturgical event from which all the others radiate. For Catholics as well as some United Methodists, these three days of the Sacred Triduum, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, come to their fulfillment with the Easter Vigil, which celebrates the resurrection during the night before Easter Sunday.

Besides these significant liturgical events, many congregations plan special programming during Lent for education and self-examination. Events may include prayer and healing services, Bible study, a speaker series, and simple shared meals. This specialized programming during Lent often takes place during the week and is generally open to all.

Some key elements of Lent and Holy Week that are especially appropriate for United Methodist and Catholic sharing are:

Ash Wednesday

Catholics, as well as many United Methodists, begin Lent with a liturgy that may or may not include the Eucharist, but always includes the distribution of ashes, placed on one’s

²⁷ UMBW, 264-65.

²⁸ UMH, 211.

forehead. The ashes are an outward symbol of the work of penitence begun inwardly in our hearts during this season of Lent. In both the Catholic and United Methodist rites, two options are given to be recited by the minister as ashes are applied or sprinkled: “Remember, you are dust, and to dust you shall return,” or “Repent, and believe in the Gospel.”

Prayer, fasting, and almsgiving

These three traditional Christian practices are emphasized during Lent. Families and congregations can cultivate meaningful ways to incorporate them. Some options include:

✚ *Regular prayer as individuals or families* (perhaps weekly during Lent), using the Sunday scripture readings for shared reflection, and perhaps lighting a candle. Many United Methodists and Catholics make use of special booklets containing Lenten family devotions.

✚ *Fasting and abstinence:* Catholics are obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays in Lent, and to limit other food consumption on those dates (see the detailed regulations at <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year-and-calendar/lent/catholic-information-on-lenten-fast-and-abstinence>; [Internet search: usccb fast abstinence liturgical year]). Further, all Christians are encouraged to make Lent a time of examining our practices of consumption (food, alcohol, media, and other sources) and re-ordering these patterns. While “giving up” items such as candy or ice cream is common, practices of reflection, helping one’s neighbor, working for justice, and other positive “giving” are an important supplement to Lenten discipline.

✚ *Almsgiving:* throughout their lives, Christians are called to give generously from their time, talent, and treasure to those in need. This responsibility receives particular emphasis during Lent.

Stations of the Cross

This traditional prayer practice involves journeying along the fourteen “stations” of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection, imitating the Lord’s walk from the Garden of Gethsemane to Golgotha. It may be done individually or as part of a group worship service, and is most commonly prayed by Catholics on the Fridays of Lent.

Catholic churches always contain visible “stations”—images placed throughout the building and forming a “path” of spiritual pilgrimage. The communal Stations service includes reflection upon the experiences of Christ and connects these with our own human experiences of suffering, death, and new life. One version of the Stations of the Cross is included in this resource (see p. 63 in the Shared Liturgies section, “We Make the Journey with Jesus”).

Good Friday seven last words

Many United Methodist and Catholic congregations hold services of hymn singing and silent and spoken prayer, alternating with preached reflections on Christ’s “seven last words” as recounted in the Gospel Passion narratives. These may be combined with Good Friday ecumenical worship (see next section). A sample service is included in this resource (see p. 51 of Shared Liturgies section, *Tre ore*).

Good Friday ecumenical worship

Some communities have clergy ministerial associations who join to offer shared worship for their congregants on Good Friday. These provide opportunities for experiencing united Christian prayer through reflecting together on the meaning of Christ's Passion, with shared singing, prayer, and preaching by several ministers. Perhaps one of the most ancient practices of the church gathered on Good Friday is the Veneration of the Wood of the Cross, in which the assembly comes forward and reverences a large cross with a kiss, a touch, or a bow.

All Saints/ All Souls

United Methodists have a single celebration of All Saints/All Souls on the first Sunday of November, while Catholics have the Feast of All Saints on November 1 and the Feast of All Souls on November 2. Worship services for each allow the remembrance of the holy ones who have gone before us, and special evoking of the memories of loved ones. Additionally, Catholic piety includes ongoing prayer for the dead as a spiritual work of mercy.

Other annual celebrations

Feast of St. Francis of Assisi/Blessing of Animals

This blessing is often celebrated in early October to coincide with the Catholic feast day of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4. It is frequently celebrated as an ecumenical service and is often done outdoors.

Thanksgiving ecumenical services

Although it is a secular holiday, Thanksgiving Day in the United States has often been an occasion for congregational worship. Many communities have clergy ministerial associations that offer a common Thanksgiving worship service for their congregants. This includes scripture, hymns, prayers, and often blessing practices, such as the blessing of bread or other food items, to express our thanks to God and experience Christian fellowship.

Other secular and national holidays

United Methodists, Catholics, and other Christians regularly cooperate in ecumenical worship connected with holidays such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, Earth Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and others.

Scripture-centered prayer

Sunday lectionary prayer and reflection

A lectionary is a schedule that organizes the readings from scripture that will be read on particular days of the year. Catholics and United Methodists both use a three-year lectionary for Sunday worship (optional for United Methodists). Typically, there is a reading from the Old

Testament, a psalm (which may be sung or read, alternating between cantor or reader and the assembly), a second reading drawn from the New Testament Epistles, and a Gospel reading. Each focuses its Gospel readings on Matthew in Year A, Mark in Year B, and Luke in Year C; readings from the Gospel of John occur throughout each lectionary cycle. In addition, Catholics use a two-year lectionary cycle for daily Mass. The Roman Catholic Lectionary for Sunday Mass and the Revised Common Lectionary used by some United Methodist churches have some differences, but many readings are shared. Individuals, families, and other groups may simply choose a preferred cycle of readings.

Praying and reflecting with lectionary readings

A simple way to use the lectionary readings in prayer and reflection follows. Many individuals, families, and groups find it helpful to do this early in the week prior to hearing a particular set of readings at the upcoming Sunday service, in order to savor them deeply and prepare to receive and reflect on their meaning during worship. Others use the preceding Sunday's readings as "mystagogy," or prolonged meditation, during the following week.

- ☞ Prayerfully read each reading, silently or aloud.
- ☞ After each reading, pause for reflection (which may include writing, sharing the meaning of the reading with others in conversation, etc.).
- ☞ Close with a brief prayer (either a standard prayer or a spontaneous prayer/collect).
- ☞ During the week, pause periodically throughout the day to call a key passage to mind from the readings and prayerfully bring it into inner conversation with God in praise, thanksgiving, or intercessory prayer.

Lectionary reading resources

Catholic: <https://bible.usccb.org/>, go to "Daily Readings" tab (Internet search: usccb daily readings). The Catholic lectionary for the United States uses a form of the New American Bible (NAB) translation with revised New Testament.

United Methodist: It is common practice for United Methodists to use the Revised Common Lectionary. An excellent website to access it is <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/> (Internet search: revised common lectionary). The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation is used.

There are also resources available with written reflections on the lectionary readings, such as:

"*The Text This Week: Lectionary, Scripture Study, Worship Links, and Resources*," www.textweek.com (Internet search: textweek). This free, ecumenical site features a wide variety of resources for study and liturgy based on the Revised Common Lectionary's three-year cycle.

"*Give Us This Day*," <https://www.giveusthisday.org/> (Internet search: liturgical press). A Catholic subscription-only publication from Liturgical Press, with daily scripture lectionary readings and reflections as well as Morning and Evening Prayer (Liturgy of the Hours).

“Magnificat,” <http://us.magnificat.net/home/discover> (Internet search: magnificat catholic spiritual resource). A Catholic subscription-only resource for spiritual growth, designed to be used both at liturgies and for personal prayer. Includes the Order of Mass, hymns, information on the liturgical year, spiritual reflections, and other resources.

“Daily Reflections,” Creighton University Online Ministries, <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/daily.html> (Internet search: creighton online ministries). A Catholic resource that links to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website for the daily scripture lectionary readings and includes a short written reflection by a member of the Creighton University staff. The website has many other resources for prayer and spiritual enrichment, including audio and video meditations by spiritual directors and a set of daily scripture reflections by Creighton students, as well as special sections for seasons of the liturgical year such as Advent and Lent.

Lectio divina

Since ancient times, Christians have engaged in prayerful “holy reading,” especially of scripture. *Lectio divina* is a widely popular practice among Catholics and Protestants today, and may be used individually or in groups.

A way of praying lectio divina

While there are many ways of doing *lectio*, here is a commonly used approach suitable for families or other groups:

- Choose a leader to invite participants to enter into each phase of reflection.
- Choose a relatively brief scripture passage for *lectio*—several verses is generally a good length.
- Choose three individuals to read the passage at various points in the reflection, including both male and female voices when possible.
- While the phases below include substantial periods of silence, the leader may invite brief spoken reflections when appropriate.
- As a variation, one or more visual images may be introduced during the reflection (*visio divina*, or “holy seeing”).

Common phases of lectio divina

1. Reading (*Lectio*): first reading of the passage, during which each person listens for a “word” (a single word or phrase) that is especially meaningful, then inwardly “dwells” with it. People may wish to speak their “words” aloud.
2. Reflection (*Meditatio*): second reading of the passage, during which each person reflects on how that “word” is touching one’s life today.
3. Prayer (*Oratio*): third reading of the passage, with each person engaging in inner prayer as a response to God’s speaking to one in the “word.”

4. Contemplation (*Contemplatio*): silent resting in God’s love as experienced during the reflection.

Sometimes an initial phase of preparation (*Silencio*) is included to allow centering silently in the moment, in order to receive the Word of God. A final phase of action (*Actio*) may also be added to consider new actions to which God might be calling one through the experience of *lectio*.

Lectio divina resources

“*Lectio Divina: Praying the Scriptures*,” <https://www.upperroom.org/resources/lectio-divina-praying-the-scriptures> (Internet search: upper room lectio divina). This United Methodist prayer resource website includes the steps for *lectio divina* and an audio meditation for its use.

“*Prayers and Devotions*,” <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/index.cfm> (Internet search: usccb prayers devotions meditations lectio divina). This resource of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops includes a section outlining a version of *lectio divina* under the heading, “Meditations,” along with additional resources in English and Spanish.

“*How to Practice Lectio Divina*,” <http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/2000/08/how-to-practice-lectio-divina.aspx> (Internet search: beliefnet lectio divina). This nondenominational website includes suggestions for both individual and group use.

Pennington, Basil. *Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying*. New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1998. This is a well-regarded book by a Catholic priest and renowned prayer practitioner that provides guidance for praying *lectio divina*.

Everyday prayers

Liturgy of the Hours/Daily prayer/Other prayers at times of day

Daily or Morning and Evening Prayer, or Liturgy of the Hours, is an ancient Christian prayer practice. The website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states, “The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office or the Work of God (*Opus Dei*), is the daily prayer of the Church, marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer. The Hours are a meditative dialogue on the mystery of Christ, using scripture and prayer” (<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgy-of-the-hours/index.cfm> Internet search: usccb liturgy of the hours). United Methodists may also recognize this prayer form under the title “canonical hours.”

Ordained Catholic clergy, religious sisters, and nuns follow this daily discipline of prayer by praying the Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer, Evening Prayer (Vespers), and Night Prayer (Compline). Catholic laity are not required to follow this discipline, but many find it a very meaningful resource for spirituality. United Methodists have services for Morning, Midday, and Evening Prayer.

The Liturgy of the Hours can be prayed in simpler and more elaborate forms, but at its heart it is a scripture-based expression of prayer that follows a cycle of psalms, antiphonally prayed and interspersed with the doxology prayer (Glory Be), hymns, other scripture readings, intercessory prayer, and a Gospel “canticle.” Whether prayed alone or in a group, the Liturgy of the Hours is a participation in the worldwide prayer of the church and thus a powerful expression of Christian unity. Monastic communities typically chant and sing the Hours.

Selected Liturgy of the Hours/Daily prayer resources

The United Methodist Hymnal, 876 and 878. Online alternatives include:

Morning prayer:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/an-order-for-morning-praise-and-prayer>

Midday prayer:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/an-order-for-midday-praise-and-prayer>

Evening prayer:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/an-order-for-evening-praise-and-prayer>

(Internet searches: United Methodist order morning prayer, etc.)

“Liturgy of the Hours, eBreviary”: <http://www.ebreviary.com/ebreviary/ebreviary.nsf/homepage.html> (Internet search: ebreviary). This website offers the official Catholic Liturgy of the Hours in printable PDF format, as well as apps for mobile devices. A subscription is required for most of the resources. (Note: the language for humans and God is not gender-inclusive.)

“Pray the Liturgy of the Hours with Your Kids,” <https://teachingcatholickids.com/liturgy-of-the-hours/> (Internet search: catholic family liturgy of hours). A family-friendly approach to the Divine Office from a Catholic perspective, with a brief description and links to prayer at morning, noon, and evening.

Daily devotional

United Methodists and Catholics alike have daily prayer practices, often in the morning or evening, which include reflective reading of a scripture passage and related text, accompanied by a brief prayer. United Methodists have typically practiced “family prayer” that may include daily scripture reading, singing, and shared prayer. Devotion receives special attention at certain times of the year, such as Advent and Lent.

Selected daily devotional resources

“The Upper Room,” <http://devotional.upperroom.org/> (Internet search: upper room ministry). A United Methodist website offering daily devotionals, with subscriptions for monthly printed versions.

“Give Us This Day,” <https://www.giveusthisday.org/> (Internet search: liturgical press). See “Lectionary reading resources” above.

“Daily Reflections,” Creighton University Online Ministries, <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/daily.html> (Internet search: creighton online ministries). See “Lectionary reading resources” above.

Other shared prayer forms

Faith sharing with food

Both Catholic and United Methodist congregations have vibrant traditions of gathering for food and fellowship, often with potluck suppers. These can become occasions for shared prayer and reflection on the connections of faith and life, and can be done with all ages, formally and informally. For example, a meal could be shared, followed by a prayer service such as those outlined in the Shared Liturgies section, or a prayer service could be followed by a meal. Or, suggested questions could be distributed at a meal to encourage group faith sharing at their tables while eating.

Intercessory prayers

The Lord’s Prayer (Our Father), combines praise of God with intercessions or petitions to God (“Give us this day our daily bread” . . . and so on).²⁹ Christians have always followed the teaching and example of Jesus in asking God for what they and others need. Catholics have often combined this with the traditional belief in the “communion of saints” to ask departed holy people to “intercede” with God in their petitions, as well as praying for these departed souls. Many Christians also ask one another to join them in specific intercessory prayers, in ecumenical worship, and more informal occasions such as Bible studies, prayer circles, and through everyday relating of needs and concerns to one another.

There are numerous ways for Catholics and United Methodists to gather and share in intercessory prayer for their concerns and needs: in prayer circles, among friends and families, in ecumenical gatherings, online, and others. (A common intercessory prayer practice by families, for example, is to pray at the children’s bedtime for loved ones and those in need.) When done in a group, a helpful approach can be for a leader to invite intercessory prayer. Each member speaks one or more petitions, and the group may respond with a simple affirmation such as, “Lord, hear our prayer.” The leader can then offer a short closing prayer.

For Catholic and United Methodist intercessory prayer on any occasion, intercessions may be grouped as a litany, with a response by the group, such as “Lord, hear our prayer,” or “Lord, have mercy.” *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* suggests that a basic litany structure be followed, including but not limited to: prayers for the church and her mission; prayers for civil leaders and global intentions; prayers related to the celebration of the day, local needs, and other issues; prayers for those in particular crisis or need; prayers for the

²⁹ For a detailed reflection on the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer, see *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§68-105.

community gathered; and prayers for the sick and those who have died.³⁰ For United Methodists, intercessory prayers of different types are often included at Sunday worship.³¹

Selected intercessory prayer resources

“Living Prayer Center,” <http://prayer-center.upperroom.org/about> (Internet search: upper room living prayer). Part of the United Methodist Church’s Upper Room Ministry. Visitors to the site are invited to submit petitions by phone or through the website to be connected to a worldwide network.

Breathing and centering prayer

Christian tradition has included many variations on forms of “becoming still” and aware of God’s presence. Stillness is enhanced by consciousness of one’s pattern of breathing and the effort to breathe slowly and evenly, noting each inhalation and exhalation. When consistently practiced, even for five to ten minutes per day, one often experiences greater compassion, inner peace, and closeness to God.

Breathing and centering prayer approach

A simple approach to such prayer includes:

- ☞ Find a quiet place for prayer. It may be helpful to light a candle.
- ☞ Sit comfortably in a chair with one’s back straight and feet on the floor.
- ☞ Quietly breathe and become aware of God’s presence with each breath. Sometimes people inwardly recite a version of the “Jesus Prayer” such as: “Jesus, Son of God” while inhaling, and “have mercy on me, a sinner” while exhaling. In the form called “centering prayer,” a sacred word such as God, Abba, Love, or Peace is chosen as the focus. Other short phrases can also be used.
- ☞ Alternatively, one could simply focus on breathing without words and rest in God’s presence.
- ☞ If distracting thoughts appear, just notice them and then gently let them go.
- ☞ End with a short prayer of thanksgiving or the Lord’s Prayer.

Selected breathing and centering prayer resources

Iovino, Joe. “Re-energize your prayer life with a new practice,” <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-method/> (Internet search: umc iovino prayer practice).

“Centering Prayer,” <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/category/category/centering-prayer> (Internet search: contemplative outreach centering prayer). Includes background on this form of prayer with videos, and a PDF brochure for distribution in groups engaging in centering prayer.

³⁰ “The Structure of the Mass, Its Elements and Its Parts,” *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), §§69-71.

³¹ See UMBW, pp. 24-25.

Blessings

United Methodists and Catholics share the practice of blessing: drawing on words, gestures, and symbols to bestow and recognize God’s gracious presence among us in all times and places, and to lift up particular persons in both everyday and important occasions on our Christian journey.

Common table blessings

United Methodist (spoken or sung)

Be present at our table, Lord.
Be here and everywhere adored.
Thy people bless, and grant that we
may feast in fellowship with Thee. Amen.

Catholic

Bless us, O Lord,
and these Thy gifts,
which we are about to receive
from thy bounty,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Family blessings

Reciting a blessing before meals is perhaps the most common form of blessing used by Christian families, but blessings may be used in many other enriching ways. Parents are encouraged to draw upon their faith traditions to incorporate blessings into their everyday lives as well as important occasions for them as Christians and family members. Catholics may draw upon the rich resource, *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*, to find numerous options for short and meaningful blessings.³² Many of these are also found at <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/family-prayers-from-birth-to-death> (Internet search: usccb family prayers birth to death). United Methodist blessings are found in the *United Methodist Book of Worship* in the section on “Blessings for Persons.” Catholics and United Methodists alike can cultivate simple family blessing practices, spontaneous and planned, which could include elements such as:

- ☞ lighting a candle or otherwise creating a sacred space
- ☞ short scripture reading
- ☞ blessing of a person or symbolic object with a gesture, such as placing one’s hand upon or over the person or object
- ☞ short prayers of praise, intercession, thanksgiving, or combining several intentions
- ☞ a simple closing, such as a spontaneous “collect” or just “Amen”³³

³² <http://store.usccb.org/catholic-household-blessings-prayers-p/7-657.htm>

³³ See the description of “collects” on p. 16 of this resource.

Common occasions for blessing include:

- special times of the liturgical year
- birthdays and baptismal anniversaries
- wedding anniversaries
- before or after taking a trip
- during pregnancy, before and after a birth
- in times of sickness or difficulty
- beginning or ending an important life phase, such as graduation, starting a new job, and retirement
- when a person is nearing death, when mourning, and on anniversaries of a loved one's death

Liturgical blessings

In our worship, ministers offer blessings that symbolize the community's connections with God, one another, and the earth. Among many blessings, here are some well-known ones used in congregations:

- ✠ blessing of the Advent wreath, Christmas crèche, and Christmas tree
- ✠ blessing of ashes for distribution on Ash Wednesday
- ✠ blessing of water and shells to be used for Baptisms
- ✠ blessing of oils to be used for anointing those to be baptized and confirmed, as well as the sick
- ✠ blessing of palms on Palm Sunday
- ✠ blessing of animals (often celebrated in early October to coincide with the Catholic feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4)

Music for worship, hymn singing, and liturgical participation

While music is integral to corporate worship for both Catholics and United Methodists, it is important to remember that it enhances all forms of prayer for individuals, families, and other Christian groups. Music may be freely incorporated into celebrations during the liturgical year, blessings, and other occasions. United Methodists and Catholics can share with one another the rich repository of Christian music over the centuries, for prayerful listening and especially for singing.

Each tradition already uses the music of the other—many Catholic liturgies include hymns from the Methodist tradition, United Methodists use the texts and tunes of historic and current Catholic writers and composers, and both may draw on popular ecumenical sources such as the music of the Iona and Taizé communities. The website www.hymnary.org provides a comprehensive index of hymns and hymnals used by both Catholics and United Methodists. It allows searches by author, topic, text, and other keywords, and provides audio samples of recordings (Internet search: hymnary).

It is often said that “Methodism was born in song.” Methodists have devoted much of their liturgical energies to the singing of songs and the writing of new songs. There is a song or

hymn for almost every theological idea and every time of year. The *United Methodist Hymnal* has historically been the primary source of theology as well as song for United Methodists. It is as much because of singing as because of testimony that early Methodists were called “enthusiasts.” In the “Directions for Singing” by John Wesley below you will discover the importance of singing in company with others toward God in worship.

*John Wesley's directions for singing*³⁴

1. Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.
2. Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.
3. Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.
4. Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.
5. Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.
6. Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.
7. Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Catholics have discovered anew the beauty and power of liturgical singing in recent decades. Drawing on many books of hymns currently in use in the United States, and many musical styles, Catholics are invited further into the richness of prayer through singing. The following excerpts provide recent reflections on the importance of music in worship.

³⁴ UMH, p. vii.

Excerpt from Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship

“A cry from deep within our being, music is a way for God to lead us to the realm of higher things. As St. Augustine says, ‘Singing is for the one who loves.’ Music is therefore a sign of God’s love for us and of our love for him. In this sense, it is very personal. But unless music sounds, it is not music, and whenever it sounds, it is accessible to others. By its very nature song has both an individual and a communal dimension. Thus, it is no wonder that singing together in church expresses so well the sacramental presence of God to his people.”³⁵

Excerpt from Stewards of the Tradition: Fifty Years after Sacrosanctum Concilium

“Liturgical song has a preeminent place in the *ars celebrandi* (art of proper celebration), for not only is it a means of active participation, but it is another source of beauty that can lift hearts and inspire worship. We commend those who have dedicated themselves as composers and pastoral musicians who enrich our worship and enable our songs of praise. The development of a repertory of vernacular music for the Liturgy over the past fifty years is a gift for which we are grateful and which we continue to promote. We also seek to improve the quality of our celebrations in light of the 2007 USCCB guidelines *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*. To rely only on the music of a single genre or style for the celebration of the Liturgy is to diminish the breadth and depth of our liturgical heritage and to risk the exclusion of the legitimate contributions of particular cultures and composers. We wish to underscore the importance of the words set to music for the Liturgy, and that they must accurately reflect the theology of the Liturgy or be drawn from the liturgical texts themselves.”³⁶

³⁵ *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008), §2.

³⁶ Committee on Divine Worship, *Stewards of the Tradition: Fifty Years after Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2013), p. 4.



*Today, we pray for your universal church.
We pray for our shared mission to your world.
We pray for open eyes and open hearts for those who need to hear
your message of grace.
We pray for kindness among our faith communions, even when we
disagree with each other's theology or opinions.
We pray for wisdom and insight to maintain unity...*

*—Ecumenical Officer and Staff, Council of Bishops,
The United Methodist Church*

Introduction and pastoral considerations

It is increasingly common for religious communities to gather ecumenically for shared prayer—at Thanksgiving, for significant days or seasons of the Christian calendar, or in response to local or national events. For Catholics and United Methodists, such occasions can flow naturally from ongoing efforts to share faith and life in interchurch families, among congregations, and in particular types of ecumenical groups who gather out of need, such as persons with limited abilities or ministries of mercy to the poor, sick, or imprisoned.

Templates for ecumenical shared prayer services for significant occasions and themes

Ideally, in planning and celebrating such communal **ecumenical prayer services**, ministers and members of both traditions work together. To assist in and encourage such efforts, this Shared Liturgies section offers basic templates that can be developed and utilized by United Methodists and Catholics together, focusing on the following occasions and themes:

- Template 1: In times of crisis
- Template 2: For those in need and “the least of these”: the poor, the persecuted, refugees, etc. (Mt 25:40)
- Template 3: For unity among Christians
- Template 4: For peace

These themes are included as they are particularly evocative and crucial for prayer in ecumenical contexts. When a crisis strikes, often suddenly, it becomes vital to offer worship that speaks to the pain and disruption that people experience, and to make this opportunity available as soon as possible (Template 1). Shared Christian prayer and communal worship are perennially important to call to mind our responsibilities to the poor and marginalized, to seek unity as the Body of Christ, and to ask God’s help in living as peacemakers (Templates 2, 3 and 4). Templates 2 and 4 would also be very appropriate for groups discussing “Together We Act: A Commentary on the Law of Love,” (*Catholics and United Methodists Together:*

We Believe, We Pray, We Act, §§106-131, and Template 3 might be appropriate for groups discussing “Our Common Baptism” from the same document, §§3-26.

When developing the template into a full worship service, elements such as the following are especially important to consider for inclusion:

- A greeting which acknowledges all who are present with a welcome and invitation to prayer
- Hymns and songs that are well known to both traditions or are easily learned
- Call to prayer
- Scripture readings
- Confession followed by words of pardon
- Intercessory petitions
- Lord’s Prayer
- Some combination of singing, silence, and meditation
- Some symbolic ritual action such as candle lighting or writing commitment statements
- Sending forth with the passing or exchange of peace

For each of the templates, worship directions and recommendations are included in red, and the spoken readings and prayers are in black.

All scripture readings are from the New Revised Standard Version translation (NRSV). All references to hymns from *The United Methodist Hymnal* are indicated as UMH, with the hymn number following. While each template includes suggested scripture readings and hymns or musical settings, it is important for planners to use their own best judgment as to the most appropriate choices for their congregations.

A supplemental form of confession and words of pardon, adaptable to any of these templates, is included at the end of this section.

Ecumenical Prayer Service Template 1
In times of crisis

shared prayers
and resources

gathering and
introduction

Gathering: Set the context for the gathering and invite everyone into the prayer space.

Consider opening this prayer service with various voices from the assembly reading passages of scripture that give witness to emotions at moments of crisis: pain, lament, suffering, alienation, fear in danger, great loss, separation, and division. For example, “Out of the depths I cry out to you, O Lord, Hear my voice.” Or, “Let my prayer arise before you like incense.” Or, “Lord, make haste to help me.”

Another example of the gathering might include a single cantor singing with oboe accompaniment a musical setting of Psalm 31, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

Use the resources at hand, and remember that simple approaches can be powerful.

Leader:

Let us pray. *(long pause)*

God, Giver of all gifts,
we praise you, the source of all we have and are.
Teach us to acknowledge always the many good things your infinite love has given us.
Help us to love you with all our heart and all our strength.

In times of trouble may we always turn to you and not away from you.
Remind us of your Son’s victory over the sea, and every evil and illness or disorder.
Give us the comfort of trusting in his power to heal our suffering and difficulty,
no matter how fearsome.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

First Reading

Reading(s) may be chosen that affirm God’s presence in crisis and suffering and draw people together to pray. One example of a possible reading follows:

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians. (Col 1:24-28)

I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. I became its servant according to God’s commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

proclamation of
the Word of God

Psalm Response: Ps 91:1-2, 10-12, 14-16

This psalm may be used, or any psalm with a familiar and appropriate musical setting chosen by the planners:

Response: **Be with me Lord, when I am in trouble. Be with me Lord, I pray.**

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.”

Response

No evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.

Response

Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.
When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.

Response

With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

Response

Hymn or Song before the Gospel

Gospel

Choose a text of consolation and/or hope. The following or any text from the Gospels may be chosen:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew. (Mt 11:25-30)

On one occasion Jesus said: “Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children. Father, it is true. You have graciously willed it so. Everything has been given over to me by Father. No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son—and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon your shoulders and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. Your souls will find rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden, light.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: **Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.**

A homily or other words may be said. Alternatively, congregants may be invited to light candles or write prayers or commitments.

A hymn or musical meditation might follow. Possible music selections are: "Restless is the Heart," Bernadette Farrell, OSB (Oregon Catholic Press), or "It Is Well with My Soul," Horatio Spafford. Music: Philip Bliss (UMH 377).

Confession

Prayers may be offered for any involvement we may have in contributing to the crisis, with opening phrases such as:

Lord, we repent for...

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, have mercy on your people.**

We have ignored...

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, have mercy on your people.**

We have allowed...

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, have mercy on your people.**

We have tuned out the cries of the suffering..

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, have mercy on your people.**

Words of Pardon

Leader: May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: **Amen.**

Universal Prayers

Participants may be invited to offer spontaneous prayers for comfort, for deeper trust in God and our growth as healers in Christ, for real change. A prolonged silence is appropriate between prayers both for ourselves and for others, as needs are called to mind in appropriate detail.

At the end of each prayer. Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer

Ritual Action

As noted above, appropriate ritual actions might occur instead of a homily. Other examples might include the placing of flowers, stones, prayer flags or banners, speaking words of commitment, etc.

Optional Offering

For a particular group or agency who serves those for whom we are praying.

Closing Prayer and Sending Forth

shared prayers
and resources

musical
meditation

confession

universal
prayers

concluding rites

Ecumenical Prayer Service Template 2
For those in need

When planning the service, consider in advance: will the congregation include or be mostly composed of people who have the needs for which the assembly will pray? This will shape the prayer.

**gathering and
introduction**

Gathering

Set the context for why people are gathered and invite them into the space.

Consider carefully how the space is arranged—seats, lighting, images. Words, quotes, or symbols that focus the attention of the assembly on worship may be used. For instance, is the focus primarily on God's presence in the midst of need, lifting prayers for help, or seeking courage to witness the love of Christ in the context or circumstance of persecution, oppression, prejudice, hate?

Opening Prayer

Some of the prayers that may be used, among many, are the following:

For those who suffer from need:

Leader: Let us pray. *(long pause)*

All powerful Father,

God of goodness,

you provide for all your creation.

Deliver us from every evil and bring relief to those who suffer from need

(or hunger, persecution, oppression, prejudice, or hate).

Give us an effective love for our brothers and sisters to motivate us to bring about
change

that they may serve you with carefree hearts.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, for ever and ever.

All: **Amen.**

Or, for refugees and exiles:

Leader: Let us pray. *(long pause)*

Lord,

no one is a stranger to you

and no one is ever far from your loving care.

In your kindness, watch over refugees and exiles,

those separated from their loved ones, young people who are lost,

and those who have left or run away from home.

Give them welcome in the place where they long to be

and help us always to show your kindness to strangers and to those in need.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: **Amen.**

Or, for those unjustly deprived of liberty:

Leader: Let us pray. *(long pause)*

Father,
your Son came among us as a servant
to free the human race from the bondage of sin.
Rescue those unjustly deprived of liberty
and restore them to the freedom you wish for all your children.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: **Amen.**

Or, for prisoners:

Leader: Let us pray. *(long pause)*

Father of mercy,
the secrets of all hearts are known to you alone.
You know who is just and you forgive all who turn back to you.
Help those who are unjustly condemned to find justice.
Hear our prayers for those in prison.
Give them patience and hope in their sufferings, touch their hearts
And renew their awareness of your love.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: **Amen.**

Or, for our oppressors:

Leader: Let us pray. *(long pause)*

Father,
according to your law of love
we wish to love sincerely all who oppress us.
Turn the hearts of oppressors, O Lord,
to see the damage of their actions and change their ways.
Help us to follow the commandments of your new covenant,
never to return evil for the evil done to us,
but to use our concern to bring about reform in our world.

We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: **Amen.**

First Reading

The following or any scripture reading appropriate to the context may be chosen by the planners:

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah. (Jer 29:11-14)

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

The Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm Response: Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 6-7a, 7b-8

This psalm may be used, or any psalm with a familiar and appropriate musical setting chosen by the planners:

Response: **Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.**

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

Response

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

Response

My soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who watch for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord!

Response

For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Response

Hymn or Song before the Gospel

Gospel

Choose a text of consolation and/or hope. The following or any text from the Gospel may be chosen:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John. (Jn 16:20-24)

Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: **Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.**

A homily or other words may be said. Alternatively, congregants may be invited to light candles or write prayers or commitments.

If naming is appropriate, a litany of those for whom we pray could be included. For example, in a shared service to pray for persecuted Christians one might name countries around the world, pause, and respond in unison with a response, "The Lord is just and merciful."

A hymn or musical meditation might follow, chosen for its familiarity with the local community and appropriateness in context. Possible music selections are:

"What Does the Lord Require," Albert Bayly. Tune: SHARPTHORNE, 12.12.12, Erik Routley (UMH 441), or

"What does the Lord require of you?", Jim Strathdee (The Faith We Sing 2174).

**m u s i c a l
m e d i t a t i o n**

Confession

For any involvement we may have had in others' suffering and need, for what we have done, and what we have failed to do:

Lord, we repent for...

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, have mercy on your people.**

We have ignored...

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, have mercy on your people.**

We have allowed...

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, have mercy on your people.**

We have tuned out the cries of the suffering...

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, have mercy on your people.**

c o n f e s s i o n

**universal
prayers**

Words of Pardon

Leader: May Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: **Amen.**

Universal Prayers

Participants may be invited to offer spontaneous prayers for comfort, for deeper trust in God and our growth as believers in Christ, for real change. A prolonged silence is appropriate between prayers both for ourselves and for others as needs are called to mind in appropriate detail.

At the end of each prayer:

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer

Ritual Action

As noted above, such actions might occur instead of a homily. Other examples might include the placing of flowers, stones, prayer flags, or banners; speaking words of commitment; etc.

Optional Offering

For a particular group or agency who serves those for whom we are praying.

concluding rites

Closing Prayer and Sending Forth

Ecumenical Prayer Service Template 3
For unity among Christians
(with optional renewal of Baptism)

shared prayers
and resources

gathering and
introduction

Gathering: Set the context for why people are gathered and invite them into the prayer space. Consider opening this prayer service with various voices in the assembly using words of scripture, or more formally, plan for leaders from the spectrum of Christianity to stand or come forward and read aloud favorite quotes from Christian leaders or dialogue documents; for example, Jn 17:20-21. (The fourth template included here, for peace, does this in more detail.)

Leader:

Let us pray. *(long pause)*

Lord, lover of your human family,
fill us with the love your Spirit gives.
Help us to live in a manner worthy of our baptismal call.
Make us witnesses of your truth to all people
and help us work to bring all believers together
in the unity of faith and the fellowship of peace.

Help us to resolve all differences, heal all divisions.
May the people you call to your kingdom be one in faith and love.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

First Reading

Reading(s) may be chosen that call us to unity and draw people together to pray. One example of a possible reading follows:

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans. (Rom 12:9-16)

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.

The Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

proclamation of
the Word of God

Psalm Response: Ps 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34

This psalm may be used, or any psalm with a familiar and appropriate musical setting chosen by the planners:

Response: Lord, send out your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

Response

When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath,
they die and return to their dust.
When you send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.

Response

May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works—
May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the Lord.

Response

Hymn or Song before the Gospel

Gospel

Choose a text of unity. The following, probably the most used, or any text from the Gospel may be chosen:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John. (Jn 17:13-23)

“But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: **Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.**

A homily or other words may be said. Alternatively, congregants may be invited to light candles or write prayers or commitments.

A hymn or musical meditation might follow. Recommended music selections are:

*“How Good and Pleasant, Lord, It Is,” Charles Webb, DOVE OF PEACE, 8.6.8.6 (UMH 617), or
“Where Charity and Love Prevail” (Ubi caritas), transl. Omer Westendorf, 8.6.8.6 (World Library
Publications, Inc).*

musical
meditation

Renewal of Baptismal Promises³⁷

A lighting of tapers begins from a central candle at the font. Once all tapers are lit, the renewal of baptismal promises begins.

Leader: Do you believe in God the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth?

All: **We do.**

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell, on the third day he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father?

All: **We do.**

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?

All: **We do.**

Leader: This is our faith and we are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Participants come forward to a font of water in two files, and as they touch the water the following songs might be sung:

*“God, Who at the Font Once Named Us,” Henry Stuempfle, Jr. Tune: REGENT SQUARE, 8.7.8.7.8.7,
Henry Smart (World Library Publications), or:*

“Awake, O Sleeper,” Marty Haugen (GLA Publications).

renewal of
baptismal
promises

Universal Prayers

Participants may be invited to offer spontaneous prayers for comfort, for deeper trust in God and our growth as healers in Christ, for real change. A prolonged silence is appropriate between prayers both for ourselves and for others as needs are called to mind in appropriate detail.

At the end of each prayer:

Leader: We pray. *All:* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

universal
prayers

³⁷ This text comes from the Easter Vigil liturgy in the Catholic Roman Missal.

The Lord's Prayer

Sign of Peace

Optional Offering

For a particular ecumenical group or agency who serves on behalf of the churches.

concluding rites

Closing Prayer and Sending Forth

Ecumenical Prayer Service Template 4
For peace

shared prayers
and resources

Leaders of Prayer enter in procession.

Silence

One by one, eight members of the assembly take turns, each reading one of the following or similar texts followed by a pause, then giving the name of its author:

Reader 1: “Christians are peacemakers, not because they cannot fight, but because they prefer the force of peace. And so I invite you, let us place all that energy that God has given our people, like a torrent, not at the service of bloodshed or violence. We have nothing to fear when we put all the assertiveness that God has given us at the service of building true justice, of building the order of things that truly ought to be defended.”

—Oscar Romero, *Catholic Archbishop (El Salvador, from a sermon August 27, 1978)*

Reader 2: “If we are to have a new world with peace, order, and security, there is nothing today more needed than prayer. Through the centuries devout Christians have prayed, ‘Give peace in our time, O Lord. For it is thou, Lord, only, that makest us dwell in safety.’ Without prayer in this mood we shall not have the insight, courage, or world vision by which to fashion a world in which all³⁸ can be safe. However, the other side of the paradox is equally true. There is nothing today more needed than action. Unless we do the works that ought to be the fruit and accompaniment of prayer, we cannot hope that in response to even the most fervent prayers God will implant order in the world.”

—Georgia Harkness, *United Methodist theologian (Prayer and the Common Life, 1948)*

Reader 3: “Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing.”

—Desmond Tutu, *Anglican Archbishop (“Truth and Reconciliation,” September 1, 2004)*

Reader 4: “There must be amidst all the confusions of the hour a tried and undisturbed remnant of persons who will not become purveyors of coercion and violence, who are ready to stand alone, if it is necessary, for the way of peace and love...”

—Rufus Jones, *Quaker theologian (1940, in Modern American Religion, Volume 3, Martin Marty)*

Reader 5: “Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for humankind³⁹ to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Humankind must evolve for all human conflict a method which

³⁸ The original text includes “men,” yet intends all in the sense used today: all humans.

³⁹ The original text uses “mankind” twice, yet intends “humankind” in the sense used today: all humans.

**introduction and
call to prayer**

rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”
—*Martin Luther King Jr., Baptist minister and civil rights leader (Nobel Peace Prize address, Dec. 10, 1964)*

Reader 6: “What will peace look like? When there is peace, no one goes hungry. When there is peace, no one is abandoned to fend for themselves. When there is peace, we support each other’s thriving. When there is peace, differences are celebrated as gifts for the good of all. When there is peace, no external threats (though there may be some) prevent us from living the fullest lives we can. When there is peace, there is also every ground for joy.”
—*United Methodist Council of Bishops statement "In Defense of Creation," 1986*

Reader 7: “Human beings are meant for life and not death. They are meant for freedom and not slavery. They were created for each other and not against each other. We must, therefore, break down the barriers that separate people from one another. For... America and the world, and for all who have given their lives in the struggle for justice, let us direct our fight toward one goal—the beloved community of humankind.”
—*James Cone, African Methodist Episcopal theologian (Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream Or a Nightmare, 1991)*

Reader 8: “In publicly gathering to proclaim and celebrate God’s Gospel of peace, the Church uniquely contributes to earthly peace. Its most valuable mission for peace is to keep alive news of God’s resolve for peace, declaring that all are responsible to God for earthly peace and announcing forgiveness, healing, and hope in the name of Jesus Christ. In praying for peace in the world, in interceding for all who suffer from war and injustice and for those in authority, the Church acts for peace.”
—*ELCA Churchwide Assembly ("For Peace in God’s World," 1995)*

Leader: Let us pray together using the words of St. Francis of Assisi:

All:

**Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God,
grant us in our misery the grace to do for you alone
what we know you want us to do,
and always to desire what pleases you.
Thus, inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened,
and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,
may we be able to follow in the footprints
of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
And, by your grace alone,
may we make our way to you, Most High,
Who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,
and are glorified God all-powerful forever and ever.
Amen.⁴⁰**

⁴⁰ Saint Francis of Assisi, a prayer for enlightenment from a letter written to his order.

First Reading

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians. (Phil 4:4-9)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

The Word of the Lord.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm Response: Ps 67:2-3, 4, 8, 5

This psalm may be used, or any psalm with a familiar and appropriate musical setting chosen by the planners:

Response: **May God bless us in his mercy; may God bless us in his mercy.**

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.

Response

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.
May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Response

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.

Response

Hymn or Song before the Gospel

Gospel

Choose a text which speaks of peace. The following or any text from the Gospels may be chosen:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew. (Mt 8:23-27)

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and

woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: **Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.**

A homily or other words may be said.

Following the homily or reflection, a collection may be taken up for a local charity. During the offering, a musical meditation might follow.

A recommended musical selection might be:

“For the Healing of the Nations,” Fred Kaan. Tune: WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 8.7.8.7.8.7, Ernest Hawkins, Henry Purcell (Hope Publishing Company), or “Litany of Peace,” Barbara Bridge (Oregon Catholic Press).

musical meditation

universal prayers

Universal Prayers

Leader: We come before our God of peace and in prayer.

All respond: **May we seek your truth, O God.**

Reader: To bring about a peaceful co-existence between peoples of different ethnic groups, cultures, and religions, help us to maintain a dialogue of mutual respect and esteem. We pray:

All respond: **May we seek your truth, O God.**

Reader: Since a culture of dialogue is essential to authentic peace, help us to work toward understanding and mutual trust among peoples, guided by the presence of Jesus. We pray:

All respond: **May we seek your truth, O God.**

Reader: In working together to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, help us to work together for justice, in order to achieve a genuine and lasting peace. We pray:

All respond: **May we seek your truth, O God.**

Reader: In the desire to offer all people of our time a genuine hope of justice and peace, help us to refuse to justify violence and evil. We pray:

All respond: **May we seek your truth, O God.**

Reader: To achieve a world of solidarity and peace built on truth and justice, help us to take every opportunity to encourage leaders in government, religion, and business to establish just policies, to care for the poor, to defend the powerless. We pray:

All respond: **May we seek your truth, O God.**

Reader: The Spirit of Assisi calls every person to seek truth, justice, liberty, and love. Help every person to enjoy their inalienable rights, and every nation, peace. We pray:

All respond: **May we seek your truth, O God.**

Concluding Sequence

Leader: The desert will sing and rejoice.

All respond: **and the wilderness blossom with flowers.**

Leader: All will see the Lord's splendor,

All respond: **see the Lord's greatness and power.**

Leader: Tell everyone who is anxious:

All respond: **Be strong and don't be afraid.**

Leader: The blind will be able to see;

All respond: **the deaf will be able to hear;**

Leader: the lame will leap and dance;

All respond: **those who can't speak will shout.**

Leader: They will hammer their swords into ploughs

All respond: **and their spears into pruning-knives;**

Leader: the nations will live in peace;

All respond: **they will train for war no more.**

Leader: This is the promise of God;

All respond: **God's promise will be fulfilled.**

Leader: Let us bless the Lord;

All respond: **and give him thanks.**

Sign of Peace

All exchange a sign of peace.

Closing Song

A recommended musical selection might be:

"For the Healing of the Nations," Fred Kaan. Tune: WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 8.7.8.7.8.7, Henry Purcell (Hope Publishing Company), or

"As a Fire Is Meant for Burning," Ruth Duck. Tune: BEACH SPRING (GLA Publications).

Suggested prayer of confession and words of pardon

The confession below was crafted in a congregational setting for use during Lent. Congregants were invited to write a word or phrase indicating what they felt they needed to confess or that for which they need to ask for forgiveness. They were also invited to share words or phrases about their experiences of God in the forgiveness of sins. The Confession and Words of Pardon below were woven together from their suggestions.

Confession

Leader:

God of mercy, we come to you as we are and offer what we have.
We confess our tendency to exclude others, to make an “us” and “them”
of your children.
We make quick judgments and focus on faults,
and we behave badly when people differ from us.
We get distracted easily, drawn into the chatter of endless media coverage
and urgent digital demands.
We forget to focus on you, the source and center of our being.
We crave your forgiveness for our sins and yet are stingy in forgiving others.
Turn our hearts, our ears, our hands, and our feet to you.
Draw us into your way of love.

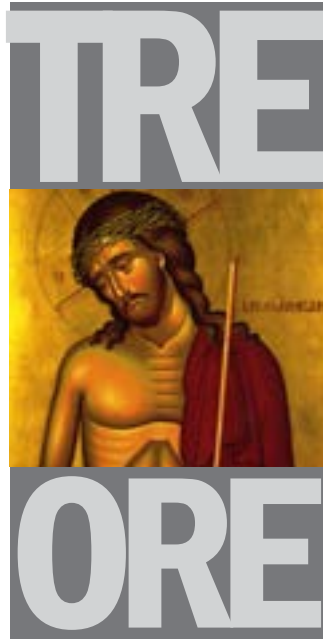
Words of Pardon

Leader:

Hear the good news: Jesus laid down his life in love for strangers and sinners
he called friends.
In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven!

All respond: **May our sins be forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.**

Example Liturgy 1: **The Tre ore**



EXAMPLES OF
LITURGIES THAT
MAY BE SHARED
FROM EACH FOR
THE OTHER'S
RECEPTION

**A service of
word and song
remembering the
seven last words
of Jesus
on the Cross**

Good Friday, 12-3pm

The Tre ore is an ecumenical opportunity for multiple communities, ministers, musicians, and choirs to reflect on the passion and death of Jesus on Good Friday. Seven candles are lit on the altar or a table, either a candelabra or seven separate candles.

Music is an essential component of the Tre ore service. Hymns, choral pieces, ostinatos and canons, responsive psalmody, and instrumental and vocal solos are all possibilities. It is perhaps better not to program all of the seven Words exactly the same way, yet a certain similarity in format creates an attractive rhythm that sustains the coherence of the service over the three hours. It is good to choose texts which correspond in some way to the Word to which they are assigned. Finding a balance between musical quality, musical variety, and appropriateness of text will create an appealing service that invites prayer. Each Word may begin with congregational singing: a hymn, responsive psalm, or an ostinato in the Taizé tradition. Following the reading of the Word and before the homily, music for meditation may take place: a choral piece or a vocal, organ or instrumental solo. Each Word may close with congregational song.

Suggestions for musical selections may be found at the end of the Tre ore on pages 59-62.

TRE



ORE

1

12:00 – 12:25 p.m.

“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

(Lk 23:33-38)

Presider is at chair.

Congregational Song or Responsive Psalm

Please see music suggestions for a hymn, Psalm or Taizé-style piece on pages 59-62.

Presider goes to ambo, lectern, or pulpit.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” They divided his garments by casting lots. The people stood by and watched; the rulers, meanwhile, sneered at him and said, “He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Messiah of God.” Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.” Above him there was an inscription that read, “This is the King of the Jews.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

No response; presider returns to chair.

Music for meditation

Please see music suggestions for a choral or instrumental piece on pages 59-62.

Homily, *approximately 10 minutes.* *Presider gives homily and leads prayer.*

Prayer

Let us pray.

O Lord, whose Son in his forgiving love prayed for those who nailed him to the cross, and taught us to forgive one another as you have forgiven us: Remove from our hearts all bitterness and resentment toward others. Give us the spirit of gracious love that so, in perfect charity, we may come to your Kingdom. We ask this in Jesus’ name.

All: **Amen.**

Hymn

Please see music suggestions for a congregational hymn on pages 59-62.

Presider, after hymn, extinguishes one of the outermost candles.

Silent prayer, as needed, until 12:25.

2

12:25 – 12:50 p.m.

“Amen, I say to you, this day you shall be with me in paradise.”

(Lk 23:39-43)

Presider is at chair.

Congregational Song or Responsive Psalm

Please see music suggestions for a hymn, Psalm or Taizé-style piece on pages 59-62.

Presider goes to ambo, lectern, or pulpit.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.” The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we have received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, this day you will be with me in paradise.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

No response; presider returns to chair.

Music for meditation

Please see music suggestions for a choral or instrumental piece on pages 59-62.

Homily, *approximately 10 minutes. Presider gives homily and leads prayer.*

Prayer

Let us pray.

Father, whose Son welcomed the penitent sinner while hanging on the Cross, by that same passion pardon the guilty, heal the wounded, recover the fallen, and restore the wandering. By your mercy may we return with penitence to the embrace of your love.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Hymn

Please see music suggestions for a congregational hymn on pages 59-62.

Presider, after hymn, extinguishes one of the outermost candles.

Silent prayer, as needed, until 12:50.



TRE



ORE

3

12:50 – 1:15 p.m.

“Woman, behold thy son; behold thy mother.”

(Jn 19:23-27)

Presider is at chair.

Congregational Song or Responsive Psalm

Please see music suggestions for a hymn, Psalm or Taizé-style piece on pages 59-62.

Presider goes to ambo, lectern, or pulpit.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four shares, a share for each soldier. They also took his tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top down. So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it will be,” in order that the passage of scripture might be fulfilled [that says]: “They divided my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots.”

That is what the soldiers did. Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

The Gospel of the Lord.

No response; presider returns to chair.

Music for meditation

Please see music suggestions for a choral or instrumental piece on pages 59-62.

Homily, *approximately 10 minutes.* *Presider gives homily and leads prayer.*

Prayer

Let us pray.

Father, whose Son by his passion has brought to birth a new family of the children of God: Grant us grace, as members of that family, to identify each other in you and to love all people for your sake. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Hymn

Please see music suggestions for a congregational hymn on pages 59-62.

Presider, after hymn, extinguishes one of the outermost candles.

Silent prayer, as needed, until 1:15.

4

1:15 – 1:40 p.m.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

(Mt 27:45-49)

Presider is at chair.

Congregational Song or Responsive Psalm

Please see music suggestions for a hymn, Psalm or Taizé-style piece on pages 59-62.

Presider goes to ambo, lectern, or pulpit.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three o'clock in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Some of the bystanders who heard it said, “This one is calling for Elijah.” Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, “Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

No response; presider returns to chair.

Music for meditation

Please see music suggestions for a choral or instrumental piece on pages 59-62.

Homily, *approximately 10 minutes. Presider gives homily and leads prayer.*

Prayer

Let us pray.

Father, whose only begotten Son endured the abandonment and darkness of the cross that we might enjoy eternal life with you: Grant that amid the pain of life we may know that we are never forsaken, you are always with us. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Hymn

Please see music suggestions for a congregational hymn on pages 59-62.

Presider, after hymn, extinguishes one of the outermost candles.

Silent prayer, as needed, until 1:40.



TRE



ORE

5

1:40 – 2:05 p.m.

“I thirst.”

(Jn 19:28-29)

Presider is at chair.

Congregational Song or Responsive Psalm

Please see music suggestions for a hymn, Psalm or Taizé-style piece on pages 59-62.

Presider goes to ambo, lectern, or pulpit.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst.” There was a vessel filled with common wine. So they put a sponge soaked in wine on a sprig of hyssop and put it up to his mouth.

The Gospel of the Lord.

No response; presider returns to chair.

Music for meditation

Please see music suggestions for a choral or instrumental piece on pages 59-62.

Homily, *approximately 10 minutes. Presider gives homily and leads prayer.*

Prayer

Let us pray.

Father, whose Son endured the thirst of both spiritual desire as well as physical anguish:

Satisfy the longing of our hearts and sanctify our sufferings by his own.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Hymn

Please see music suggestions for a congregational hymn on pages 59-62.

Presider, after hymn, extinguishes one of the outermost candles.

Silent prayer, as needed, until 2:05.

6

2:05 – 2:30 p.m.

“It is finished.”

(Jn 19:30-34)

Presider is at chair.

Congregational Song or Responsive Psalm

Please see music suggestions for a hymn, Psalm or Taizé-style piece on pages 59-62.

Presider goes to ambo, lectern, or pulpit.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, “It is finished.” And bowing his head, he handed over the spirit.

Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

The Gospel of the Lord.

No response; presider returns to chair.

Music for meditation

Please see music suggestions for a choral or instrumental piece on pages 59-62.

Homily, *approximately 10 minutes. Presider gives homily and leads prayer.*

Prayer

Let us pray.

Father, grant to us and all your servants the grace to persevere to the end, in the power of your Son who laid down his life in obedience to fulfill your work.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Hymn

Please see music suggestions for a congregational hymn on pages 59-62.

Presider, after hymn, extinguishes one of the outermost candles.

Silent prayer, as needed, until 2:30.



TRE



ORE

7

2:30 – 2:55 p.m.

“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

(Lk 23:44-49)

Presider is at chair.

Congregational Song or Responsive Psalm

Please see music suggestions for a hymn, Psalm or Taizé-style piece on pages 59-62.

Presider goes to ambo, lectern, or pulpit.

Gospel

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

It was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because of an eclipse of the sun. Then the veil in the temple was torn down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”; and when he had said this he breathed his last. The centurion who witnessed what had happened glorified God and said, “This was an innocent man beyond doubt.” When all the people who had gathered for the spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their breasts; but all his acquaintances stood at a distance, including the women who had followed him from Galilee and saw these events.

The Gospel of the Lord.

No response; presider returns to chair.

Music for meditation

Please see music suggestions for a choral or instrumental piece on pages 59-62.

Homily, *approximately 10 minutes. Presider gives homily and leads prayer.*

Prayer

Let us pray.

Father, look with mercy on us, your family, for whom our Lord was betrayed and into whose hands he was given to suffer death on the cross. We ask this through Christ our Lord, who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

All: Amen.

Hymn

Please see music suggestions for a congregational hymn on pages 59-62.

Presider, after hymn, extinguishes one of the outermost candles.

Silent prayer, as needed, until 2:55.

Musical Resources for the *Tre ore*

Hymns for the congregation

Hymns and songs are a fundamental genre of Christian participatory worship and should make up a good proportion of the congregational singing of the *Tre ore* service. Several of these texts appear in almost any hymnal. For others, a suggested hymnal is given. The tunes supplied are suggestions; a more familiar tune with the same meter may be used. Because the text concerns the Seven Last Words, Frederick William Faber's "O Come and Mourn" (public domain, Long Meter) would be an especially appropriate congregational hymn or choir anthem:

O come and mourn with me awhile;
O come now to the Saviour's side;
O come, together let us mourn:
Jesus, our Love, is crucified.

Have we no tears to shed for him,
while soldiers scoff and foes deride?
Ah! Look how patiently he hangs:
Jesus, our Love, is crucified.

Seven times he spake, seven words of love;
and all three hours his silence cried
for mercy on the souls of all;
Jesus, our Love, is crucified.

O love of God! O sin-filled world!
In this dread act your strength is tried;
and victory remains with love:
Jesus, our Love, is crucified.

Texts shared in the repertoire of Catholics and United Methodists:

- "Jesus, Remember Me," Jacques Berthier and the Community of Taizé
- "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded," Paul Gerhardt, trans. James Alexander
- "Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle"/"Sing, My Tongue, the Song of Triumph,"
Venantius Fortunatus (6th c.), various English translations
- "Were You There?," African American spiritual
- "What Wondrous Love Is This?," USA folk hymn
- "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," Isaac Watts



Texts from the United Methodist Hymnal (1989):

- “Ah, Holy Jesus,” Johann Heerman, trans. Robert Bridges. Tune: HERZLIEBSTER JESU, 11 11 11.5
- “Beneath the Cross of Jesus,” Elizabeth C. Clephane. Tune: ST. CHRISTOPHER, 76.86.86.86
- “Depth of Mercy,” Charles Wesley. Tune: CANTERBURY, 77.77
- “He Never Said a Mumbalin’ Word,” African American spiritual. Tune: SUFFERER, Irr.
- “In the Cross of Christ I Glory,” John Bowring. Tune: RATHBUN, 87.87
- “O Love Divine, What Hast Thou Done,” Charles Wesley. Tune: SELENA, 88.88.88
- “’Tis Finished! The Messiah Dies,” Charles Wesley. Tune: OLIVES BROW, LM
- “To Mock Your Reign, O Dearest Lord,” Fred Pratt Green. Tune: KINGSFOLD, CMD

Texts from Catholic hymnals:

- “My Song Is Love Unknown,” Samuel Crossman. Tune: LOVE UNKNOWN, 66.66.44.44 (*Ritualsong*)
- “O Sacred Head Surrounded,” ascr. Bernard of Clairvaux, tr. Henry Baker. Tune: PASSION CHORALE, 76.76D (*Gather, 3rd ed., Ritualsong*)
- “Tree of Life,” Marty Haugen. Tune: THOMAS, 8.7.8.77 (*Gather, 3rd ed.; Ritualsong*)
- “Tree of Life and Glory,” Venantius Fortunatus, refrain Francis Patrick O’Brien. (various collections)

Other considerations:

- “Cross of Jesus, Cross of Sorrow,” William Sparrow-Simpson. Tune: CROSS OF JESUS, 87.87, John Stainer. (*Hymnal 1982*, 160)
- “O Sorrow Deep,” Friedrich Spee, et al., trans. Charles Winfred Douglas. Tune: O TRAU-ERIGKEIT, 447.76 (*Hymnal 1982*, 173)
- “Praise to the Holiest in the Height,” John Henry Newmann. Tune: GERONTIUS, CM, John Dykes (*Hymnal 1982*, 445); alternate tune: RICHMOND
- “The Royal Banners Forward Go,” Venantius Fortunatus, trans. Neale. Tune VEXILLA REGIS, LM (*Hymnal 1982*, 162); alternate tune: GONFALON ROYAL
- “There Is a Green Hill Far Away,” C.F. Alexander. Tune HORSLEY, CM, W. Horsley (*Hymnal 1982*, 167)

Responsive Psalmody (cantor and congregation)

Several Churches who follow the Revised Common Lectionary have developed a rich tradition of singing responsorial psalmody during the service of the Word, at the Eucharist and other celebrations. The psalms suggested below are taken from those assigned for Lent and Holy Week. Denominational publishers have collections of psalm settings which are very useful and could be used in place of those suggested below.

Psalm 22

Suggested response: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

- “My God, My God,” C. Alexander Peloquin in *Psalms for Holy Week* (GIA Publications)
- “My God/Dios mío,” Tony Alonso in *Cantemos al Señor-Let Us Sing to the Lord, Bilingual Psalms for Holy Week* (GIA).

Psalm 31

Suggested response: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

- In *Lectionary Psalms: Grail/Gelineau* (GIA)
- “Father, into Your Hands/Padre, a Tus Manos,” Michael Mahler, in *Cantemos al Señor-Let Us Sing to the Lord, Bilingual Psalms for Holy Week* (GIA).

Psalm 51

Suggested response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.

- “Be Merciful, O Lord,” Marty Haugen, in *Psalms for the Church Year, vol. 1*, Marty Haugen (GIA)
- In *The Five Graces Psalter: Lectionary Psalms*, Luke Mayernick (MorningstarMusic)

Psalm 91

Suggested response: Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.

- “Be with Me Lord,” Michael Joncas (Oregon Catholic Press)
- “Be with Me,” Marty Haugen, *Psalms for the Church Year, vol. 1* (GIA)

Psalm 130

Suggested response: With the Lord there is mercy and fulness of redemption

- In *Lectionary Psalms*, Michel Guimont (GIA)
- “With the Lord There is Mercy,” Tim Smith (Oregon Catholic Press)

Ostinatos, Canons and Responses in the Taizé tradition (congregation)

These pieces with repetitive elements allow a more contemplative or meditative experience than stanzaic hymns, providing some variety throughout the service.

“Adoramus te Christe” (*Songs of and Prayers of Taizé*)

“All You Who Pass this Way” (*Taizé: Songs for Prayer*)

“In manus tuas, Pater/Into Your Hands” (*Christe lux mundi: Music from Taizé*)

“Jesus Remember Me” (*Taizé: Songs for Prayer*)

“Lajuda em vindrà/I Lift Up My Eyes” (*Christe lux mundi: Music from Taizé*)

“Peace I Leave with You” (*Christe lux mundi: Music from Taizé*)

“Stay with Me/Bleibet hier” (*Songs of and Prayers of Taizé*)

“When the Night Becomes Dark” (*Songs of and Prayers of Taizé*)

Choral Pieces

One or two musical settings of a text are given. Other settings should be sought out and considered. Published editions are listed for those settings not in the public domain. Public domain works may be available from several publishers. Several of these pieces are settings of hymn texts listed above to original music. Seeking out settings of other hymns is a good way of finding quality choral settings.

- “Adoramus te, Christe,” Quirino Gasparini
- “Adoramus te, Christe,” from *Three Communion Anthems* – Gerald Near (Aureole Editions)
- “Ah, Holy Jesus,” John Ferguson (Augsburg Fortress Press)
- “Ave verum corpus,” Flor Peeters (Edition Schwann/National Music Publishers)
- “God So Loved the World,” John Stainer
- “God So Loved the World,” John Goss
- “Christus factus est,” Giovanni Anerio
- “Drop, Drop, Slow Tears,” Orlando Gibbons
- “Kyrie Eleison,” Dana Mengel (Abingdon Press)
- “Lamb of God,” F. Melius Christiansen (Augsburg Fortress)
- “O Come and Mourn,” Hal Hopson (Hope Publishing)
- “O Dearest Lord, Thy Sacred Head,” David Johnson (Augsburg Fortress)
- “O vos omnes,” Tomas Luis Victoria
- “O the Lamb,” arr. John Bell (GIA Publications)
- “Saw Ye My Savior,” Leo Nestor (E.C. Schirmer)
- “There Is a Green Hill Far Away,” Evelyn R. Larter (Augsburg Fortress)
- “Tristis est anima mea,” Giovanni Battista Martini
- “We Adore You, O Christ,” Richard Proulx (Paraclete Press Sacred Music)
- “Were You There,” Bob Chilcotte (Oxford University Press)
- “What Wondrous Love Is This,” Mark Hayes (Alfred)
- “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” Amy Engelsdorfer (Augsburg Fortress)

Instrumental pieces and vocal solos.

The inclusion of a few instrumental or solo vocal works can contribute to variety and pacing in the service. Pieces for organ, piano, or other instruments based on a hymn tune used in the service, perhaps as a reprise, are very appropriate. Pieces from the art music tradition, if they are in a style consonant with the religious sense desired, can also work well. Vocal solos from the classical tradition, both modern, such as Samuel Barber’s “The Crucifixion,” and older, such as arias from the cantatas of J.S. Bach, make a wonderful addition if the singer(s) and accompanist are capable.

We Make the Journey of the Cross with Jesus

AN ECUMENICAL STATIONS OF THE CROSS



Example Liturgy 2: An Ecumenical Stations of the Cross

Introductory Prayers

Reader: Let us briefly enter with Jesus on the journey he makes through Jerusalem, from the Fortress of Pilate near the Temple, to outside the walls, to the hill of Calvary and a tomb nearby. There is a sense of dread we feel today, as a mighty storm seems to approach. The world, it seems, holds its breath to see what is about to happen.

Presider: Let us pray. As these events unfold before us today, loving Father, help us to be witnesses of your love. Help us not to be merely bystanders, onlookers, simply watching and waiting. By the power of our Baptism, in which your Holy Spirit first stirred in our hearts, now stir up our hearts once again to recognize the immense love with which you have made us, and the profound love with which you have redeemed us in Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who walks this Way of the Cross in our place. Help us to see the mystery of his love from his perspective, from within his Body, whose members we truly are.

Help us to bear with him the insult of false conviction, the weight of his cross, the ridicule of the crowds, the pain of his suffering, his loneliness and abandonment, the agony of death. Help us also to recognize the love and commitment of Mary, our mother, the compassion of the women, the comfort of Veronica, the assistance of Simon, the faith of the criminal hanging nearby, the loyalty of his beloved John, beneath the cross, and his joy of fulfilling your will that all might be truly saved.

Help us to find the meaning of our life's journey in his journey. Make our hearts overflow with gratitude that this journey of Jesus brings with it the possibility of a new heaven and a new earth, and help us to offer ourselves, with Jesus on the Cross, to make his mission our own.

We unite our hearts today with the offering of Jesus, your Son, so that living the faith of the Way of the Cross, we might also live with the hope of life eternal in his resurrection on the last day.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

A suitable refrain may be sung or musical selection such as "Were You There?" (African American Spiritual, found here with additional stanzas written for these Stations of the Cross).

Were you there as they sentenced him to death?

Were you there as they sentenced him to death?

Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there as they sentenced him to death?

THE FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to die.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: On the Jewish feast of the Passover, it was the custom for the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate, to give freedom to one prisoner chosen by the people. Pilate wants to release Jesus because he could not find him guilty of any crime. But Pilate gives in to the demands of the crowd: he frees a murderer named Barabbas instead, and hands Jesus over to be scourged and crucified.

Presider: Imagine we are praying in the garden with Jesus. The disciples are sleeping. Then the soldiers come and take Jesus away to the courtroom and we listen as Jesus is condemned to death. Even though Jesus knows he doesn't deserve it, he remains silent and prays for the people who want him to die.

***ALL:* Dear Jesus, it isn't right! You did nothing wrong. You are the Son of God and you became a man to bring your Father's justice and mercy into the world, because without you we could not hope for heaven. You came to teach us to love you, and to love one another as you love us. Help me always to love you more. Help me to learn how not to judge others. Teach me to be understanding and forgiving with the people in my life. Show me how to see with your eyes, Jesus.**

Were you there as he took the Cross for us?

Were you there as he took the Cross for us?

Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there as he took the Cross for us?

THE SECOND STATION:

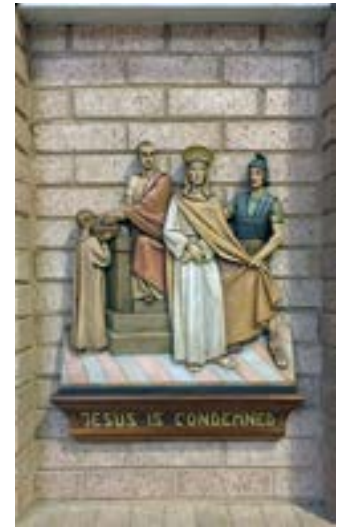
Jesus takes up his Cross.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: After severely whipping and beating Jesus, soldiers dress him in a royal purple robe, and place a crown of sharp thorns on his head. Then they humiliate him, shouting "Hail, King of the Jews!" He is given an impossibly heavy wooden cross to carry to Calvary, the place where he will be crucified.

Presider: We imagine that we see Jesus pick up his heavy Cross. If we tried to lift it, it would be too heavy. "Can Jesus carry this heavy Cross by himself all the way to Calvary?" we wonder. Jesus patiently, lovingly lifts the Cross to his shoulder, knowing that this is what his Father wants him to do: to save us from the punishment of our sins, and to carry the Cross for us.



ALL: Dear Jesus, I am afraid when my problems seem too heavy for me. Give me the grace I need to do the hard things I must do, and the wisdom to turn to you when I need help. I know you are always here to help me, especially in difficult times. Teach me to be kind, because now I can see how much you suffer when I hurt other people or disrespect them.

*Were you there as he fell beneath the Cross?
Were you there as he fell beneath the Cross?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there as he fell beneath the Cross?*



THE THIRD STATION:
Jesus falls the first time.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader: Jesus is already weak from being cruelly whipped. He falls under the weight of the Cross. But his determination to do his Father's will is stronger than his physical suffering, and he struggles back to his feet and goes forward.

Presider: We imagine that we are in the crowd following right behind Jesus when he trips and falls. It is frightening to see someone so kind and gentle having to suffer all alone. Jesus stands up again and looks back at us with his gentle smile. "We can make it," his eyes seem to say. I believe we can.

ALL: Dear Jesus, it is because we fall into sin and selfishness that you now fall beneath the weight of our Cross for us. Teach us to be strong like you. When we are tempted, keep our consciences true and help us to remember that you are there to keep us from falling. Lift me up, Jesus, so you and I can continue to walk together always.

*Were you there as he beheld his mother's face?
Were you there as he beheld his mother's face?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there as he beheld his mother's face?*

THE FOURTH STATION:

Jesus meets his Mother, Mary.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: Jesus sees Mary, his mother, in the crowd at the side of the road. Their meeting is short, only a pause, and Mary is crying silently. The disciples tried to keep Mary at home today, to avoid the anger and false judgment of the crowd. Mary insists on being there, to see for herself how much her Son loves his people, the Son who was given to her by the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Presider: We imagine how much pain both Jesus and Mary must feel. Mary, his mother, suffers because she sees her Son in so much pain and humiliation. Jesus suffers even more because he loves his mother very much and knows how much this hurts her to watch. Jesus stops with the Cross for a moment and they look into each other's eyes. They are both peaceful, because they both know how important Jesus' suffering is for the salvation of the world.

ALL: **Dear Jesus, you have given us your mother Mary to be our mother, too, to comfort us and be with us. As I follow you today and always, I know the way will be hard. Help me to turn to her and ask her for her special help. Also, help me never to hurt my own mother and father, because they love and care for me, and suffer with me as Mary did for you on the way to Calvary.**

*Were you there when they searched for one to help?
Were you there when they searched for one to help?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to searched for, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they searched for one to help?*

THE FIFTH STATION:

Simon helps Jesus carry the Cross.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: The soldiers do not want Jesus to die before he gets to Calvary, but he is very weak from the scourging he has received from them. They grab an onlooker from the crowd, Simon of Cyrene, to help Jesus carry the heavy Cross.

Presider: We see Jesus getting more and more weary. We know that Jesus taught us that we must take up our own cross and follow in his footsteps, but what can we do now? Are the soldiers looking around for somebody to help Jesus? What if they choose me? Would I be strong enough to help Jesus in this way? But the soldiers choose Simon, a man passing by, to carry the load for us.



ALL: Dear Jesus, I wish now that the soldiers had chosen me to help you. You are so good and gentle, and if everyone had taken just a little bit of the weight of the Cross, your burden would have been lighter. Help me to know the ways in which I can help you, even if it is just a small part of your work today. Help me to be generous in my neighborhood and my church, and to grow up knowing that you call us to help you save souls.

*Were you there as that brave girl cared for him?
Were you there as that brave girl cared for him?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there as that brave girl cared for him?*



THE SIXTH STATION:
Veronica wipes the face of Jesus.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader: As Jesus struggles along the way of the Cross, he continues to bleed from the crown of thorns and the wounds he has received. He is covered with sweat, and blood is getting in his eyes. A woman in the crowd, Veronica, is overcome with compassion. She runs to Jesus and, taking her veil, she wipes his face.

Presider: We imagine Jesus so worn out and tired. Could anyone be brave enough to step in front of the cruel soldiers and comfort Jesus? Veronica is. Does she even know Jesus, or does she always take the risk to care for those who are unjustly treated, even strangers? She has a lot of courage to help Jesus now when everyone else has turned their backs on him.

ALL: Dear Jesus, I want to do what is right and good, but sometimes I am afraid of what others might say. Help me to be brave like Veronica, to act without fear in saying and doing the right thing. Help me to stand firm in my faith and my desire to love you more each day, even when others have turned their backs on you.

*Were you there when he fell a second time?
Were you there when he fell a second time?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when he fell a second time?*

THE SEVENTH STATION:
Jesus falls the second time.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: Jesus legs are wearing out with each new step. He falls again. The weight of the Cross forces him to the ground, but he gets up again, a second time, and keeps going.

Presider: We imagine how the angry crowd suddenly becomes silent when Jesus falls a second time. “Is he dead?” you hear someone ask. We want to kneel down next to Jesus and hold him, and whisper, “Jesus, I’m sorry.” We realize that he is falling for us, and add, “Jesus, don’t give up.” And, giving him your hand, you help him back to his feet.

ALL: **Dear Jesus, it is my sin that continues to be so heavy that you fall again. Yet, I sin again and again. You are determined to keep going and, in my confessing, you give me your forgiveness again and again. You give me your hand, and I have the strength to get up and start over. Thank you for never giving up on me. Help me to never sin against you again, and grant that I may love you always.**

Were you there as the women wept for him?

Were you there as the women wept for him?

Ab, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there as the women wept for him?



THE EIGHTH STATION:
Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

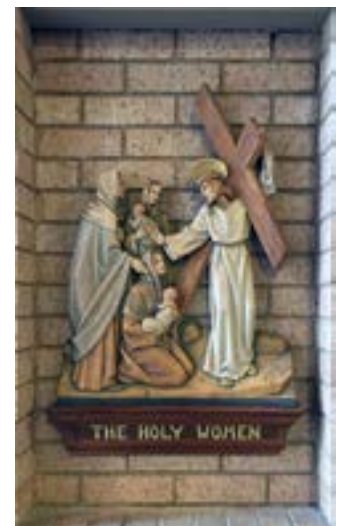
All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: Jesus then sees a group of women weeping, and crying out how badly he was treated. They are terrified by the brutal violence of this scene. He says to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.”

Presider: When we recall Jesus’ passion, we know that he cannot suffer again.

Our tears, then, should be for our own sins. We imagine how wonderful is this Son of God, that in the middle of his own terrible pain, he stops to teach us that he is doing all this for us so that we might turn away from our selfishness toward him, toward the new life of grace he offers.

ALL: **Dear Jesus, even as you suffer, you teach us to seek your truth and not miss the point of what is happening here. Help me to be more concerned with others instead**



of always worrying about myself. Gather together our community in the active worship of God and the life of the sacraments. Don't let us pass up the opportunity of the new life you offer us.

*Were you there when he could no longer walk?
Were you there when he could no longer walk?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when he could no longer walk?*



THE NINTH STATION:
Jesus falls a third time.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: Jesus, having gone about as far as he can, falls again under the Cross. Clearly, he is near dying. But, again, he slowly gets up and continues the way of the Cross.

Presider: We imagine that we are with Jesus as he falls again. He could have called to his Father for help, but he accepted the plan his Father had for him. That is because he understands the purpose of his suffering. We say to Jesus, "Get up, Jesus. I can't travel this way of the Cross without you." And, again, he continues with us.

ALL: **Dear Jesus, your failing strength makes me see how helpless I am. Help me to rely on your strength, to see how much I need you. Give me the faith I need to remember that you always walk with me, that you will never leave me. In moments of suffering or hardship, help me always to see the value in making it an offering to you, as you have done for me.**

*Were you there as they stripped him of his cloak?
Were you there as they stripped him of his cloak?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there as they stripped him of his cloak?*

THE TENTH STATION:
Jesus is stripped of his clothes.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: Jesus finally comes to the place where he will be crucified. The soldiers tear away his clothing from his wounded body and Jesus, humiliated, stands now before the crowd with no possessions at all. The soldiers take his clothes and divide them up among themselves.

Presider: We imagine Jesus standing alone without anything or anyone to comfort him. “How I wish I could give him my coat,” we think. “He has given me so much; what can I give him?” Even though he has nothing to make him look like a king, no one can rob him of his dignity as God’s own Son and ruler of all souls.

ALL: Lord Jesus, seeing you so cruelly treated makes me think about how sometimes my own possessions are way too important to me. I am too concerned with my own accomplishments. I have to have my way too often. Teach me to share the things I have with people in need. Teach me to seek the things in this life that are really important and pleasing to you, and beneficial to me and others. Help me to let go of those things in my life that distract me and prevent me from growing closer to you and to others.

*Were you there as they nailed him to the tree?
Were you there as they nailed him to the tree?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there as they nailed him to the tree?*

THE ELEVENTH STATION: Jesus is nailed to the Cross.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.
All, genuflecting: Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.

Reader: The soldiers lay Jesus down on the Cross and drive heavy nails through his hands and his feet so that he can no longer move. They move the Cross to a hole in the ground and set it upright, and Jesus hangs on the Cross that he has carried, crucified between two thieves. Even now, Jesus forgives the soldiers and the people who were making fun of him and shouting at him, and he prays to his Father, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Presider: As we stand nearby, all we can hear is the sound of the hammers as the nails are driven into Jesus. This is suffering we can’t even imagine, and Jesus is going through it for us. The crowd grows quiet; Jesus doesn’t even cry out. There is nothing we can do now to save him from this new pain.

ALL: Dear Jesus, the pain you felt on the Cross was for me. Now, when I hear people laugh at you or use your name in anger, give me the strength to stand up for you and tell them of your great love for them. When I feel angry or hurt because of something wrong done to me, teach me not to hold a grudge. Help me to see your example and pray for the strength to forgive that person.

*Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?
Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they pierced him in the side?*





THE TWELFTH STATION:
Jesus dies on the Cross.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: After several hours of agony, Jesus cries out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” He gives his mother, Mary, to his beloved disciple, John, who is also there, standing at the foot of the Cross. Finally, he breathes his last breath and darkness comes over the earth. The great curtain made of iron in the Holy of Holies in the temple is torn in two, top to bottom; we are no longer separated from the temple of Jesus’ body, which he will rebuild in three days.

Presider: We imagine that now we are alone. The angry crowds have gone, and we are there with Mary and John, mourning the cruel death of Jesus, our brother and our friend. There is a terrible silence as Jesus, the Word of God, has spoken his last words. But the silence is not empty: It now speaks louder than all other words in the world. He spent his life teaching us how to live. He gave us faith, hope, and love. He gave us his mother, and his Holy Spirit. In his gift of the blood and water that flowed from his side on the cross, his church is born and we are reconciled with God. How deep is this love our God is showing for us! How much deeper my love must be in return!

ALL: **Look upon me, good and gentle Jesus, while I kneel here. Make my soul strong in faith, hope, and love. Make me really sorry for my sins that I may never sin again. As I think upon your five wounds with deep sorrow and compassion, I recall, good Jesus, the words of your prophet, David: “They have pierced my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones.”**

I love you, Jesus. I am sorry for ever offending you. Grant that I may love you always.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

*Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Ab, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?*

THE THIRTEENTH STATION:

Jesus is taken down from the Cross.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: The crowds have all gone home. Joseph of Arimathea, a follower and friend of Jesus, goes to Pilate and asks for Jesus' body. With tenderness he goes to Calvary and carefully takes the lifeless, damaged body of Jesus down from the Cross, and prepares it for burial.

Presider: We imagine Mary holding the lifeless body of her Son. This was her baby not so long ago in Bethlehem. This was her boy who helped St. Joseph and learned the trade of a carpenter. This was the young man who taught a new way of life, a new truth. Who worked wonderful miracles, healing the sick and restoring goodness where he found suffering and evil. Simply, she says to us: "Behold, the Son of God." She smiles at us through her tears, and asks us to follow her as she adores the body of Christ sacrificed for our salvation on the altar of the Cross.

ALL: **Dear Jesus, fill the sadness of our hearts with faith and hope in the life that is yet to come. Keep your everlasting love always before us, and guide us on the road that leads to you in your heavenly Kingdom. Help us to place our lives in your gentle hands.**

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Ah, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?



THE FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the tomb.

Presider: We adore You, O Christ, and we praise you.

All, genuflecting: **Because, by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world.**

Reader: Jesus' body is placed in a tomb which has been carved out of rock. A large stone is rolled across the entrance, and everyone hurries home, for the sun is setting and Sabbath has begun.

Presider: We now follow the funeral procession with the few people who have remained to the end. But we know that his death is not the end, because he told us that on the third day he would rise from the dead. The tomb is dark, but we know that this darkness is only a doorway to the holy light of the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



ALL: Dear Jesus, by your three days in the tomb you have made holy the graves of all those who have died in the hope of rising again. You were laid to rest in the darkness of the tomb that we might rise to eternal life, your light and peace. Help us never to fear death. Help us always to remember your promise of life even in the darkest times. You have died for us. Lord Jesus, Son of the Living God, have mercy on us. Teach us to recognize your presence with us always, especially in the Eucharist when the memorial of this great Mystery of the Cross is made present to us.

*Were you there when they rolled the stone away?
Were you there when they rolled the stone away?
Ab, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they rolled the stone away?*

ALL pray the Apostles Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Presider:

Let us pray.⁴¹

Lord, + send down your abundant blessing upon your people
who have devoutly recalled the death of your Son
in the sure hope of the resurrection.
Grant them pardon; bring them comfort.
May their faith grow stronger
and their salvation be assured.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Presider: Let us go in peace.

⁴¹ It is customary for Catholic deacons or priests to make + a sign of the Cross over the people as a form of blessing. The gesture of the laying on of hands may also be used, or a gesture may be omitted entirely.

Introduction

Talking to each other across our Catholic and United Methodist traditions may seem like the simplest thing in the world to do and easy to begin at any time. But if we are honest, we might have to admit that most attempts at personal dialogue take place in the privacy of our minds, in which we imagine the other person we wish to address and play out conversation in our imaginations. Actually talking together and trying to share in prayer or daily discipleship is another matter entirely.

Historically, United Methodists might have thought of Catholic practices as superstitious, and Catholics might have thought of United Methodists as schismatics who had broken away from the truth. Catholics were discouraged to marry anyone outside of the Catholic church. For whatever reason, marriages between Catholics and United Methodists were held suspect through the 1950s, and some families still bear the scars of that generational pain.

Families

Many families embrace multiple religious traditions. They make different choices about what to emphasize, observe, and practice. Experiences in such families are rich. Learning to talk about them can be helpful within the families themselves as well as in congregational groupings. Dialogue within families is especially important during milestone experiences such as birth, confirmation, marriage, and death. But because such occasions are emotionally charged, it is best if the groundwork for conversation has been laid during “quieter” times in the family’s life cycle.

Families with children may be introduced to religious difference through their children’s stories from school, sports, and other activities. Children are quite curious and usually share their religious practices with relative freedom unless explicitly directed not to do so. These conversations are often an occasion for children to ask parents and others about their own religious texts, practices, and identities.

Keep in mind that tensions within families related to interchurch identities can result in one or both parents deciding not to practice. Expectations of parents (and grandparents) can complicate the search for faith, especially for grandchildren and especially around milestone experiences.

Congregations

Most congregations have participants who have experienced a variety of religious practices. Even if most assembled on a given day were born and raised in that tradition, they have gone to school with, married, and/or been friends with people of other traditions. At times, large numbers of people have changed religious traditions or the tradition itself has gone through a period of great change.

With these circumstances in mind, opportunities to share experiences of difference are helpful, such as :

- moments of inspiration or enrichment from people or ideas of other traditions
- moments of connection or relationship with people or ideas of other traditions
- moments of prejudice or conflict with people or ideas of other traditions
- moments of action or cooperation with people or ideas of other traditions
- moments of recognizing difference with other religious people or ideas, yet feeling admiration for them.

Ministers

In seminary, ministers are frequently educated and trained with others who share their religious tradition. Even so, differences are common and may be highlighted in seminary, when people are contemplating giving their life to a vocation within their religious tradition. Tensions are often even greater when people are studying with those from differing religious traditions. In these situations, dialogue is necessary, though it may be difficult.

In a particular geographical setting, there may be few colleagues of the same religious tradition. One's community changes—especially in light of territorial parish configurations, which link the geography of a neighborhood, town, or city to the life of a congregation. In these particular contexts, ecumenical ministerial associations can be collegial groups oriented to religious practice that builds up the community. Such groups develop patterns of conversation and sometimes shared actions. However, they often may avoid certain topics that are uncomfortable or controversial.

Common challenges to dialogue and helpful strategies to address them

Each of the following challenges represents either a statement that one might either say or hear from others, blocking authentic dialogue, or a situation one might experience. For each, a simple strategy is proposed in response.

Challenge: “I am not a good representative of my religious tradition.”

Strategy: Remember that everyone is an expert in their own experience, and no one knows everything about their own religious tradition.

Challenge: “I disagree with official teachings of my religious tradition.”

Strategy: Speak from your own experience of your tradition, and point to other voices or perspectives that inform you as you are able. Be prepared to answer questions about how you and your tradition view authority.

Challenge: You might find yourself saying or hearing: “I do not know my tradition well enough with regard to history, geography, or diversity of practice.”

Strategy: Know what you know (and what you do not know) about your own tradition. Say “I don't know” when you don't.

Challenge: “I learned (or already know) everything I need to know. I don’t need to hear from others; I’m just trying to live my own life.”

Strategy: Remember that all of religious life is practice. It’s hard to get it “right” one time, but the good news is there is always a new time to practice. Focus on right relationship with the person(s) you are with.

Challenge: You might start to feel adrift when you’re responsible for what to say about your tradition while in the company of those from other traditions.

Strategy: Be accountable to people you trust in your own religious tradition. Share your encounters with others and ask what you might say, do, or think.

Challenge: You might be wondering how to begin a dialogue.

Strategy: Listen with curiosity, empathy, and encouragement. Practice sharing your story as a religious person. What is most important or meaningful to you? With what do you struggle?

Challenge: You might be struggling with memories of past bad experiences.

Strategy: Maintain honesty about bad experiences while also working to open a space for a new experience in the present.

Special helps to understanding and sharing different practices of sacramental life

This section is intended as a reference for Catholics and United Methodists to consult when considering their varied understandings and practices of sacramental life. In particular, ministers from each tradition may draw on this information to assist families and congregations in finding a fuller understanding of the issues that sacramental differences can raise, and in seeking to find strategies to address any resulting difficulties.⁴²

B.1 Catholic Sacramental Life

There are seven sacraments in the Catholic Church. Catholics believe that God acts for human salvation in these rites, as long as they are properly celebrated and the participants are willing and open to God's grace. These seven are grouped into three categories:

Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist

Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick

Sacraments in the Service of Communion: Matrimony, Holy Orders

*Baptism*⁴³

Baptism, at any time during one's life, is to be celebrated and honored as our entrance into God's life, shared with us. It is through Baptism that we are offered salvation through the redemptive suffering of Jesus in his death and resurrection, our sins are forgiven, and we are redeemed. He is our Passover and we pass through the waters of Baptism (as Israel was led through the sea) to live life in this desert with our eyes intent on beholding the promised land, the heavenly kingdom. We become sons and daughters of God, adopted through Baptism, and dwelling places of the Holy Spirit.

As expressed in one of our international ecumenical dialogues, "Catholics and United Methodists give full recognition to each other's celebration of the sacrament of Baptism. Our common Baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is our sacramental bond of unity, the visible foundation of the deep communion which already exists between us and which impels us to ever deeper unity with each other."⁴⁴

In addition to recognizing one another's Baptism, Catholic baptismal practice allows for a United Methodist sponsor as a Christian witness, acting together with a Catholic godparent. Shared celebrations of Baptism still have their challenges because Baptism is celebrated in the context of a particular congregation, its faith tradition, and its expected practices for members (Catholics, for example, are expected to attend weekly Mass on Sunday).

⁴² This appendix is not intended as an in-depth treatment of sacramental theology and how sacraments are administered, but as a pastorally oriented, introductory guide. The varying terminology and length of subsections B.1 and B.2 hint at the distinctive ways of understanding and interpreting the place of the sacraments among the Catholic and United Methodist traditions. Fuller articulation of similarities and differences may be found in other sources such as this document's companion, *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*.

⁴³ For more information on recognition of one another's Baptism, see *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§3-26.

⁴⁴ *Encountering Christ the Saviour: Church and Sacraments* (Durban, 2011), §28b.

Therefore, Catholic and United Methodist individuals, families, and congregations should take care to understand the implications of celebrating Baptism in a Catholic parish or other Catholic setting.

Eucharist

As affirmed in *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*:

In United Methodist and Catholic teaching, the Eucharist serves as an ongoing renewal of Baptism as well as its fulfillment and a foretaste of its completion when we will be completely one with Jesus Christ and one another. United Methodists and Catholics have different emphases and theological explanations of Jesus Christ's presence among us in the Eucharist, but we both believe that Christ is truly and mysteriously present in the eucharistic gifts and in the gathered congregation.⁴⁵

For Catholics, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the life of faith. In addition to being the real presence of the Body and Blood of Christ, it represents in outward form the visible unity of the Body of Christ, by which it is formed. The Eucharist remains the focus of utmost reverence and devotion for Catholics.

Often the Catholic lack of an “open table”—that is, not inviting all Christians to share the Eucharist during Communion at Catholic liturgies—is misunderstood as an exclusionary act. This is not the intention. For Catholics, Holy Communion is a visible aspect of a complete unity of faith, and the unity of Catholics and United Methodists is still only partial. Nor do Catholics believe that Communion is complete without all the baptized participating. Rather, our lack of unity in practice is a source of great sadness, and Catholics are compelled to pray for the unity that we know to be the will of Jesus.

Matrimony: Catholic Considerations of Marriage as Sacrament

For Catholics, Matrimony is one of seven sacraments. Unlike Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist) in which the member is conformed to Christ himself, and the Sacraments of Healing (Reconciliation or Penance, and Anointing of the Sick) in which a person is spiritually or physically restored to health and ability to come to the table, Matrimony (along with the seventh sacrament, Holy Orders) is considered a Sacrament in Service of Communion. The purpose of the priesthood is to make the Eucharist present for the life of the Church; the purpose of marriage serves communion by literally building the church with members, the beloved of God. Matrimony is the only sacrament to predate the event of Jesus in history, yet his presence at the wedding in Cana provides its ratification (John 2:1-12). As such, it is the only sacrament in the Catholic Church in which the minister of the sacrament is not the presiding priest or deacon, but the bride and groom who, by virtue of their baptismal roles as priest, prophet, and king, call upon God's seal for their marriage bond.

Sacraments, for Catholics, are outward signs instituted by Christ to give grace. A sacrament always involves a type of consecration, or “setting aside for a sacred duty,” where some

⁴⁵ *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §18. See 18-21 for additional reflection on this topic.

aspect of our humanity is blessed and made holy. It might be our sorrow for sin (Reconciliation), it might be our very person (Baptism), it might be our consent (vows) at a wedding. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, the bride and groom become the living embodiment of Christ and his relationship with his bride, the church, and all present witness the outpouring of self-emptying love of two people as they become spouses, a mystical union where two become one, a new community of life and love.

Canonically, the Sacrament of Matrimony requires three intentions in order for the marriage to be valid. Both the bride and groom must have the intention of mutual and lasting fidelity, the intention of permanence (until death), and the intention to have children, insofar as this is possible.

The “Canonical Form” of the Catholic Church requires that, in order to be a valid marriage, the vows must be exchanged (consent given mutually) according to the Catholic Rite, and witnessed by a “duly authorized sacred minister,” customarily a priest or deacon. In certain circumstances permissions may be granted which are exceptional to this rule, but these permissions must always be requested and received from the local bishop.

Ministers from other Christian denominations may co-officiate with Catholic priests or deacons. Priests and deacons may co-officiate with ministers from other Christian denominations.

Permission must be granted by a bishop for a Catholic to marry a non-Catholic, as well as to be married in a church of another Christian denomination.

Anointing

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is conducted along with the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance or Confession) whenever possible, to celebrate the full rite. Because of the deep-seated cultural memory of deathbed confessions, and its association with sacramental anointing, for centuries the Anointing of the Sick was referred to as “Extreme Unction” and considered a sacrament for the dying. On the contrary, the sacrament may be received by any person with illness every six months or when a person’s condition worsens. Catholics today will sometimes still wait until the moment of death (or even after death, when sacraments may no longer be celebrated) to call a priest for the anointing. This is a common misunderstanding; the actual sacrament for those who are dying is the Eucharist, in this special circumstance called *Viatikum*, or “food for the journey.”

Anointing of the Sick is a rite with several parts, including the Sacrament of Reconciliation, prayers and blessings, and a physical anointing on the forehead and palms of the hands. The words used are both words of restoration and preparation: “Through this holy anointing may the Lord, in his love and mercy, help you with the Grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin, save you and raise you up.”

The Oil of the Sick, which is used for sacramental anointing, is blessed by the bishop at the annual Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday morning, along with the Sacred Chrism (for use in

Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders) and the Oil of Catechumens (for use in the preparatory rites during the holy Season of Lent with those who are preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil Mass).⁴⁶

Further Notes on Sacraments, Sacramentals, and Works of Mercy

The language of the United Methodist and Catholic traditions with regard to sacraments can be somewhat confusing. As already stated, Catholics define seven sacraments and believe these to be instituted directly by Christ. Both Catholics and United Methodists share the conviction that God’s creation is filled with God’s grace, and in that sense, we can speak of all reality as “sacramental.” Thus there are other sources of grace not limited to the seven sacraments. Among these are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy (see below for further elaboration), pious practices and prayers in various seasons, fasting and abstaining from meat, and almsgiving.

Distinguished from sacraments, *sacramentals* are, generally speaking, things that a priest or deacon has blessed by liturgical action, and which serve Catholics as aids to holiness and proper disposition in life. Sacramentals include prayer books, sacred images, rosaries, medals, and other things which Catholics might wear or use to remind them of God’s presence and our need to be attentive to him. Such things are blessed—set aside for a sacred purpose. Objects used in liturgy—such as sacred vessels, holy water, blessed palms on Palm Sunday, and blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday—are also sacramentals.⁴⁷

*Works of Mercy*⁴⁸

The Works of Mercy offer other “means of grace”⁴⁹ in which United Methodists and Catholics can participate fully with one another. These include praying and fasting together, caring for the poor and those in need, caring for creation, and especially engaging together in the Corporal Works of Mercy:

- ☞ To feed the hungry
- ☞ To give water to the thirsty
- ☞ To clothe the naked
- ☞ To shelter the homeless
- ☞ To visit the sick
- ☞ To visit the imprisoned, or ransom the captive
- ☞ To bury the dead.

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts of compassion by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs. These can also be understood as duties that United

⁴⁶ There are other anointings in the Catholic Tradition, but they are not sacraments in the sense of the seven Catholic Sacraments. Olive oil is often used in healing services or other blessings, but these oils are not of the three listed here.

⁴⁷ Sacramentals must be disposed of reverently. The Catholic Church teaches that these things must be burned or buried, never simply discarded.

⁴⁸ For more discussion of our shared practices of mercy, see “Together We Act,” *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§106-131.

⁴⁹ See Appendix B.2 below for John Wesley’s understanding of “means of grace.”

Methodists and Catholics share:

- ☞ To instruct the ignorant
- ☞ To counsel the doubtful
- ☞ To admonish the sinner
- ☞ To comfort the afflicted
- ☞ To forgive offenses willingly
- ☞ To bear wrongs patiently
- ☞ To pray for the living and the dead.

B.2 United Methodist Sacramental Life

United Methodists, like many Protestants, celebrate two sacraments: *Baptism*, through which a person accepts and makes public the grace offered to all in Jesus; and the *Lord's Supper*, by which the faithful receive and become the Body of Christ for the world.

Baptism

A person of any age may be baptized in a United Methodist church, and the Baptism of any Christian church is recognized as prerequisite for membership in a United Methodist congregation. Baptism is intended to be celebrated publicly, as a response to the proclamation of the Word and in a profession of faith that receives the gifts God has given. The liturgy includes promises from the congregation that welcome the baptized into the Body of Christ as well as to membership in a particular congregation. Even as the baptized enter covenant with God through the sacrament, the entire congregation reaffirms its covenant with God, “faithfully to participate in the ministries of the church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service.”⁵⁰

United Methodists see Baptism in any Christian church as entry into Christ’s whole church. This means that “United Methodists recognize all Christian Baptisms and look upon Baptism as something that should unite, rather than divide, Christians.”⁵¹ It also means that Catholic family members and friends may accompany the baptized in the rite and throughout the development of Christian faith.

The Lord's Supper

United Methodists gather for worship frequently. Each worship service includes scripture, prayer, and song. The Lord’s Supper is celebrated regularly, most often once a month in United Methodist congregations. “All who intend to lead a Christian life, together with their children, are invited to receive the bread and cup. We have no tradition of refusing any who present themselves desiring to receive.”⁵² The elements of bread and chalice are symbols of unity in Christ. The actions of giving thanks and distributing both elements emulate Jesus’ actions as well as those of the early church. “Serving one another acts out our faith that Christ is the giver of this holy meal and that we are receivers of Christ’s grace.”⁵³

⁵⁰ UMBW, 94.

⁵¹ Ibid., 81.

⁵² Ibid., 29.

⁵³ Ibid., 30.

The United Methodist invitation to participate in the Eucharist is broad: “Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another.”⁵⁴ Because of this, United Methodists often use language of an “open table” to convey the message that all are welcome to the feast of the Lord, if they indeed repent and strive to live peacefully.⁵⁵ However, among many members there is only a small awareness that the proclamation of openness may not feel open or inclusive to persons whose faith commitments keep them from communing with United Methodists. Catholics are one of those groups who might feel the tension on this point.

Marriage

In the United Methodist Church, Christian marriage is a “sacred covenant reflecting the Baptismal Covenant,” yet it is not considered a sacrament.⁵⁶ The service includes reading of scripture, prayer, and blessing in the name of the triune God. Vows are declared publicly and rings are often exchanged as “outward and visible sign[s] of inward, invisible grace.”⁵⁷

Anointing

Anointing of persons is permissible in the context of healing and other holy moments of prayer. It is understood as a means of grace though it is not considered a sacrament as such.

Means of grace

“Means of grace” is important Wesleyan language. John Wesley believed that grace is active and evident in everyday life. Grace is conveyed through holy conversation or conference, creation, and the unfolding of events. Wesley employed the phrase “means of grace” to describe experience of the holy in daily activities. It is a sacramental orientation to human life.

*Works of Piety and Mercy*⁵⁸

A Christian’s commitment to the triune God is enacted through works of piety and mercy, through which one might receive grace and become a means of grace to others. Contemporary United Methodists have thought of piety and mercy as having both personal and collective dimensions of faithfulness: piety comes alive in personal acts of devotion as well as collective acts of worship, and mercy is made manifest in personal acts of compassion as well as collective commitments to justice.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁵ However, United Methodists emphasize the close connection between participation in the Lord’s Supper and membership in a local congregation. See “Common Baptism and the Eucharist,” *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §20, for more discussion of this topic.

⁵⁶ UMBW, 115.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 121.

⁵⁸ For more discussion of our shared practices of mercy, see “Together We Act,” *Catholics and United Methodists Together: We Believe, We Pray, We Act*, §§106-131.

Brief summaries of official dialogue statements of Catholics and United Methodists in the United States

United Methodists and Catholics have been meeting together for national dialogue since 1966 and have released seven statements that examine shared beliefs and divergent practices. Below is a short summary of each statement for reference and further study.

These documents are currently housed at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/library> (Internet search: usccb [and key words from document titles]).

Heaven and Earth are Full of Your Glory (2012)

Issued three years prior to the important encyclical by Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home* (2015), this statement begins with the eucharistic affirmation of creation as God's good gift and "offer[s] a joint prophetic witness on a significant challenge facing both our communions regarding the relation of humanity to the rest of the natural world" (§3). Rooted in eucharistic practice, the statement calls for "a theological recovery of the doctrine of creation," which involves "awareness of the sacramentality of the world" (§8 and 9). Four central elements of eucharistic worship are explored for their evocation of this awareness: "the gathering of the people of God, the proclamation and reception of the word, our communion with the Lord, and the sending in the Spirit" (§14).

Through Divine Love: The Church in Each Place and All Places (2005)

This statement begins with the reality that our churches exist side by side in neighborhoods and communities across the globe, working together in many areas of mission and service, yet rarely worshipping together. The document affirms that each church exists in communion with Christ while lamenting the "lack [of] the fullness of visible unity willed by the Lord" (§5). Persons wishing to understand the organization and meaning of "church" according to United Methodists and Catholics will find a helpful guide in Part IV, "Dynamics of Ecclesial Community."

Methodist-Catholic Dialogues: 30 Years of Mission and Witness (2001)

Under the heading, "What We Have Learned Together," this summary document of national and international documents introduces three areas of commonality and shared ethos leading to mission: Common Confession of the Apostolic Faith; Common Sacramental Life (one Baptism and much-shared theology of Holy Communion); Common Governance of the Church (emphasizing the importance of teaching as well as oversight by bishops); and Ethic of Disciplined Love. The document affirms that both churches are "unalterably committed" to ecumenism and, ultimately, to full communion.

Holy Living and Holy Dying (1989)

The shared principle of "loving stewardship of life" is examined in three sections: Theological and Ethical Principles, Pastoral Care for Holy Living and Holy Dying, and Social Dimension. Emphasizing life as a gift that makes humanity in the image of God, the statement calls congregations, pastors, and lay people alike to witness to human dignity, even in the midst of

a culture largely in denial of death. Specific issues such as euthanasia, suicide, organ donation, and others are briefly treated, as well as affirming for all the right to death with dignity.

Eucharistic Celebration: Converging Theology–Divergent Practice (1981)

Though the Eucharist is often experienced as the place of deepest difference, this 1981 statement showed considerable sharing of beliefs about God’s work in the Eucharist, making present the Body of Christ. United Methodists and Catholics also both affirm the unity and equal importance of the Word and Eucharist. Many of the differences, the statements’ authors suggest, are manifest because while United Methodists often consider the Eucharist a sacrament that the church *does*, Catholics view Eucharist as the sacrament the church *is*. Both are clear that the church’s offering proclaims and sets forth the redemptive mystery of Christ’s giving and does not repeat the sacrifice. “Yet it is clear for both churches that the Holy Spirit in the gathered community makes real what Christ has gained for us” (p. 8). The dialogue participants made evident their desire that full communion among Catholics and United Methodists would occur.

Holiness and Spirituality of the Ordained Ministry (1976)

Catholics and Methodists together affirm that “[t]he Lord of the church calls his people to be holy in the totality of their lives” (§V). All people are called to holiness, which is understood both as gift of God and human task. “Ordination is a sacramental act by which the church recognizes and authenticates the Spirit’s call of certain persons” to lead and fulfill many of the church’s acts that communicate and form holiness (§VII). In both communions the function of the ordained is largely similar: to proclaim the good news; to lead in worship, prayer, and sacraments; to exhort the faithful to loving and holy living; and to tend education, formation, and witness for social justice. Differences remain in whether or not women are to be ordained to priestly functions and whether or not persons performing priestly functions ought to be married.

Shared Convictions about Education (1970)

Partly in conversation with the multiple Supreme Court decisions about education in the 1960s, Catholics and Methodists issued a short statement of shared values about education that affirm the public purpose of education, which is always aimed toward the common good, even when offered privately through churches.

Joint Bible Study: Yearning to be One (2001)⁵⁹

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the dialogues, a joint Bible study was also released for use in local congregations, with an equal number of participants from both communions. *Yearning to be One: Spiritual Dialogue Between Catholics and United Methodists* includes the following sections:

⁵⁹ *Yearning to Be One: Spiritual Dialogue between Catholics and United Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2000). Not available online. This summary is placed here, rather than chronologically among the other summaries, since the text is a different genre.

- 1) Discovering Our Need for One Another
- 2) Exploring the Spirituality of Dialogue
- 3) Beginning Our Faith
- 4) Worshiping in Our Faith Communion
- 5) Living Our Faith
- 6) Becoming Engaged in the Mission of the Church.

Each session includes scripture, conversation starters, opportunities to go deeper or further, reflection activities/questions, and preparation for the next session. Many who have participated in shared study continue to nurture friendships first made there. Others have put deepened faith into action in their local communities, participating in mission projects and/or social justice advocacy.