**WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2022**

**Order of Worship**

**L =** Leader, **R =** Reader, **C =** Congregation

**Opening**

The clergy and other participants enter in procession while a hymn is sung or played.

**Call to Worship**

**L** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** **Amen.**

**L** Brothers and sisters, we are united today with fellow believers in the four corners of the world as we gather to pray for the visible unity of the Church. We do this with worship resources prepared by the Middle East Council of Churches. Our texts are inspired by the visit of the Magi to the new-born King, as described in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: “*We observed his star in the East, and have come to pay him homage.*” Let us fix our eyes on the star that was seen in the East and allow it to lead us too.

Let us come into God’s presence with thanksgiving and joy, bringing all the sick, the suffering, the marginalized, the refugees, and the uprooted before him, knowing that God can dispel our darkness with his light. As we pray today for the unity of the Church, may we and our communities also be lights that guide others to Jesus the Saviour.

**L** Glory be to you Father Almighty, for you have revealed yourself through your creation and invited all people to stand in your presence. We have seen the star of Jesus in our lives and have come to worship him just as the Magi did. We offer him ourselves today and we ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

**C**  **Unite us with one another as we come from the North and from the South, from the East and from the West, old and young, men and women to bow down before you and offer you homage, our heavenly king. Amen.**

**Prayer of Praise and Confession**

**L** We glorify you, O Lord, creator of heaven and earth, for you have set the lights in the vault of the sky. You separated light from darkness and arranged signs to mark sacred times, and days and years. You studded the firmament with stars. How majestic are your works, the heavens declare your glory and the skies proclaim the work of your hands!

**C**  **We glorify you, O Lord**.

**L** We praise you for you did not abandon us despite our rebellion but sent your Son to brighten our darkness and be our light and our salvation. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humanity. And the light shines in the darkness.

**C**  **We praise you, O Lord.**

**L** We worship you, O Lord, for you accompany us in the chaos of our life through the power of your Holy Spirit. You light up our paths and give us wisdom and faith in a world of untruth and doubt.

**C We worship you, O Lord.**

**L** We thank you, O Lord, for you send us into the world to reflect this light around us, in our various churches and diverse cultures and to witness to Jesus, the one true King, offering ourselves to him.

**C We thank you, O Lord.**

**L** May all the peoples bow before you and worship you. We have often preferred darkness, but you have given us light. Therefore, we come to you confessing our sins and saying:

**C We confess before you that we have turned away from your ways and disobeyed your ordinances. We have disfigured your good creation and squandered its resources through our consumerist practices. We have polluted your rivers and seas and poisoned your air and soil and contributed to the extinction of many species.** *(Silence)*

**C We have acted selfishly towards our brothers and sisters. We have allowed our own needs and desires to prevail over our commitment to justice. We have built walls between us and planted the seeds of distrust towards the other.** *(Silence)*

**C We have separated people based on ethnicity, religion and gender and we have claimed Jesus on our side in any war we waged. Forgive all these thoughts and deeds, O Lord, as we come before you in repentance.** *(Silence)*

**L** Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have sent in the fullness of time to redeem all the people, we ask you to have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and transform us into his glorious image so we can shine as a beacon of hope in our troubled world. *(Silence)*

**L** Almighty God hears our prayers, has mercy on us and forgives our sins.

**C Thanks be to God, whom we praise with all our voices.**

**Chant**: Trisagion2 - Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!

**Psalm 8**

**R**O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

**C Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.**

**R** When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

**C what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?**

**R** Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour.

**C You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;** **you have put all things under their feet,**

**R** all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

**C O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

**Chant:** *Tui Amoris Ignem*

**First Reading**: Isaiah 9:2-7

**Chant**: Song of Light (Saint Ephrem)

**Second Reading**: Ephesians 5:8-14

**Gospel Acclamation**

**Gospel Reading**: Matthew 2:1-12

**Homily**

*(Moment of silence or hymn)*

**Nicene Creed** *(according to the tradition of the Eastern Churches)*

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father,

who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Sharing Christ’s Light**

*A piece of dark blue cloth is hung to evoke the night sky, on which a large star is placed. Paper stars are made available for the worshippers, who are invited to come forward and add their stars to the cloth.*

**L** A star led the Magi to Christ. Today this star points to the presence of Christ, who has been revealed to us and whose light shines on us. As the Magi followed the star to Bethlehem, we gather under this star today, adding our own stars to the sky, uniting our own gifts and prayers for the visible unity of Church. As we journey towards that goal, may our lives together give a luminous witness that leads others to know Christ.

**Prayers of Intercession**

**L** With faith and confidence, we come in prayer, before God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

**R** The Magi came from the East to pay homage and offer special gifts from their cultures and countries.

We pray today for all Christian communities around the world in all of their diversity of worship and tradition:

Lord we ask you to preserve these treasures, particularly in areas of the world where the presence and survival of Christians is threatened by violence and oppression.

**C** **O, Lord hear our prayer** (*spoken or sung*)

**R** The early years of the Lord’s life were marked by violence and massacres at the orders of the despot Herod.

We pray for children living in places in the world where violence continues and where its results are tangible:

Strengthen, O Lord, the bonds of unity and mutual love among our churches and help us to cooperate and witness to your holy Name. Inspire us to work without ceasing in order to defend the oppressed and include the marginalized. Encourage us to stand together in the face of tyranny and oppressive regimes as we seek your Kingdom among us.

**C O, Lord, hear our prayer**

**R** After the visit of the Magi, the holy family experienced migration through the wilderness and became refugees in the land of Egypt.

We pray for all the refugees and uprooted people in this world:

Equip us, Lord, to show hospitality to those driven from their homes, and grant us the spirit of welcome to those looking for a safe haven.

**C O, Lord, hear our prayer**

**R** The birth of Jesus was good news for all, gathering people from different nations and religions in worship of the holy child.

We pray for our efforts to seek harmony and dialogue with other religions: Lord, give us humility and patience to walk with others with respect on their journey.

**C O, Lord, hear our prayer**

**R** The Magi returned to their home by a different way.

We pray for our churches in this changing world:

Lord, help us to find new and creative ways to follow you and to witness to you so that the world may believe.

**C O, Lord, hear our prayer**

**R** When the Magi saw the holy child, they rejoiced with great joy.

Heavenly Father, fix our eyes on him so we do not lose our way. Unite us in the Lord Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, and who has taught us to pray, saying:

**C Our Father in heaven…**

**Hymn**

**Sending and Blessing**

**L** Go now and live as children of light.

**C For the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.**

**L** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.

**C Let us wake from sleep and Christ will shine upon us.**

**L** Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

**C Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**Parting Hymn**