**Day 1: One has died for all** (2 Corinthians 5:14)

Isaiah 53:4-12; Psalm 118: 1, 14-29; 1 John 2:1-2; John 15:13-17

**Commentary**

When Paul was converted to Christ, he came to a radical new understanding: Jesus died for all people, past, present and future.

Because Jesus died for all, all have died with him (2 Cor. 5:14). In dying with Christ, our old way of life becomes a thing of the past and we enter into a new form of existence: abundant life – a life in which we can experience reassurance, trust and forgiveness, even today – a life which continues to have meaning even after death. This new life is life in God. Having come to this realization, Paul felt compelled by the love of Christ to preach the Good News of reconciliation with God. Christian churches share in this same commission of proclaiming the Gospel message. We need to ask ourselves how we can proclaim this gospel of reconciliation in view of our divisions.

**Questions**

1. What does it mean to say that Jesus died for all?
2. The German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: “I am a brother to another person through what Jesus Christ did for me and to me; the other person has become a brother to me through what Jesus Christ did for him.” How does this quote affect how we view others?
3. What are the consequences of this reality for ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue?

**Prayer**

Loving God,in Jesus you gave us the one who died for all.

He lived our life and died our death. You accepted his sacrifice and raised him to new life with you. Grant that we, who have died with him, may be made one by the Holy Spiritand live in the abundance of your divine presence now and forever. Amen.

**Day 2: Live no longer for themselves** (2 Corinthians 5:15)

Micah 6:6-8; Psalm 25:1-5; 1 John 4:19-21; Matthew 16:24-26

**Commentary**

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been freed to live in the life-giving power of Christ, who lived, died, and rose again for us. When we ‘lose’ our life for his sake, we gain it.The prophets were constantly faced with questions concerning the right way to live before God. The prophet Micah found a very clear answer to this question: “To do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.” The author of Psalm 25 knew that we cannot do this by ourselves and cried out to God for guidance and strength.In recent years, social isolation and increasing loneliness have become crucial issues in many contemporary societies. Christians are called to develop new forms of community life in which we share our means of livelihood with others and nurture support between generations. The Gospel call to live not for ourselves but for Christ is also a call to reach out to others and to break down the barriers of isolation.

**Questions**

1. How does our society tempt us to live only for ourselvesrather than for others?
2. In what ways can we live for others in our daily life?
3. What are the ecumenical implications of the call to live no longer for ourselves?

**Prayer**

Merciful God, in Jesus Christ you have freed us for a life that goes beyond ourselves.Guide us with your Spiritand help us to orient our lives as sisters and brothers in Christ, who lived, suffered, died and rose again for us,and who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

**Day 3: We regard no one from a human point of view**

(2 Corinthians 5:16)

1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7; Psalm 19:7-13;Acts 9:1-19; Matthew 5:1-12

**Commentary**

Encountering Christ turns everything upside down. Paul had that experience on the road to Damascus. For the first time he could see Jesus who really was the Saviour of the world. Paul’s point of view was changed completely. He had to lay his human, worldly judgement aside.Encountering Christ changes our perspective as well. Nevertheless, we often linger in the past and judge according to human standards. We make claims or do things “in the name of the Lord” that in reality may be self-serving. Throughout history, in Germany and in many other countries, both rulers and the churches themselves have misused their power and influence to pursue unjust political goals. In resposne, for example, the Christians of the Moravian Church (*Herrnhuter*) transformed by their encounter with Christ, in 1741,answered the call to see others as God sees them, without mistrust or prejudice.

**Questions**

1. Where can we identify Damascus experiences in our life?
2. What changes when we view other Christians or people of other faiths as God views them?

**Prayer**

Everlasting God, you are the origin and goal of all living things.

Forgive us when we think only of ourselves and are blinded by our own standards. Open our hearts and our eyes.Teach us to be loving, accepting and gracious,so that we may grow in the unity which is your gift.To you be honour and praise, now and forever. Amen.

**Day 4: Everything old has passed away** (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Genesis 19:15-26; Psalm 77:5-15; Philippians 3:7-14; Luke 9:57-62

**Commentary**

We often live out of the past. Looking back can be helpful, and is often necessary for the healing of memories, but it can also paralyze us and prevent us from living in the present. Paul’s message here is liberating: “everything old has passed away”.The Bible encourages us to keep the past in mind, to draw strength from our memories, and to remember the good which God has done. However, it also asks us to leave the old, even what was good, in order to follow Christ and live a new life in him.

During this year, the work of Martin Luther and other reformers is being commemorated by many Christians. The Reformation changed much in the life of the Western Church. Many Christians showed heroic witness and many were renewed in their Christian lives. At the same time, as scripture shows, it is important not to be limited by what happened in the past, but rather to allow the Holy Spirit to open us to a new future in which division is overcome and God’s people made whole.

**Questions**

1. What could we learn by reading together the history of our divisions and mutual mistrust?
2. What must change in our church so that divisions can be overcome and that which unites can be strengthened?

**Prayer**

Faithful God,the same yesterday, today and forever.Heal the wounds of our past,bless our pilgrimage towards unity today

and guide us into your future,when you will be all in all, God, Son, and Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

**Day 5: Everything has become new** (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Ezekiel 36:25-27; Psalm 126; Colossians 3:9-17; John 3:1-8

**Commentary**

Paul encountered Christ, the risen Lord, and became a renewed person—just as everyone does who believes in Christ. This new creation is not visible to the naked eye but is available only through faith and the power of the Holy Spirit. We are brought into a saving relationship with God. In Christ’s resurrection, death is overcome; no person or thing can snatch us out of the hand of God. We are one in Christ and he lives in us. This new life becomes visible when we live it out in “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Col 3:12) It must also become apparent in our ecumenical relationships. A common conviction in many churches is that the more we are in Christ, the closer we are to one another. Especially on this 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we are reminded of both the achievements and tragedies of our history. The love of Christ compels us to live as renewed beings, actively seeking unity and reconciliation.

**Questions**

1. What helps us to recognize that we are a new creation in Christ?
2. What are the steps we need to take to live out our new life in Christ?
3. What are the ecumenical implications of being a new creation?

**Prayer**

O God, you reveal yourself to us as Creator, as Son and Saviour, and as Spirit and giver of life, and yet you are one. You break down our human boundaries and renew us. Give us a new heart to overcome all that endangers our unity in you. We pray in the name of Christ Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Day 6: We are reconciled to God** (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Genesis 17:1-8; Psalm 98; Romans 5:6-11; Luke 2:8-14

**Commentary**

Reconciliation has two sides: it is fascinating and terrifying at the same time. It draws us in so that we desire it: within ourselves, with one another, and between our different traditions. We also see the cost and it frightens us, because reconciliation means renouncing our desire for power and recognition. In Christ, God graciously reconciles us and the whole of creation even though we have turned away from God. In the Old Testament, God was faithful and merciful to the people of Israel, with whom he established a covenant. Romans 11:29 tells us that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.” Jesus inaugurated the new covenant in his blood. Too often in history our churches have failed to honour this. Since the Holocaust, German churches have regarded it as their distinctive responsibility to combat antisemitism. Similarly, all churches are called to bring forth reconciliation in their communities and resist all forms of human discrimination, for we are all part of God’s covenant.

**Questions**

1. What does the covenant mean for our different Christian communities?
2. What forms of discrimination do our churches need to address today in your societies?

**Prayer**

Merciful God, out of love you made a covenant with your people. Empower us to resist all forms of discrimination. Let the gift of your loving covenant fill us with joy and inspire us to greater unity. Through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

**Day 7: The ministry of reconciliation** (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 72; 1 John 3:16b-21; John 17:20-26

**Commentary**

Reconciliation between God and humanity is the key reality of our Christian faith. Paul was convinced that the love of Christ compels us to bring God’s reconciliation to bear in all aspects of our life. Today, this leads us to examine our consciences in relation to our divisions. As the story of Joseph demonstrates, God always gives the grace needed for the healing of broken relationships. The great reformers of all Christian traditions, sought to bring about renewal in the church. The ministry of reconciliation includes the work of overcoming divisions within Christianity. Today, many Christian churches work together in mutual trust and respect. One positive example of ecumenical reconciliation is the dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Mennonite World Conference. In 2010, togetherthese two organizations held a penitential service. Other reconciliation services took place throughout Germany and many other countries.

**Questions**

1. Where do we see the need for a ministry of reconciliation in our context?
2. How are we responding to this need?

**Prayer**

God of all goodness, we give you thanks for reconciling us and the whole world to yourself in Christ. Empower us, our congregations and our churches in ministries of reconciliation. “Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy”. We pray in the name of Christ Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Day 8: Reconciled to God**(2 Corinthians 5:20)

Micah 4:1-5; Psalm 87; Revelation 21:1-5a; John 20:11-18

**Commentary**

What if the prophecies in the Bible actually came true? What if the wars between people stopped and what if life-giving things were to be made out of the weapons of war? What if God’s justice and peace reigned, a peace which was more than simply the absence of war? What if everyone came together for a celebration in which not a single person was marginalized? What if there really was no more mourning, no more tears, and no more death? It would be the culmination of the reconciliation that God brought about in Jesus Christ. It would be heaven!Psalms, canticles, and hymns sing of the day when the whole perfected creation finally arrives at its goal, the day when God will be “all in all”. They tell about the Christian hope for the fulfilment of God´s reign, when suffering will be transformed into joy. On that day, the Church will be revealed in its beauty and grace as the one body of Christ. Wherever we gather in the Spirit to sing together about the fulfilment of God’s promises, the heavens break open and we begin here and now to dance to the melody of eternity.

**Questions**

1. How do we envision heaven?
2. Which songs, stories, poems, and pictures from our traditions give us the feeling of participating in the reality of God´s eternity?

**Prayer**

LovingGod,we thank you for this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, for being together as Christians and for the different ways we have experienced your presence. Let us always praise your holy name together so that we may continue to grow in unity and reconciliation. Amen.

[For the inside of the back cover of the booklet]

Lamb of God, the heavens adore you,   
the saints and angels sing before you   
with harp and cymbals' clearest tone.   
Of one pearl each shining portal,   
where, joining with the choir immortal,   
we gather round your radiant throne.   
No eye has seen that light,   
no ear the echoed might   
of your glory;   
yet there shall we in victory   
sing shouts of joy eternally!

[German: "Wachet auf, ruftuns die Stimme," author: Philipp Nicolai (1599); English: "Wake, awake, the night is flying" (third stanza), translated by Catherine Winkworth]