

*A prayer for the church inspired by John 17:21 and based on The United Church of Canada's "A New Creed" and the United Church of Christ's "Statement of Faith (in the Form of a Doxology)." Congregations are invited to share in this prayer on Sunday, October 18, 2015, in celebration of the full communion of these two denominations.*

**That all may be one**

Uniting God,  
you call us into your church to accept the cost and joy  
of discipleship:

to celebrate your presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to be your servants in the service of others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

Send your Holy Spirit to bind us in full communion  
so that we may be a uniting church  
embodying your love for the world.

As one we proclaim:

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
you are with us,  
we are not alone,  
all glory and power be unto you.  
Amen.



## Full Communion

The United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ (USA) share a rich and similar history as "united and uniting" churches in North America. In 2013, both denominations began exploring the call of God toward full communion. This summer, the 30th General Synod of the United Church of Christ, meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, and the 42nd General Council of The United Church of Canada, meeting in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador, approved a full communion agreement. This agreement will be enacted at a service of worship to be held at St. Andrew's United Church, Niagara Falls, Canada, on Saturday, October 17, 2015, at 6:30 p.m.

On Sunday, October 18, congregations of the two denominations throughout North America will share a common prayer celebrating this agreement.

Just what does "full communion" mean? It does not mean a merger between our denominations. Full communion emphasizes an openness to cooperation in terms of witness, mission, worship, and the proclamation of a common faith. While this is the first such agreement for The United Church of Canada, the United Church of Christ has entered several full communion agreements. These partnerships generally rest on five marks of acceptance and cooperation.

## The Five Marks of Full Communion

1. “Common Confession of Christ” – This mark is built upon the common faith shared by both churches, that God is in Christ, “reconciling the world to [God’s self]” (2 Corinthians 5:19), and is the One in whom “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). In an ecumenical partnership, both churches covenant to be mutually accountable in their witness to Christ in the world today.

2. “Mutual Recognition of Members” – Both churches believe that we have much to learn from the expressions of faith found in other Christian communities. In this second affirmation of full communion, both The United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ recognize and affirm each other’s baptisms, and also affirm the members of each other’s churches. In full communion, both churches would agree to the “transfer of membership” between their local congregations “by letter.” Neither church would give up its own approach to the practice of baptism or church membership. Instead, their commitment to each other represents a desire to express their commitment to the fact that any differences in practices in this area should not divide them as churches.

3. “Common Celebration of the Lord’s Supper/Holy Communion” – Since these churches confess Christ in common, and since they recognize each other’s baptism and accept each other’s members in each other’s congregations, it naturally follows that they should encourage congregations to cross borders where they might be geographically close to each other and to share worship and communion together.

4. “Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation of Ordained Ministries” – In full communion, the two churches would affirm each other’s ordained and ordered ministries (in The United Church of Canada ordered ministry includes both ordained and diaconal ministers) as belonging to the one

ministry of Jesus Christ. Ministers in one church will be recognized as ministers in the other church. Each may serve, when invited, as minister to the other. Though ministerial credentials are immediately recognized, each minister will need to go through processes agreed to by each denomination to gain official standing within the denomination.

5. “Common Commitment to Mission” – This fifth mark of full communion between our two churches recognizes that mission is not an option for the church; rather it, like unity, is part of the church’s very essence. When churches are not engaged in mission, they cease to exist as church. As our two denominations enter into full communion, we will explore ways of supporting each other in God’s mission in our own countries and around the world.

For more information on the full communion agreement please go to [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca).

