

**The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
2025**

**Praying for Togetherness
To a God of Togetherness**

*A WCC resource for Households, Schools and
Church Services where all-ages are present.*



The Nicene Creed

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,
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 all, and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried.
On the third day he rose from the dead in accordance with the scriptures.
He ascended to 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 worshipped
and glorified,
who has spoken through the Prophets.

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

Icon of the Hospitality of Abraham



Introduction

What is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity?

Each year the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is observed at least two times. It is a period when Christians worldwide are invited to pray together for the unity of all who follow Jesus Christ, as Lord and Saviour. The first time is from 18 – 25 January in the part of the world that we refer to as the northern hemisphere. The second time is around the feast of Pentecost, that time of the Church's annual calendar when we celebrate the birthday of the Church.

The dates in January were first proposed in 1908 by Paul Wattson to cover the days between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul. Both of these early leaders of the Church, Peter and Paul had disagreements about actual matters of the faith, especially related to some traditions that were carried over from the early Jewish converts to Christianity. Even though they had some disagreements, eventually they reconciled, and once again became friends and coworkers in Christ.

The Faith and Order movement suggested the second dates for the southern hemisphere in 1926. It was agreed that Pentecost was an appropriate time to pray, with hope, for the unity of Christians as we celebrate the Church's birthday.

Using this text (for pastors, parents, and Sunday School teachers)

Each year, a resource is prepared by a group of local Christians and shared worldwide after it is edited by an international committee jointly appointed by the World Council of Churches and the Dicastery for the Promotion of Christian Unity of the Vatican. The theme, chosen by the local group, is different each time. In 2025, the theme for the Week of Prayer is **“Do you believe this?”** (*John 11:26*), and was prepared by the monastic community of Bose in northern Italy. This theme was chosen in light of the 1700th anniversary of the first Christian Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea, near Constantinople in 325 AD. The main result of the first Council is a statement of faith that states what Christians believe. Today it is referred to as the Nicene Creed.

In light of this special commemoration in 2025, this resource entitled **“Praying for Togetherness to a God of Togetherness”** is being provided as a World Council of Churches resource for households, schools, and church services where all ages are present. Centred around the Nicene Creed, we hope that this resource will provide a unique opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the common faith of Christians, which was put into words in the Creed at the Council of Nicaea.

This text is meant to be flexible and adaptable and we invite you to use this material throughout the year not only during the dates mentioned above. As it is being used, we urge you to consider the local liturgical and devotional practices and the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically. We encourage the use of pre-existent ecumenical structures; should such be non-existent, we hope that this resource will stimulate the creation of such.

Using the material

This resource is meant to be engaging and interactive. To that end, it employs some very practical activities:

- Storytelling with questions that are centred around various elements of the Creed.
- The construction of an ‘*altar of prayer symbols*.’ This can be done if there is an ecumenical worship service for people of all ages. However, it can also be completed over the course of the week of prayer as part of the daily gathering of children within the home or at school. Ultimately, the context will determine usage as the resource is adapted.
- The colouring of icons. For those whose spiritual contexts and faith traditions do not include icons, the question may be asked, what is an icon? The word comes from the Greek language (*eikona*) and means image. We are living icons because we are all made in the image and according to the likeness of God. Some Christians use icons in their traditions to represent Jesus, the Virgin Mary, saints, and other biblical stories. Through their usage they helped early Christians, especially those who could not read, to understand many aspects of the Christian faith better. However, in today’s world, even if one can read and understand the bible, an image can be more helpful than words in aiding one’s understanding of the Christian faith. In addition to the icons to be coloured, others have been included, in particular, to show what icons look like. Each person can use their creativity in colouring the icon ensuring that their imagination is connected with their Christian faith.

As we offer this resource for the first time, we hope that parents, pastors, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, and all involved in Christian education and worship will find it helpful and inspiring.

It is being offered with the hope that people of all ages and in all places will continue to pray together for Christians everywhere to be together, united in our common faith which we all believe and which binds us together as one in Christ.

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Understanding the Importance of Praying Together

In 2025 the week of prayer for Christian unity takes place in a year that commemorates the formulation of the Nicene Creed in 325 AD/CE

In other words, our prayers for unity and our shared liturgical expression of unity come together. We pray together out of the faith in God we share. We are praying that what holds us together may move us forward together in our shared mission and ministry in God's world. Our shared prayers and faith unite us.

In John chapter 17 Jesus prayed: *'...that those who believe in me.... may be one... just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you.'*(verses 20 and 21)

A creed is a shared belief expressed in words which believers can agree to and they speak out together as part of a service of worship. The two most common Christian creeds are the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

There is evidence of early credal statements in the New Testament most notably 'Jesus Christ is Lord' (1 Corinthians 12: 3) and there are also fragments about the nature of God that can be gathered from early hymns quoted in the epistles, such as Philippians 2: 6 - 11 and 1 Timothy 3: 16. Clearly what the first Christians spoke or sang together helped them to unite and pray together.

These credal statements and Creeds we're also important for baptism courses and the service of baptism itself. They summed up what Christians believe.

Christians can pray together because they have a shared understanding of who God is and one version of this is found in the Nicene Creed.

Jesus says that if two or three agree together on earth about anything they ask for, it shall be done for them in heaven (Matthew 18: 19). This agreement at its deepest level is not just about the things asked for but about the nature of the One to whom we are praying.

Our prayers in the week of prayer for Christian unity should be rooted in an agreed understanding of the God to whom we pray, and this is expressed most helpfully in the Nicene Creed which we commemorate in parallel with this week of prayer.

So, what is God like.... the God to whom we pray together? As the basis for our praying this year, we suggest that the following reflective presentation of the Nicene Creed be shared with the congregation or the fellowship that has chosen to pray together.

Icon of the Annunciation



A Brief History to the Nicene Creed *(for those leading the reflection)*

In 325 AD/CE the Emperor Constantine called together a Council of Bishops to draw up a statement of faith with particular reference to the nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This was partly in response to various alternative 'theologies' at the time which sought to divide the Trinity in different ways. The Creed they produced was to become a touchstone of what Christians believed and was probably based on an older baptismal credal statement. 318 Bishops came together to formulate this statement of faith, meeting at a place called Nicaea in northern Turkey. This Creed is sometimes also called the Creed of Constantinople. It was completed on the 19th June that year and during the Council they also considered other matters, particularly what books should be included in the final canon of Scripture for what we now call the New Testament.

In our own day, when the church is now global and with many denominations and local expressions of Christianity, it is important to reflect on what is it that holds us together. So, what is the basis for our shared prayers? Can we in our day unite around a shared creed such as the Nicene Creed and if we can, what does that say about the other things over which we differ?

For the following reflective presentation, you will need equivalents for the following items:

- a white circle of felt
- a pillar candle
- wooden prayer hands
- an icon of Christ praying in Gethsemane
- an icon of The Trinity
- a model bishop's mite and/or a wooden figure representing a bishop
- a copy of a page from the NT codex, a scroll and small praying hands
- a globe and small stars
- a wooden Christ figure; baby in the manger; cross: an open tomb
- a flame; dove; oil; three concentric wooden hearts
- a friendship bowl with small pillar candle

N.B. These items are just a guide. Please use your imagination and search out any similar props that you can easily find.

Ideally those sharing in this reflection should be gathered in a circle around the visuals used. The words on the left are read by the facilitator of the session while she/he moves the objects, as recorded on the right. Do not rush this presentation but build in silences and space for wondering, which participants are invited to articulate at the end, in response to the suggested questions.

Icon of the Resurrection



Text for the Reflective Story

This is in two columns with the words on the left and the accompanying visuals and movements on the right. There are photos of the visuals and what the reflective story looks like after the story.

Prayer is a precious gift given to us by God.

Lay out a large white circle of felt

We can pray in many ways: with words or in silence; on our own or with others. And we can pray about everything that matters to us or to others, confident that it also matters to God.

Place an image of praying hands at the centre.

Once the friends of Jesus were listening while he was praying. They heard him asking that all his followers would love one another and be as one. This would be the best way to show the world God's love. Jesus prayed that they would be united just like he and Father God were united.

Position an icon of Jesus praying in Gethsemane on the edge of the white circle, close to you as the storyteller.

This is a prayer God wants all of us to pray.

I wonder if you have ever prayed a prayer like this?

I wonder why it is important?

I wonder what helps us to pray like this?

Below the candle to the storyteller's right, place a friendship bowl of people holding hands

Perhaps, if we stop to think what God is like, that will help us to pray better.

People have different ideas about God but Christians believe that God is a togetherness - a special type of oneness, which is why God wants us to be one with each other too.

Change the icon of Jesus praying to an icon of the Trinity.

I wonder what you think God is like?

I wonder how you imagine God when you pray?

I wonder how it can help us to pray if we come to understand what God is like?

Remove the icon of the Trinity, the praying hands and the friendship bowl, but keep them close by to be used again later.

Icon of Jesus' Birth



Long ago Christian bishops came together at a place called Nicaea in Turkey to write down what they believed God was like and how God is a special sort of togetherness.

Place a Bishop's mitre and figure of a Bishop on the cloth between the centre and the storyteller.

They looked at the Scriptures that showed them what God is like; they listened to the wisdom of Christian leaders, past and present and who had come close to God in prayer; and of course, they prayed together.

Finally, they wrote down special words to help people understand what God is like.

They called it **The Nicene Creed**.

In front of the mitre and Bishop put down a facsimile of New Testament Codex, a scroll and praying hands.

Shall we explore what they wrote down?

I wonder how thinking about the God we believe in can help us pray to God?

Remove the figures from the white cloth.

They wrote that there was only one God but we can experience this God in more than one way.

Place a candle at the centre of the white cloth and light it.

God is the invisible One who made everything. God created the whole universe, some of which we can see, but there is far, far more that we have not yet seen. All the power in the universe comes from God.

To the storyteller's left (viewer's right), place a globe, and a scattering of stars.

God is also someone we can see. God has a name and it is Jesus. His titles are the Christ and the Lord. Jesus is God; he is God alongside us. They are the same and different at the same time. Jesus is made of the same light that God is made of and Jesus was there when everything was made.

To the storyteller's right, place a wooden Christ figure.

There is already a togetherness in God which is why God wants us to be together too.

Below the candle to the storyteller's right, place the friendship bowl of people holding hands. Remove it before the next part of the story.

Icon of the Baptism (Theophany)



This is the Jesus we can read about in the Bible. Jesus was God from heaven living among us on earth. He was born like we are born, and grew up like we grow up. God understands what it is like to be part of the universe. God was in the world with us, so he could rescue us from all that is bad. He did this by his death on a cross. This happened at one time in history for everyone.

To the storyteller's right, around the wooden Christ figure, slowly place symbols of the life of Christ reflecting the words of the story: a manger with a baby, a cross and an empty tomb....

But God's love in Jesus was stronger than death and he came back to life again. This was always the plan and Jesus went back to heaven to be one with God again. One day Jesus will return to put everything right and bring everything back together again in a kingdom of togetherness. This is why God wants us to pray for that togetherness.

And God is also someone we can experience working inside our lives. God is an invisible and holy Spirit who pours God's love into our hearts. The Holy Spirit is God; an inside-us God. They are the same and different at the same time. The Spirit is made of the same love as the Creator God and the Saviour God Jesus. You see, there is even more togetherness in God, which is why God wants us to be together too.

Below the candle to the storyteller's left, place symbols of the Holy Spirit: a flame, oil, a dove and three concentric, wooden hearts

God is one and God is three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is a creating, saving and transforming togetherness powered by love. This is what Christians believe God is like. This is the God they believe in when they are baptized. And it's through this togetherness-God that our sins are forgiven and one day believers will rise to eternal life in heaven.

Below the candle to the storyteller's right, place a friendship bowl of people holding hands.

Return the icon of the Trinity to the top of the cloth, close to the storyteller.

Light a candle placed within the friendship bowl.

Icon of Pentecost



When we pray for togetherness with each other, we are praying to be like God.

I wonder if there is any part of this Nicene Creed you could take away and still have all you want to say about God?

I wonder how this Nicene Creed can help us pray together in this week of prayer for Christian unity?

Place the prayer hands at the bottom of the cloth close to the friendship bowl

I wonder which part of this Nicene Creed you like the best?

I wonder which part of this Nicene Creed is the most important part?

I wonder which part of this Nicene Creed is special for you at the moment?

Pause and look around before asking the wondering questions

Photos of the elements of the reflective story and its final stage



**Photos of the elements of the reflective story and its final stage
Second set**



The Final Image



Resources for Children from the WCC

<https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/wccs-engagement-for-children>

<https://www.truefreedom24.com/>

<https://oikoumene.org/children/theopopettes>

<https://oikoumene.org/what-we-do/wccs-engagement-for-children/out-of-the-shadows>

<https://oikoumene.org/resources/documents/climate-responsible-finance-a-moral-imperative-towards-children>

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/churches-commitments-to-children>

<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/save-childrens-lives>

<https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/wccs-engagement-for-children#resources>

Additional Related WCC Online Resources

Faith and Order Commission:

[Faith and Order Commission | World Council of Churches \(oikoumene.org\)](#)

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:

[Week of Prayer for Christian Unity | World Council of Churches \(oikoumene.org\)](#)

Weekly Ecumenical Prayer Cycle:

[The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle | World Council of Churches \(oikoumene.org\)](#)

Sample of an Icon



All icons for colouring were sourced from the following page: [Orthodox Christian Icon Coloring Book | PDF | Eastern Orthodox Church | Icon \(scribd.com\)](https://www.scribd.com/document/100000000/Orthodox-Christian-Icon-Coloring-Book-PDF-Eastern-Orthodox-Church-Icon)

Icon of Christ



Icon of the Ascension



Icon of Jesus welcoming children

