**Overview & Purpose**

First and foremost, please feel free to utilize this and adapt it for your own purposes. I designed this service for use at our association Fall gathering. In addition to the stress that Covid has brought to bear on our congregations and our association, we (the executive committee of the Central Union Association) have been in conversation regarding necessary updates to the constitution and by-laws of our association. In examining who we are, who we have historically been, and who we see God calling us to be in the future, we have broached some very difficult and divisive issues and ideas.

Quite frankly, the CUA is at a cross-road, with some members or congregations talking of going their separate ways. Theological dispute and difference is nothing new, but still we are faced with the question of “what now?” or “where do we go from here?” I had (and still have) the sense that God is calling us together in prayer around scripture. Still we were left with the reality that if we can not gather together in prayer and worship, despite our differences, then there is no point in trying to determine why we associate and nothing to hold us together. BUT, I know that in Christ all things are possible, and so I designed this service of worship with this idea in mind: in Christ we are one.

I hope you find this service useful in the reminder that we are united in Christ, though the world would seek to divide us, we stand on the word of God and we pray even for our enemies.

**Worship Outline**

Welcome & Opening Prayer

Praise Team

Invocation

Historical Overview of Associational Life

Introduction to Concert of Prayer (full text following worship outline)

1. **Ephesians 2:19-22** list CUA churches
2. **1 Peter 5:1-5** Healthy churches and leaders
3. **Exodus 18:17-20** ABCOPAD staff
4. **3 John 1:2-8** Mission efforts and missionaries
5. **Matthew 25:34-40** Hunger and physical needs of our communities
6. **Ephesians 4:1-6** Division and disunity we see within the world; the change starts with us
7. **John 17:18-23** Unity: that all may be one

Praise Team

Lord’s Supper

Blest Be The Tie That Binds (v. 1 sung a Capella)

Benediction and prayer for the fellowship meal

**Concert of Prayer**

Friends, we have heard some of the history which binds and defines us. We have witnessed and been a part of some of the discussions and disagreements which would seek to divide and malign us. And yet we gather here in free association with one another and with God. We seek discernment and direction in our call to discipleship and evangelism.

We gather because, as Hoadley writes in answer to where we go from here*: “we have learned that God is always present, always ready to lead us. Sometimes we follow less wisely than others, but the fault is ours, not God’s. The guiding hand is always available. When will we learn to accept it, differing in our understandings we must, but maintaining love and respect for each other even while we differ?... Sometimes when God breaks through to us, we surprise even ourselves by rising to peaks of active loving and caring that can only be described as noble.”* (Hoadley, By God’s Own Hand, p. 171-72). And so we come now to that most blessed time, when together in faith and fellowship we join our hearts, minds, and voices in a concert of prayer hearing the words of scripture as they come to us from Ephesians 2:19-22:

***19Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.***

And so we pray now for all our association congregations:

#2: 1 Peter 5:1-5

***To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.***

***5In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,***

***“God opposes the proud
    but shows favor to the humble.”***

We pray now for healthy churches and for healthy church leaders…..

#3 Exodus 18:17-20 ***17Moses’ father-in-law replied, “What you are doing is not good. 18You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. 19Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him. 20Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave.***

We pray now for our servant leaders in the ABCOPAD staff…..

#4 3 John 1:2-8

***Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. 3It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. 4I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.***

***5Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters,[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=3+John+1%3A2-8&version=NIV#fen-NIV-30664a)***] even though they are strangers to you. 6They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God. 7It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. 8We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.***

We pray now for our mission efforts and for missionaries…..

#5. Matthew 25:34-40 **34*“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’***

***37“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’***

***40“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’***

We pray now for hunger and addiction, and for the physical and spiritual needs of our communities…

#4 3 John 1:2-8

***Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. 3It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. 4I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.***

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We pray now for our mission efforts and for missionaries…..

#7 John 17: 18-23 ***As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.***

***20“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— 23I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.***

We pray now for unity in Jesus’ prayer that all may be one…