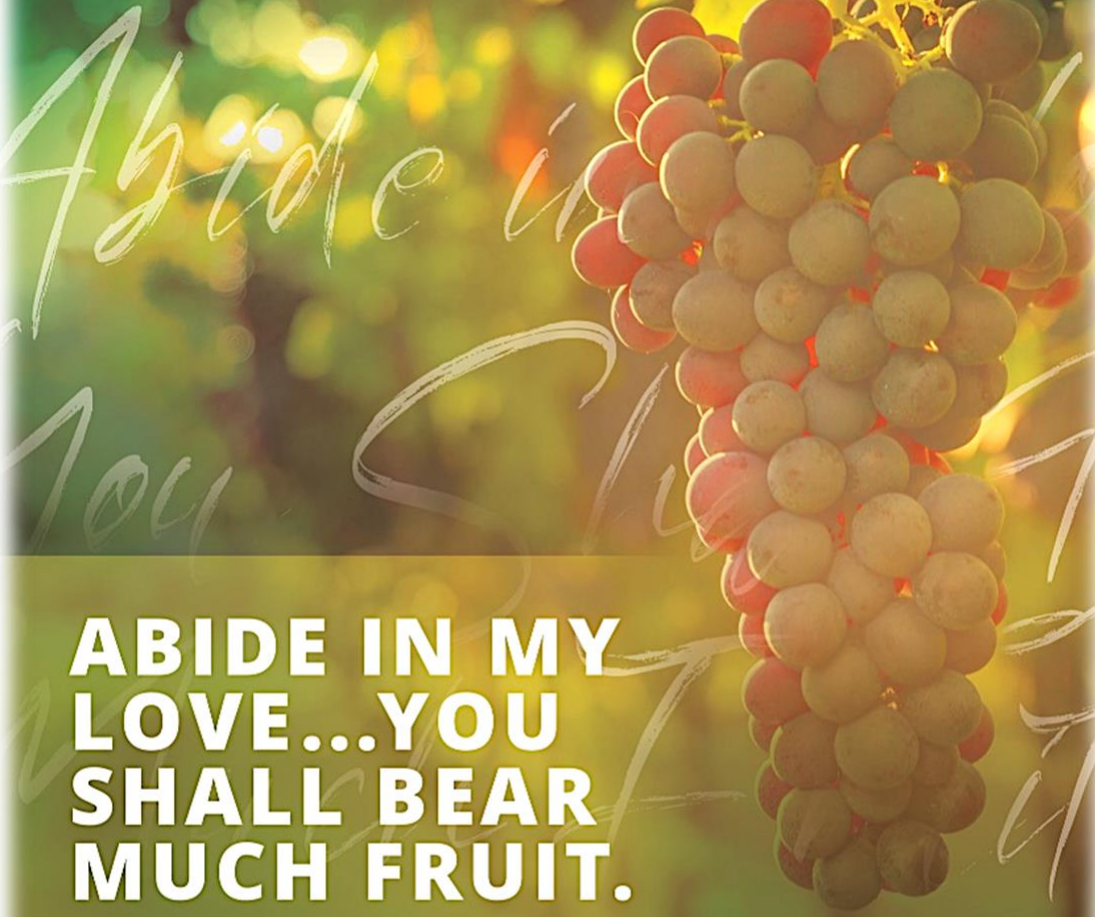


WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2021

Abide in my love...
you shall bear much fruit.



**ABIDE IN MY
LOVE...YOU
SHALL BEAR
MUCH FRUIT.**

JOHN 15:1-17

*A Service of Prayer and Reflection to be used
in the home for one or more persons*

A BRIEF HISTORY

Dear friend: Each year Ecumenism Metro Chicago (EMC), a group of representatives of faith communities and organizations in Chicago and its suburbs, invites Christians to observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The WPCU was established in 1908 and is celebrated each year between the feasts of Saint Peter (January 18) and Saint Paul (January 25). It is sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Each year, these two partners choose representatives of Christian churches from a different country to prepare the prayer service that is used throughout the world during the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

This year, the theme gifted to the Church comes from the ecumenical monastic community of Grandchamp in Switzerland, “Abide in my love . . . you shall bear much fruit.” (John 15:1-17). We are reminded by the very voice of Jesus Christ that he is the vine and we are the branches. The artwork above reminds us that the sap that nourishes a grapevine is a metaphor of the Holy Spirit nourishing the whole vine of the one Church, no matter what our branch. Each branch can produce abundant good fruit to nourish in turn the whole world. But Christ himself is the vine on which we flourish.

In previous years, Ecumenism Metro Chicago has sponsored a service of worship during the WPCU using the resources graciously provided by the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute (geli.org). Bishops and judicatory heads have led us in prayer. After the services refreshments and opportunities to meet brothers and sisters from other faith traditions have been provided. This year, in the spirit of loving one another, we cannot gather together as in past years. Therefore, EMC invites you to *A Service of Prayer and Reflection to be used in the home for one or more persons*. We invite you to use this resource as you wish – taking the time to use it as one service of worship, or using portions of it during the week of January 18-25. If you live alone, you may choose to read some portions silently and some aloud. For those living in community, you may want to read responsively. However you may use this service, we pray it will be a blessing to you. Together, even though physically apart from one another, let us pray. After the upheavals and anguish of 2020, let us all abide in Christ’s love to bear the good fruit that can make 2021 a blessing for all. Let us pray that we all might be one, for Christ’s sake and in his name.

Note: Some of the materials used here have been added from previous WPCU Prayer Services. The Scripture is NRSV.

A Word of Welcome

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you always!

Dear friends in Christ, as we gather together in this service of prayer for unity, we thank God for our Christian dignity and vocation, described in the words of St. Peter: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” May we grow in our communion with our Lord Jesus Christ and with all our brothers and sisters aspiring to unity (1 Peter 2:9).

It is the great desire of God, expressed by Jesus, that we might come to him and abide in him. He waits for us tirelessly, hoping that, united to him in love, we will bear fruit that will bring life to all. Faced with the difference of “the other,” we risk withdrawing into ourselves and seeing only that which separates us. But let us listen to how Christ calls us to abide in his love, and so bear much fruit.

In the **three moments of prayer that follow**, we remember the call of Christ, we turn to his love, to him who is the center of our life. For the path of unity begins in our intimate relationship with God. Abiding in God’s love strengthens the desire to seek unity and reconciliation with others. God opens us up to those who are different from us. This is an important fruit, a gift of healing for the divisions within us, between us, and in the world.

HYMN “Family of Faith”

Hymn text by Steven Ottományi

(This may be sung to the following hymn tunes: Old 100th, Tallis Canon, Prospect, Duke Street, 8.8.8 8 LM, or we invite you to read the lyrics as a prayer.)

1) Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from death,
Our spirit's life, our spirit's breath:
You show the way that leads to peace,
Where anger sleeps, where hatreds cease.

2) O Key of David, open wide
The doors now blocked by human pride.
Come, change our hearts, make clear our need
To follow where Your will shall lead.

3) And still, O Lord, You walk our way;
You walk with us both night and day.
You call us, Lord, in love to be
A sign of hope, of unity.

4) So lead us, Lord, to live and claim
All that it means to bear Your name.
Now make of us one family
Of faith, of hope, of charity.

In peace let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, You are the vinedresser who cares for us with love. You call on us to see the beauty of each branch united to the vine, the beauty of each person. And yet, too often the differences in others make us wary. We withdraw into ourselves. Our trust in You is forsaken. Enmity develops between us. Come and direct our hearts toward You once again. Grant us to live out of Your forgiveness so that we may be together and praise Your name. Amen.

LITANY OF PRAISE

You who call us to sing praise in the midst of the earth: glory to You!

We sing Your praise in the midst of the world and among all peoples.

We sing Your praise in the midst of creation and among all creatures.

You who call us to sing praise in the midst of the earth: glory to You!

We sing Your praise among suffering and tears.

We sing Your praise among promises and achievements.

You who call us to sing praise in the midst of the earth: glory to You!

We sing Your praise in the places of conflict and misunderstanding.

We sing Your praise in the places of encounter and reconciliation.

You who call us to sing praise in the midst of the earth: glory to You!

We sing Your praise in the midst of rifts and divisions.

**We sing Your praise in the midst of life and death,
the birth of a new heaven and a new earth.**

You who call us to sing praise in the midst of the earth: glory to You!



FIRST VIGIL

Abiding in Christ: The unity of the whole person

Psalm 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits—who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.

He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.

For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.

As for mortals, their days are like grass; they flourish like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.

But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word.

Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will.

Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

A Reading: John 15:1-17

“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. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

HYMN “Diverse, But Not Divided”

Hymn text Frederick W. Harrison

(May be sung to hymn tune: Aurelia (The Church's One Foundation) 7.6.7.6 D)

1) Diverse, but not divided,
The church on earth must be,
Reflecting her Creator,
The Holy Trinity.
All races, tongues, and cultures,
Through Spirit sanctified,
Become one voice in witness
Of Christ the Crucified.

2) Grace given in Christ Jesus,
Enriching every way,
In speaking and in knowledge,
Confirmed in us each day.
No lack of Spirit gifting
Or strength to reach the end –
That day of revelation
Of Christ, our Lord and friend.

3) Agree with one another;
May you be of one mind
United by the Spirit –
A light for human kind.
No more this talk of quarrels,
Vain boasts, or praise of men!
None has a claim on Jesus
But rather, He on them.

4) Words not of human wisdom,
But gospel truth be told,
With courage and conviction,
Proclaimed in witness bold.
Let not the Cross diminish
Nor emptied of its power;
God's sacrifice sufficient
For this, and every hour.

Words composed May 2012 for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2014.

Short Silence for Reflection

Intercessions

God of love, through Christ You said to us: “You did not choose me but I chose you.” You seek us, You invite us to receive Your friendship and abide in it. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation, and grow in a life that is ever more complete.

The joy of our heart is in God.

God of life, You call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to welcome one another as a gift of Your grace. May Your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, open us to receive each other just as we are.

The joy of our heart is in God.

God who gathers, You knit us together as one vine in Your Son Jesus. May Your loving Spirit abide in us at parish meetings and local ecumenical gatherings. Grant that together we might celebrate You with joy.

The joy of our heart is in God.

God of the one vineyard, You call us to abide in Your love in all we do and say. Touched by Your goodness, grant us to be a reflection of that love in our homes and workplaces. May we pave the way for bridging rivalries and overcoming tensions.

The joy of our heart is in God.

ACTION: A time of silence

Very often we think of prayer as something we **do**, an activity of our own. In these few moments we are invited to an interior silence, and to turn aside from all the noise and concerns of our lives and thoughts. In this silence the action belongs to God. We are simply called to abide in God's love, to rest in God.

Silence (*Approximately 5 minutes*)

HYMN “Amazing Grace”

John Newton, 1725-1807

1) Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

2) 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.



SECOND VIGIL

The visible unity of Christians

Psalm 85

Lord, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Selah

You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.

Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us.

Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

Will you not revive us again, so that your people may rejoice in you?

Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.

Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.

Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky.

The Lord will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

A Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13a

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided?

Short Silence (*Approximately 1 minute*)

Intercessions

Holy Spirit, You create and re-create the Church in all places. Come and whisper in our hearts the prayer which Jesus addressed to his Father on the eve of his passion: "that they may all be one...so that the world may believe."

Lord have mercy.

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, light the fire of Your love in us so that suspicions, contempt and misunderstanding cease in the Church. May the walls that separate us fall.

Lord have mercy.

Holy Spirit, Consoler of all, open our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation and bring us back from our wanderings.

Lord have mercy.

Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, give us poverty of spirit so that we may welcome the unexpectedness of Your grace.

Lord have mercy.

Holy Spirit, You never abandon the men, women and children who are persecuted for their fidelity to the gospel. Give them strength and courage, and support those who help them.

Lord have mercy.

Action: Sharing a Sign of Peace

The Lord calls us to be united among ourselves. He gives us his peace and invites us to share it. If others are with you, we invite you to share a sign of peace with them. If you are alone at this time, we invite you to place a telephone call, send an email, a text, or a brief letter to someone who has been on your mind. May the peace of Christ be with you.

HYMN

"They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love"

1) We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord,
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

(Refrain)

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love,
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

2) We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand,
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

3) We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
We will work with each other, we will work side by side,
And we'll guard each one's dignity and save each one's pride.

4) All praise to the Father, from whom all things come,
And all praise to Christ Jesus, his only Son,
And all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one.



THIRD VIGIL

The unity of all peoples and all creation

Psalm 96

O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

Say among the nations, "The Lord is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord; for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth.

A Reading: Revelation 7:9-12

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

RESPONSE:

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.

Time of Reflection and Prayer: (We invite you to find a quiet place, sit comfortably, and light a candle if you are able.)

This has been a difficult time of separation. Although necessary because of the pandemic, it has taken a toll on each person in some way. Some of us have lost jobs and security. Too many of us have lost beloved friends and family. All of us have felt the pain of separation from others.

Let us turn to God and share the innermost thoughts of our hearts and minds.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Intercessions

God of grace, our creator, God of mercy, our savior, merciful God, our help, who knows what we need before we ask, we praise You for Your creation, for salvation and Your unceasing compassion for us.

Heal us of our deafness, that together we may more clearly hear the sound of Your voice in the silence of the poor and suffering.

Breathe into us the desire to work without ceasing for that Christian unity which is Your desire and grant that nothing will overcome our search for that unity for which Jesus prayed.

Jesus, friend of the poor and of strangers, You have held out Your hand to lead all who were far away to Your grace and salvation.

May those who feel like strangers find comfort and signs of Your presence in our communities of faith.

Jesus, sent by the Father, You have called Your disciples to announce the gospel and to be instruments of transformation in this world together.

Help us, so that the vision of a world transformed may fire the imagination of all believers!

Holy Spirit, giver of life, may we continually be nourished by Your life-giving power.

Through Your presence among us, give power to those who are powerless and help us to give a voice to those who are voiceless.

Holy Spirit, who leads us to unity, give to the leaders of our faith communities unshakeable zeal in their efforts towards unity.

Hear our prayers, open new ways for Your church to be united.

Holy Spirit, who leads us to the whole truth and makes straight that which is crooked, inspire all those who exercise a role in government.

Grant them the desire to ensure that the needs of the poor, the humble and the weak without voice are a priority; and guard them from all temptation so that their integrity is preserved from all corruption.

O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one in three persons, be with us and break down the walls that separate us. Bring us together in Christ through Your Spirit.

Merciful God of love, look kindly upon our churches whom You call to join together in reflecting in everyday life the merciful and kindly love of Your son Jesus Christ, God with us forever and ever. Amen.

WPCU 2007

THE LORD'S PRAYER

And now, with the words that Jesus taught us, let us now pray together:

C: Our Father...

HYMN "Amazing Grace"

3) Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home.

John Newton, 1725-1807

4) The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

CLOSING PRAYER

As we close in prayer, hear the words recited daily by the Sisters of the Grandchamp Community:

"Throughout your day, let the Word of God breathe life into work and rest. Maintain inner silence in all things so as to dwell in Christ. Be filled with the spirit of the Beatitudes: joy, simplicity, mercy."

We pray, Loving God, may we be one, so that the world may believe! As we abide in Your love, send us into the world, with open hearts, using new technologies, to share the fruits of Your love.

Fill us with all joy and peace in faith, so that we may abound in hope by the power of Your Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

FINAL HYMN “Amazing Grace”

5) Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

John Newton, 1725-1807

6) When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God!



Please continue to learn more about Ecumenism Metro Chicago . . .

Ecumenism Metro Chicago

The American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago

The Armenian (Orthodox) Church Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)

The Christian Church IL/WI (Disciples of Christ)

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago and Gary Districts

The Church of God in Christ First Jurisdiction Illinois

The Church of the Brethren IL and WI District

The Episcopal Church, USA Diocese of Chicago

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Metropolitan Chicago Synod

The Greek Orthodox Church Metropolis of Chicago

The Orthodox Church in America Diocese of the Midwest

The Polish Catholic Church Western Diocese

The Presbyterian Church (USA) Presbytery of Chicago

The Roman Catholic Church Archdiocese of Chicago

The Salvation Army Chicago Metropolitan Division

The Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA and Canada Metropolitanate of Midwestern America

St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, Diocese of Chicago

The Syriac Orthodox Church Archdiocese of the Eastern USA

The Ukrainian Catholic Church St. Nicholas Eparchy

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, Western Eparchy

The United Church of Christ Illinois Conference

The United Methodist Church, Northern Illinois Conference

Greater Chicago Broadcast Ministries

The Initiative: An Ecumenical Community

Facebook: Ecumenism Metro Chicago E-mail: ecumenismmetrochicago@gmail.com

The following prayer was composed in 1999 by members of the Ecumenical Millennium Committee, now called Ecumenism Metro Chicago. We offer it to you, our siblings in faith.
Please join us in prayer that we may all be one,



Ecumenical Millennium Prayer

Almighty God, we lift our hearts to You
in praise and thanksgiving.

Out of love You created the heavens and the earth,
and breathed life into this world.

Inspire us to treasure this gift in all our relationships:
with You, with each other, and with all of creation.

Out of love You gave us Your Son,
our Savior Jesus Christ, as Light for the world.
Ignite in us the passion of disciples
and the courage to strive for justice and peace
among the rich diversity of race and culture.

Out of love You sent us the Spirit,
Your own first gift for those who believe.
Instill in us a right spirit,
that we may bear Your light and love.

Often we have strayed from You.
In Your mercy, grant us Your forgiveness.
By Your power, strengthen us to do Your will.

Gracious God, in this new millennium,
enkindle the fire of love in this and every place
Fill us with hope, wisdom, joy, and peace,
that we may be faithful unto the ages of ages.
Amen