

Caribbean Christians craft unity prayers



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“The people of the Caribbean have a rich story to tell, one that can enrich the spiritual lives of Christians around the world,” said Fr Anthony Curren of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU).

That very story was shared in a heartfelt way this week at an ecumenical gathering to create the first draft of the text that will be used for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018. From 4-9 September, representatives from the Caribbean Council of Churches, World Council of Churches (WCC), and the PCPCU met at the Emmaus Centre in Nassau, the capital city of the Bahamas, to craft prayers that will unify people of faith around the world. The Archdiocese of Nassau, at the invitation of the Holy See (Vatican), hosted the international event.

The Caribbean draft group is basing its theme on the Song of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15, relating the text to the Caribbean experience of slavery,

colonialism and liberation. The 8-day prayer cycle will include themes of human dignity, the modern day slavery of human trafficking, economic justice, and family life, among others.

In choosing the theme of God's glorious deliverance from oppression, the Caribbean authors sought to link action for liberation and justice with the commitment of Christians to work and pray for unity.

"In this UN decade for people of African descent, the resources prepared by the Caribbean group are a call to a post-colonial spirituality that holds together the struggle for visible Christian unity and the struggle for human liberation," noted Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, director of WCC Faith and Order.

As the group edited the materials, they also visited the Pompey Museum of Slavery & Emancipation in Nassau's historic district. Together, the international editorial team acknowledged and honoured the struggles for freedom of the Bahamian and wider Caribbean people.

Since 1968 the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been jointly sponsored by the PCPCU of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC Commission on Faith and Order. Traditionally the week of prayer is celebrated between 18-25 January, between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul. Each year, an ecumenical team of men and women from a different region in the world prepares the material.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU)

The origin of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is closely linked with the Second Vatican Council. The Council is entrusted with the promotion, within the Catholic Church, of an authentic ecumenical spirit according to the conciliar decree *Unitatis redintegratio*. At the same time, it also aims to develop dialogue and collaboration with the other Christian Churches worldwide.

The World Council of Churches (WCC)

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a community of churches on the way to

visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ. It seeks to advance towards this unity, as Jesus prayed for his followers, "so that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

The meeting in Nassau took place at The Emmaus Centre, Fox Hill. The following were participants: Br Martin Browne, osb, Anne-Noelle Clement, Rev. Peter Colwell, Rev. Anthony Currer, Pastor Bernd Densky, Dr Ani Ghazaryan Drissi, Hanne Lamparter, Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus, Rev. Dr Ester Pudjo Wideasih, Rev. Father James Puglisi, sa, Marie-Agnes Pui, Most Rev. Kenneth Richards, Gerard Granado, Rt. Rev. Kingsley Lewis, Rev. Dr Kirkley Sands and Dr Marjorie Lewis. Archbishop Patrick C. Pinder, Bishop Laish Boyd and Rev. Dr Ranford Patterson, President of the Bahamas Christian Council joined the participants for lunch on Tuesday, 6 September.

[More information on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#)