

The background is a mosaic of small, irregular tiles in various colors including white, yellow, orange, brown, and red. A central figure, possibly a religious icon, is partially visible, rendered in a mosaic style. The top of the image has a dark teal gradient.

Common Prayer

From Conflict to Communion

Lutheran–Catholic
Common Commemoration
of the Reformation in 2017

COMMON PRAYER

FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION:
LUTHERAN—CATHOLIC
COMMON COMMEMORATION
OF THE REFORMATION IN 2017

Text by the Liturgical Task Force of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic
Commission on Unity

COMMON PRAYER

FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION:
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Parallel editions in French, German and Spanish

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMON PRAYER FOR THE ECUMENICAL COMMEMORATION

COMMON PRAYER

This liturgical order marks a very special moment in the journey from conflict to communion between Lutherans and Catholics. It offers an opportunity to look back in thanksgiving and confession and look ahead, committing ourselves to common witness and continuing our journey together.

The ecumenical commemoration of the 500 years of Reformation reflects in its basic liturgical structure this theme of thanksgiving, repentance and common witness and commitment, as developed in *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran–Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017. Report of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic Commission on Unity*. These characteristics of common prayer mirror the reality of Christian life: shaped by God’s Word, the people are sent out in common witness and service. In this particular and unique ecumenical commemoration, thanksgiving and lament, joy and repentance, mark the singing and the praying as we commemorate the gifts of the Reformation and ask forgiveness for the division that we have perpetuated. Thanksgiving and lament, however, do not stand alone: they lead us to common witness and commitment to each other and for the world.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

ROLES IN THE COMMON PRAYER

Throughout this ecumenical commemoration, two roles are designated: presiders and readers. The two presiders are to be Lutheran and Catholic. The two readers are to be Catholic and Lutheran. The readers and presiders should not be the same persons.

In the second half of the common prayer, other readers and leaders of intercessory prayer will be called upon. These readers should not be the same as the main readers and presiders. Ecumenical guests, if present, can be invited to participate in these various roles.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE COMMON PRAYER

Music

The songs suggested here are only given as examples. They are conceived for a multicultural context. Every context and language, every time and place, will find hymns, chants, and songs that fulfill the same role in the prayer as these suggested ones. Choosing appropriate music begins with understanding the particular function of a song in the liturgy.

Opening

The Opening Song may be a song that gathers us together in thanksgiving and in the name of the Triune God. It can be either a classic hymn that is known to both Catholics and Lutherans or a new song. For example, “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (Lobe den Herren) or a more recent song from Brazil, “Cantai ao Senhor” (Spanish “Cantad al Señor; in English “O Sing to the Lord”).

The opening dialogue includes two options. Communal prayer begins in various ways. In some regions, it is standard practice to begin in the name of the Triune God. In others, it is more usual to begin prayer with “O Lord, open my lips...” followed by the naming of the Triune God in the Doxology. The presiders then welcome those gathered, inviting them into the basic action of the liturgy.

A reader then quotes from the study document *From Conflict to Communion* that explicitly states why we are gathered as Lutherans and Catholics together. This passage also includes a reading from Scripture (1 Cor 12:26). A presider concludes this section in prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit.

After this opening and prayer, the assembly joins in song and calls upon the Holy Spirit to illumine hearts and prayer. Songs that fulfill this role are, for example, “O Living Breath of God/Soplo de Dios viviente” or “Gracious Spirit, Heed our Pleading” or more meditative songs in the style of Taizé (for example, “Veni Sancte Spiritus”) or songs such as “Come Holy Spirit, Descend on Us” (Iona Community).

Thanksgiving

After the opening, we look back together in thanksgiving and repentance. These two sections begin with readings and reflections from both the Catholic and the Lutheran side. The Thanksgiving section concludes with a prayer of thanksgiving and a song of thanksgiving. The repentance moves into confession, the singing of Psalm 130, the promise of forgiveness in Christ and the sharing of peace.

The section entitled *Thanksgiving* expresses our mutual joy for the gifts received and rediscovered in various ways through the renewal and impulses of the Reformation. After the prayer of thanksgiving, the whole assembly

joins in singing thanks for and praise of God's work. Songs of praise familiar to all are best used here. Some examples include, "Thanks Be to You Forever" (Marty Haugen) or "To God Our Thanks We Give" ("Reamo leboga" from Botswana) or "Laudate Dominum" from Taizé.

Repentance

After two readings that help contextualize the confession, the presiders lead the assembly in a three-part prayer. First of all, the assembly laments the way in which even good actions of reform often had unintended negative consequences. Secondly, the assembly acknowledges the guilt of the past. Thirdly, the assembly confesses its own complacency that has perpetuated the divisions of the past and has built more walls today. The assembly joins the presiders by responding to each section with a sung *Kyrie eleison*.

Psalm 130 ("Out of the depths") is then chanted. The entire psalm is recommended for use rather than paraphrases. There are many chanted versions of Psalm 130 available, including the plainchant found in most hymnbooks or more developed versions with antiphons and responsive singing (for example, see works by composers Gelineau, Farlee, Haugen, Joncas).

The psalm is followed by the promise of forgiveness in Christ that is jointly or alternately spoken by the presiders, who then invite the assembly into the sharing of peace and reconciliation. During the Sharing of the Peace, "Ubi Caritas" (Taizé) may be sung. This chant focuses on the theme of unity: where love and charity abide, God dwells there. On a more practical side, a repetitive song as "Ubi Caritas" can be sung for as long as it takes for the assembly to share the peace.

Common Witness and Commitment

Thanksgiving and repentance lead the assembly into common witness, commitment and service.

Following the peace, the assembly listens to the Gospel read by one of the readers. The Gospel of John 15 places Jesus Christ at the center. Without Christ, we can do nothing. In response to the Gospel reading, the presiders preach a joint sermon (see notes for the sermon).

The assembly professes their common faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed.

A song now moves the assembly from hearing the Word into very specific commitments that come from the five imperatives found in *From Conflict to Communion*. The character of this song could focus the assembly towards service in the world. For example, "O Lord, We Praise You" (Luther) or "Lord Keep Us Steadfast" (Luther) or "We All Are One in Mission" (a Finnish tune). [Note: If the Creed is sung, another song may not be necessary at this point or it may be sung after the presider introduces the Five Commitments, "Our ecumenical journey continues..."].

The five imperatives or commitments are announced in the assembly. Young people could read the commitments. After each reading, someone (maybe young children or families, especially families that represent ecumenical—Catholic/Lutheran—marriages) lights one of the five large candles that are either on the altar or in a beautiful arrangement near the altar. The Paschal Candle may serve as the main light from which the five other candles are lighted, reflecting in this way the Gospel reading, apart from Christ, we can do nothing. The Paschal Candle may also be set next to the baptismal font.

After the five commitments have been read, a song of light is sung. For example, “Christ Be Our Light” (Bernadette Farrell) or “Come Light, Light of God” (Community of Grandchamp, Switzerland) or “Kindle a Flame” (Iona Community) or “Within our darkness night, you kindle a fire that never dies away” (Taizé).

The assembly prays. The intercessions are addressed to God whose mercy endures forever. They may be adapted to time and place, adding or editing intercessions as needed that address the local situation and the current world situation.

The concluding prayer leads into the Lord’s Prayer.

Common prayer concludes with a thanksgiving¹ and blessing spoken by both presiders.

The song after the blessing sends us out with joy into the world. If this common prayer began with a well-known hymn from the tradition, this sending song could be a song composed recently that looks out towards God’s future. For example, if at the beginning, the assembly sang “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” they might end with “Cantai ao Senhor” (O Sing to the Lord).

Sermon Notes

The sermon should reflect on the link between Jesus Christ as the center and fundament of the church (Jn 15) and the commemoration of 500 years of the Reformation as part of the journey *From Conflict to Communion*, moving the gathered assembly to an on-going commitment to common witness and service and to prayer for unity.

The commemoration of the Reformation should be a celebration of Jesus Christ since the reformers saw their main task in pointing to Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life” and calling people to trust in Christ. Christ should be celebrated. Martin Luther and the other reformers only sought to be “witnesses to Christ.”

Since the sermon (or the two sermons) should not be too long, the preacher(s) should focus on John 15 and its connection with the journey

¹ The concluding dialogue is reproduced by permission from “A Wee Worship Book 4” (Wild Goose Publications, 1999). Text (adapted) John L. Bell, © 1999 WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH, Scotland. www.wildgoose.scot.

From Conflict to Communion as described above. Elements of thanksgiving and repentance that were addressed earlier in the service may be taken as illustrations, as well as experiences from the respective congregations can be mentioned. However, there should not be too many topics. The sermon should have a clear line: it should lead to focusing on Christ, the witness to Christ, seeking the unity of the one vine, and being sent out in common service with and for others in communion with Christ.

Chapter 5 of *From Conflict to Communion* can be particularly helpful in establishing a structure for a joint sermon as it provides several summary statements.

The preachers may also reflect on the Five Imperatives found in Chapter 6. These imperatives could be developed with specific reference to the local context.

The Scriptural text is John 15:1-5.

- ◇ Christ calls Himself “the true vine” but a vine cannot be without branches: Christ does not want to be without the church, as the church is nothing without Christ: without Christ, we can do nothing.
- ◇ There is only *one* true vine. All the branches are branches of *one* vine, and thus they are called to unity. As we come closer to Christ, we also come closer to each other. John’s Gospel focuses on communion with Christ, who is the face of the Father’s mercy.
- ◇ The branches are not for themselves but in order to bear fruit. The fruit is twofold: witness and service. Believers in Christ and the church as a whole are witnesses to the gift given to them. They are witnesses for the life with Christ and the salvation through Christ. The world that constantly forgets God desperately needs this witness. In communion with Christ we are called to serve others as Christ does to us. In the present context, one important fruit of the branches is their longing for unity, seeking unity, being committed to continue the journey to unity. The imagery of the vine and branches is one of growth. On the ecumenical journey, we commit ourselves to growth, with all that growth entails.
- ◇ The branches are in constant need to be cleansed: *ecclesia semper reformanda*. The emphasis laid in John 15 on the fruits and the cleansing of the branches creates the challenge to us of self-critically examining ourselves. This also allows for coming back to the element of repentance in the service but it should be more oriented to the future: the call ever anew to conversion to Christ and to the neighbors as overcoming peoples’ own self-centeredness (and also the churches’ self-centeredness) through the power of the Holy Spirit. Here the imperatives can be of some help in describing this call to conversion and to unity.

- ◇ At the heart of this text is the statement that without Christ, we can do nothing. Christ is the center. Our journey of faith, our journey together, our commitment to common witness and service, all have their source in Jesus Christ.
- ◇ This communion or relationship is not only individual but communal. It is reflected in a common commitment and witness, in a common purpose and service in and for and with the world.
- ◇ “Oneness” in purpose and service witnesses to God who is love. “That they may be one so that the world believes... .” (Jn 17:21).
- ◇ Abiding: Remaining in Christ implies remaining in fellowship with one another. It is in abiding or remaining in fellowship, committed to communion and reconciliation, that good fruits are produced. A good tree is recognized by its good fruits. A good tree is one that is not divided in itself.

Theo Dieter

Dirk Lange

Wolfgang Thönissen

COMMON PRAYER

FROM CONFLICT TO COMMUNION: LUTHERAN- CATHOLIC COMMEMORATION OF THE REFORMATION

OPENING

OPENING SONG

Presider I:

In the name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The Lord be with you!
And also with you!

[Optional: Other opening dialogues may be used such as depending on context and language]

O Lord, open my lips
And my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

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.

Presider I:

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ! Welcome to this ecumenical prayer, which commemorates the 500 years of the Reformation. For over 50 years Lutherans and Catholics have been on a journey from conflict to communion. With joy, we have come to recognize that what unites us is far greater than what divides us. On this journey, mutual understanding and trust have grown.

Presider II:

So it is possible for us to gather today. We come with different thoughts and feelings of thanksgiving and lament, joy and repentance, joy in the Gospel and sorrow for division. We gather to commemorate in remembrance, in thanksgiving and confession, and in common witness and commitment.

Reader I

In the document *From Conflict to Communion*, we read, “The church is the body of Christ. As there is only one Christ, so also he has only one body. Through baptism, human beings are made members of this body.” (#219) “Since Catholics and Lutherans are bound to one another in the body of Christ as members of it, then it is true of them what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:26: ‘If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.’ What affects one member of the body also affects all the others. For this reason, when Lutheran Christians remember the events that led to the particular formation of their churches, they do not wish to do so without their Catholic fellow Christians. In remembering with each other the beginning of the Reformation, they are taking their baptism seriously.” (#221)

Presider I:

Let us pray!

[brief silence]

Jesus Christ, Lord of the church, send your Holy Spirit! Illumine our hearts and heal our memories. O Holy Spirit: help us to rejoice in the gifts that have come to the Church through the Reformation, prepare us to repent for the dividing walls that we, and our forebears, have built, and equip us for common witness and service in the world.

Amen.

SONG INVOKING THE HOLY SPIRIT**THANKSGIVING****Reader I:**

A reading from *From Conflict to Communion*

“Lutherans are thankful in their hearts for what Luther and the other reformers made accessible to them: the understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and faith in him; the insight into the mystery of the Triune God who gives Himself to us human beings out of grace and who can be received only in full trust in the divine promise; the freedom and certainty that the gospel creates; in the love that comes from and is awakened by faith, and in the hope in life and death that faith brings with it; and in the living contact with the Holy Scripture, the catechisms, and hymns that draw faith into life” (#225), in the priesthood of all baptized believers and their calling for the common mission of the Church. “Lutherans ... realize that what they are thanking God for is not a gift that they can claim only for themselves. They want to share this gift with all other Christians.” (#226)

Reader II:

“Catholics and Lutherans have so much of the faith in common that they can ... be thankful together.” (#226). Encouraged by the Second Vatican Council, Catholics “gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. It is right and salutary to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. For God is always wonderful in His works and worthy of all praise.” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, Chapter 1). In this spirit, Catholics and Lutherans embrace each other as sisters and brothers in the Lord. Together they rejoice in the truly Christian gifts that they both have received and rediscovered in various ways through the renewal and impulses of the Reformation. These gifts are reason for thanksgiving.

“The ecumenical journey enables Lutherans and Catholics to appreciate together Martin Luther’s insight into and spiritual experience of the gospel of the righteousness of God, which is also God’s mercy.” (#244)

Presider I:

Let us pray!

[brief silence]

Thanks be to you O God for the many guiding theological and spiritual insights that we have all received through the Reformation. Thanks be to you for the good transformations and reforms that were set in motion by the Reformation or by struggling with its challenges. Thanks be to you for the proclamation of the gospel that occurred during the Reformation and that since then has strengthened countless people to live lives of faith in Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SONG OF THANKSGIVING

REPENTANCE

Reader I:

“As the commemoration in 2017 brings joy and gratitude to expression, so must it also allow room for both Lutherans and Catholics to experience the pain over failures and trespasses, guilt and sin in the persons and events that are being remembered.” (#228) “In the sixteenth century, Catholics and Lutherans frequently not only misunderstood but also exaggerated and caricatured their opponents in order to make them look ridiculous. They repeatedly violated the eighth commandment, which prohibits bearing false witness against one’s neighbor.” (#233)

Reader II:

Lutherans and Catholics often focused on what separated them from each other rather than looking for what united them. They accepted that the Gospel was mixed with the political and economic interests of those in power. Their failures resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. Families were torn apart, people imprisoned and tortured, wars fought and religion and faith misused. Human beings suffered and the credibility of the Gospel was undermined with consequences that still impact us today. We deeply regret the evil things that Catholics and Lutherans have mutually done to each other.

Presider I:

Let us pray!

[brief silence]

Presider II:

O God of mercy, we lament that even good actions of reform and renewal had often unintended negative consequences.

Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)

Presider I:

We bring before you the burdens of the guilt of the past when our forbears did not follow your will that all be one in the truth of the Gospel.

Christe eleison (Christ have mercy)

Presider II:

We confess our own ways of thinking and acting that perpetuate the divisions of the past. As communities and as individuals, we build many walls around us: mental, spiritual, physical, political walls that result in discrimination and violence. Forgive us, Lord.

Kyrie eleison (Lord have mercy)

PSALM 130

[The psalm can be sung on psalm tone or read by alternate whole verse.]

Presider I and II:

[These words may be said alternately by presiders I and II.]

Christ is the way, the truth and the life. He is our peace, who breaks down the walls that divide, who gives us, through the Holy Spirit, ever-new beginnings.

In Christ, we receive forgiveness and reconciliation and we are strengthened for a faithful and common witness in our time.

Amen

THE PEACE**Presider II:**

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you are called to peace.

The peace of Christ be with you always!

And also with you!

Presider I:

Let us offer each a sign of reconciliation and peace.

SHARING OF PEACE

[During the sharing of peace, Ubi Caritas or another hymn may be sung.]

GOSPEL

Reader I:

As we continue our journey from conflict to communion, let us hear the Gospel according to John

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn 15:1-5)

The Gospel of the Lord!

Thanks be to God!

JOINT SERMON

Presider I:

Together, let us confess our faith.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

SONG

COMMITMENTS: FIVE IMPERATIVES

Presider II:

Our ecumenical journey continues. In this worship, we commit ourselves to grow in communion. The five imperatives found in *From Conflict to Communion* will guide us.

[A large candle is lighted after each commitment is read. The light may be taken each time from the Paschal Candle. Young people may be asked to read the five commitments and the candles may be lit by children and families. The organ or other instrument may play the melody of a song such as “In the Lord I’ll be ever thankful” (Taizé) or another song to accompany the lighting of the candles.]

1. Our first commitment: Catholics and Lutherans 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. (#239).

Light a candle

2. Our second commitment: Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith. (#240)

Light a candle

3. Our third commitment: Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal. (#241)

Light a candle

4. Our fourth commitment: Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time. (#242)

Light a candle

5. Our fifth commitment: Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world. (#243)

Light a candle

SONG

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

[The person praying the intercession may be different from the previous readers.]

Presider I:

“Ecumenical engagement for the unity of the church does not serve only the church but also the world so that the world may believe.” (#243) Let us now pray for the world, the church and all those in need... .

1. God of mercy, throughout history your goodness prevails, open the hearts of all people to find you and your mercy that endures forever.

Hear our prayer!

2. God of peace, bend that which is inflexible, the barriers that divide, the attachments that thwart reconciliation. Bring peace in this world, especially in [name countries, places...]. Restore wholeness among us and show us your mercy!

Hear our prayer!

3. God of justice, healer and redeemer, heal those who suffer from illness, poverty and exclusion. Hasten justice for those suffering under the power of evil. Give new life to all and show us your mercy!

Hear our prayer!

4. God, rock and fortress, protect refugees, those without homes or security, all the abandoned children. Help us always to defend human dignity. Show us your mercy!

Hear our prayer!

5. God creator, all creation groans in expectation, convert us from exploitation. Teach us to live in harmony with your creation. Show us your mercy!

Hear our prayer!

6. God of mercy, strengthen and protect those who are persecuted for faith in you and those of other faiths who suffer persecution. Give us the courage to profess our faith. Your mercy endures forever.

Hear our prayer!

7. God of life, heal painful memories, transform all complacency, indifference and ignorance, pour out a spirit of reconciliation. Turn us to you and one another. Show us your mercy!

Hear our prayer!

8. God of love, your son Jesus reveals the mystery of love among us, strengthen that unity that you along sustain in our diversity. Your mercy endures forever!

Hear our prayer!

9. God our sustenance, bring us together at your eucharistic table, nurture within and among us a communion rooted in your love. Your mercy endures forever!

Hear our prayer!

Presider II:

In confidence that you O God hear our prayers for the needs of this world and for the unity of all Christians in their witness, let us pray as Jesus taught us... .

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father...

Presider I:

For all that God can do within us, for all that God can do without us,
Thanks be to God!

Presider II:

For all in whom Christ lived before us, for all in whom Christ lives beside us,
Thanks be to God!

Presider I:

For all the Spirit wants to bring us, for where the Spirit wants to send us,
Thanks be to God!

Presiders (jointly):

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and on your way together, now and forever.

Amen.

SONG

[Other songs may be sung or a postlude played as people leave.]

