

Unity Prayers on Thursday 20 January 2022 at 19.00 on Zoom

“We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him” (Matthew 2:2)

Join Zoom Meeting ID: 890 1615 8547 Passcode: 770668

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89016158547?pwd=c2xMSEoyR1BMNXZQYlZSOW1HZlJ5Zz09>

Church leaders participating from St Edmunds (Anglican Church - hosting), Margaretakyrkan (Church of Sweden), Trefoldighetskirken (Church of Norway), St Olavs Katolske kirke (Roman Catholic Church), Marie Bebudelse kirke (Greek Orthodox Church) and Den finske menigheten i Norge (Church of Finland), with the Choir of St Edmund's. The service is based on an order prepared by the Middle East Council of Churches.

Musical prelude (while people join on Zoom (muted) from 18.55)

Call to Worship

Joanna: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Brothers and sisters, we are united today with fellow believers in the four corners of the world as we gather to pray for the visible unity of the Church. We do this with worship resources prepared by the Middle East Council of Churches. Our texts are inspired by the visit of the Magi to the new-born King, as described in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: *“We observed his star in the East, and have come to pay him homage.”* Let us fix our eyes on the star that was seen in the East and allow it to lead us too.

Carlo: Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving and joy, bringing all the sick, the suffering, the marginalized, the refugees, and the uprooted before him, knowing that God can dispel our darkness with his light. As we pray today for the unity of the Church, may we and our communities also be lights that guide others to Jesus the Saviour.

Glory be to you Father Almighty, for you have revealed yourself through your creation and invited all people to stand in your presence. We have seen the star of Jesus in our lives and have come to worship him just as the Magi did. We offer him ourselves today and we ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

Unite us with one another as we come from the North and from the South, from the East and from the West, old and young, men and women to bow down before you and offer you homage, our heavenly king. Amen.

Hymn

**O worship the King, all glorious above!
O gratefully sing his power and his love!
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.**

**O tell of his might! O sing of his grace!
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.**

**Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;
thy mercies, how tender! How firm to the end!
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!**

**O measureless Might, ineffable Love,
while angels delight to worship thee above,
the humbler creation, though feeble their lays,
with true adoration shall all sing thy praise.**

Prayer of Praise and Confession

Per Anders: We glorify you, O Lord, creator of heaven and earth, for you have set the lights in the vault of the sky. You separated light from darkness and arranged signs to mark sacred times, and days and years. You studded the firmament with stars. How majestic are your works, the heavens declare your glory and the skies proclaim the work of your hands!

We glorify you, O Lord.

We praise you for you did not abandon us despite our rebellion but sent your Son to brighten our darkness and be our light and our salvation. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humanity. And the light shines in the darkness.

We praise you, O Lord.

We worship you, O Lord, for you accompany us in the chaos of our life through the power of your Holy Spirit. You light up our paths and give us wisdom and faith in a world of untruth and doubt.

We worship you, O Lord.

We thank you, O Lord, for you send us into the world to reflect this light around us, in our various churches and diverse cultures and to witness to Jesus, the one true King, offering ourselves to him.

We thank you, O Lord.

May all the peoples bow before you and worship you. We have often preferred darkness, but you have given us light. Therefore, we come to you confessing our sins and saying:

We confess before you that we have turned away from your ways and disobeyed your ordinances. We have disfigured your good creation and squandered its resources through our consumerist practices. We have polluted your rivers and seas and poisoned your air and soil and contributed to the extinction of many species.

(Kyrie Eleison is sung)

We have acted selfishly towards our brothers and sisters. We have allowed our own needs and desires to prevail over our commitment to justice. We have built walls between us and planted the seeds of distrust towards the other.

(Christe eleison is sung)

We have separated people based on ethnicity, religion and gender and we have claimed Jesus on our side in any war we waged. Forgive all these thoughts and deeds, O Lord, as we come before you in repentance.

(Kyrie Eleison is sung)

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have sent in the fullness of time to redeem all the people, we ask you to have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and transform us into his glorious image so we can shine as a beacon of hope in our troubled world.

(Silence)

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

Thanks be to God, whom we praise with all our voices.

Chant: Trisagion – *sung by Alexandros*

Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!

First Reading Ephesians 5:8-9 (read in Finnish, Norwegian, Vietnamese, Swedish, Greek & English)

Chant *Tui Amoris Ignem* (Taize) *Sung first solo in Arabic, then by all in English.*

Holy Spirit come to us, kindle in us the fire of your love.

Holy Spirit come to us, Holy Spirit come to us.

Gospel Reading Matthew 2:1-12 - *Pål Kristian reads in Norwegian*

1 minute reflection – Pål Kristian in English

Choir anthem / musical reflection

Nicene Creed (*according to the tradition of the Eastern Churches*) -*Joanna introduces*

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,

God from God, 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 and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,

was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary

and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again

in accordance with the Scriptures;

he ascended into 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 worshiped and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Joanna: A star led the Magi to Christ. Today this star points to the presence of Christ, who has been revealed to us and whose light shines on us. As the Magi followed the star to Bethlehem, we gather under this star today, uniting our own gifts and prayers for the visible unity of Church. As we journey towards that goal, may our lives together give a luminous witness that leads others to know Christ. With faith and confidence, we come in prayer, before God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

Kristine: The Magi came from the East to pay homage and offer special gifts from their cultures and countries. We pray today for all Christian communities around the world in all of their diversity of worship and tradition:

Lord we ask you to preserve these treasures, particularly in areas of the world where the presence and survival of Christians is threatened by violence and oppression.

O, Lord hear our prayer

The early years of the Lord's life were marked by violence and massacres at the orders of the despot Herod. We pray for children living in places in the world where violence continues and where its results are tangible:

Strengthen, O Lord, the bonds of unity and mutual love among our churches and help us to cooperate and witness to your holy Name. Inspire us to work without ceasing in order to defend the oppressed and include the marginalized. Encourage us to stand together in the face of tyranny and oppressive regimes as we seek your Kingdom among us.

O, Lord, hear our prayer

After the visit of the Magi, the holy family experienced migration through the wilderness and became refugees in the land of Egypt. We pray for all the refugees and uprooted people in this world:

Equip us, Lord, to show hospitality to those driven from their homes, and grant us the spirit of welcome to those looking for a safe haven.

O, Lord, hear our prayer

The birth of Jesus was good news for all, gathering people from different nations and religions in worship of the holy child. We pray for our efforts to seek harmony and dialogue with other religions: Lord, give us humility and patience to walk with others with respect on their journey.

O, Lord, hear our prayer

The Magi returned to their home by a different way.

We pray for our churches in this changing world:

Lord, help us to find new and creative ways to follow you and to witness to you so that the world may believe.

O, Lord, hear our prayer

When the Magi saw the holy child, they rejoiced with great joy.

Heavenly Father, fix our eyes on him so we do not lose our way. Unite us in the Lord Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, and who has taught us to pray, as we say each in our own languages: **Our Father...**

Sending and Blessing

Anssi: Go now and live as children of light.

For the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.

Let us wake from sleep and Christ will shine upon us.

Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Parting Hymn: (*Tai ze – All peoples praise the Lord*)

Laudate omnes gentes. Laudate dominum.

Laudate omnes gentes. Laudate dominum.