

2023 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Order of Worship

Prelude **"O Heavenly King"** - Byzantine chants invoking the Holy Spirit
Gabriel Meyer (cantor) St Andrew Church

Words of Welcome **Rt. Rev. Alexei Smith**, Pastor of Saint Andrew Church,
Ecumenical Officer of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles &
President of the Southern California Christian Forum

Call to Gather

Sisters and brothers, we gather here in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

By the waters of baptism, we have become members of the Body of Christ, yet our sins have caused pain and trauma to each other.

We have failed to do good.

We have not sought justice in the face of grave oppression, nor heeded God's command to care for the widow and orphan (*Is 1:17*).

As we gather, let us reflect on our actions and inactions and learn to do good and seek justice.

We need God's grace to overcome our divisions and to uproot systems and structures that have contributed to the fracturing of our communities.

We gather to pray to reinforce the unity that we have as Christians to "open our hearts, that we may be bold in finding the riches of inclusion and the treasures of diversity among us. We pray in faith."⁶

Hymn **"Many Gifts, One Spirit"** - **Trinity Singers**

Invitation to Confession and Forgiveness

Tim Compton & Sandra Bossi

Confession and Forgiveness through the Reading of Isaiah 1:12-18

Tim We are invited to confess our sins with the words of the prophet Isaiah.

When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more; bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me.

C **Forgive us Lord when we come to worship without walking humbly before you.**

Silence

Sandra New moon and Sabbath and calling of convocation – I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them.

C **We ask forgiveness for the complicity of churches in the evils of colonialism felt around the world.**

Silence

Tim When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

C **We ask forgiveness for our sins of injustice and oppression that suppress the diverse harmony of your creation.**

Silence

Sandra Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

C **As we have been washed clean in the living waters of baptism, forgive us anew and reconcile us to one another and to creation.**

Silence

Tim Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

May God in his mercy, free you from your sins so that you can do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God.

Silence

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

C **Thanks be to God.**

Prayer

Tim God of all, our hearts and bodies are thankful for this opportunity to come before you to confess our sins of injustice and divisiveness.

Sandra Together we come before you, a holy family, united in the beautiful diversity of your creation.

Tim We praise you that through the living waters of baptism our sins, red as scarlet, were washed away and we were healed, as we became part of the beloved community, the family of God. We offer our thanksgiving and praise to you, Creator God.

Sandra Together on this journey, we celebrate with our hearts and eyes open to understanding and growing in the sacred wisdom that is shared and passed amongst all people. Help us to embrace unity with each other, and remind us that we are of one family gathered by your Holy Spirit, in the midst of your creation.

C Amen

Hymn "You Call Us By Name" - Focolare

Epistle Reading Ephesians 2:13-22 Nelle Osburn

Psalm 42 (responsively) Lindsay Hill & Keith Klein

Lindsay As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold the face of God?

C Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.

Keith My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually,
"Where is your God?"
These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

C Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.

Lindsay Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.
My soul is cast down within me;

C Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.

Keith By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.
I say to God, my rock,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?"

C Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.

Lindsay As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?"
Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

C Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.

Gospel Reading **Matthew 25: 31-40** **Walid Najjar**

Hymn **“Stay With Us, O Lord” - Focolare**

Reflection **Joey Baker**, Assemblies of God Church, Ph.D Candidate
at Fuller Theological Seminary, Member of the Board of the
North America Academy of Ecumenists

Hymn **“Adam’s Lament”** (Valaam chant)
Gabriel Meyer (cantor) St Andrew Church

Prayers of Intercession **Jeff Utter & Regina De Jesus**

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

Creator God, today we live with the consequences of actions that have made life unsustainable for some and overabundant for others. Teach us to know how to use responsibly the resources you have given to us for the benefit of all and the respect of your creation. The groaning creation cries out to you.

C **Teach us and show us the way.**

Jeff Compassionate God, help us repair the harm that we have inflicted upon each other and the divisions we have created among your people. Just as Christ Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit onto the disciples to birth the community of the new creation, send your grace to heal our divisions and gift us with the unity for which Jesus prayed.

C **Teach us and show us the way.**

Regina Christ, the way, the truth and the life, you embodied justice in your ministry on earth by the good that you did, breaking down the walls that divide and the prejudices that imprison. Open our hearts and minds to recognize that though we are many, we are one in you.

C **Teach us and show us the way.**

Jeff Holy Spirit, you create anew the face of the earth. The summit of the mountains, the thunder of the sky, the rhythm of the lakes speak to us –

C **Because we are connected.**

Regina The faintness of the stars, the freshness of the morning, the dewdrops on the flower speak to us –

C **Because we are connected.**

Jeff The voices of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized speak to us –

C **Because we are connected.**

Regina But above all, our hearts soar to you for we cry out ‘Abba, Father’ as we say:

C **Our Father.... (In your own version)**

Collection **Gabriel Meyer, Executive Director,
Southern California Christian Forum**

Background music during collection (solo guitar – Focolare?)

Closing Prayer **Rt. Rev. Alexei Smith**

L Everlasting God, look upon these faces gathered together in holy community and send them anywhere you would have them go.

Encourage them by your Holy Spirit to continue to tell their stories, to do good, and to seek justice for the sake of your Creation through their actions.

Sustain them that they may be one, so the world may believe that you sent your only Son Jesus for the life of the world.

Sending Forth

L The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you.
And give you peace.

C **Amen**

Dismissal Hymn “Open The Eyes Of My Heart” - Trinity Singers