

Tenth Anniversary of Union.

We celebrate the 10th anniversary of the union of the former Reformed Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa this year. We became the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) on 27 September 1999.

Union and celebrating it is important, because unity amongst Christians is an important Biblical principle. After all, we believe in “one, holy, universal Church”, because the Bible teaches us that there is only one Body under one Head and King. If Christians with the same teachings, doctrine, church government and history cannot “live in one spiritual home”, who can?

We certainly are called to celebrate both our unity and our unity in diversity. Jesus clearly said in John 17 that the unbelieving world will believe that he is Lord and Saviour, if they see that we are one “as he and the Father are one”. This is our challenge and our calling.

Lets be grateful that the Lord thus far protected our Union, in spite of the fact that many practical issues and historical cultural questions still need to be answered and resolved. Let us pray, for the sake of our witness in the world, that we will remain as one and serve the Lord and his Kingdom with fervour, love and passion, understanding his priorities for his work and living according to his principles for his ministry.

A prayer for the Church of Christ and for the UPCSA, as we remember the “journey of union” this week:

Eternal God, most blessed and most Holy, before whom the angels veil their faces,
with humble reverence and adoring love
we acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity,
and worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God.

Lord of heaven and earth,
we thank you for all the ways in which you have blessed humankind
through the work and witness of your world-wide Church.
We bless you for the teaching of the Scriptures,
for the preaching of your Word,
for the grace of the sacraments,
and for our fellowship in Christ with you and with one another.
We thank you for the holy example of your faithful servants
who have gone before us
and pray with them that
we may be counted in the company of the redeemed,
when Jesus comes in glory.

In particular we thank you for
the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa,
as a branch of your one, holy, universal Church,
and for the ten years of our union that you have given us
to express the unity of the Body of Christ.

Forgive us, we pray,
for the times when we have not listened to one another
and for all the ways in which we have not, for the sake of our unity,
set aside our prejudices or what our own group prefers.
Set us free from all our failures in the past
and from all our self-importance and pride, we pray,
so that we may more fully express
the oneness of the Body of Christ in the world.

Almighty God, holy Father of us all,
we ask you to provide the UPCSA with all it needs
to grow into the stature of the fullness of Christ:
teachers to educate children in your love and grace,
Ministers to minister in Word and sacrament,
Elders to serve with diligence and integrity,

carers to care for the needy and the suffering,
and places of worship in which to glorify you.

God our Father, you are the source of all truth and peace.

Hear our prayer also for the whole Church of Christ.

Look with mercy on all your people.

Purify our hearts from all hypocrisy, falsehood and prejudice
that, professing one Lord, one faith and one baptism,
all whom Christ calls may be of one heart and one mind
and come to manifest the unity of the Body of Christ to the world,
to the honour and glory of your Name

We pray for all who spread the gospel,
that through them your Holy Spirit may draw all people to the Father.

We pray for all who do receive the Word,
that they in turn may bear a good witness to your glory.

So guide us by your loving wisdom
that the peace and unity to which you call the family of God
may be realized more and more in our land
and between all people on earth.

Take away from us everything that hinders
the advancement of your truth;

rouse the careless;

turn the wicked to repent;

restore the penitent;

strengthen and confirm the faithful;

protect and guide our children;

comfort and heal the sick and the afflicted
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God, bless Africa:

guard her children,

guide her leaders

and give her peace,

for Jesus Christ's sake.

Amen.

Jesus Leef! Jesus is alive!

uJesu u ya phila! Jesu oa phela! Yesu wa hanya!