

CHRISTIAN UNITY

25 January, 2016

This year the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity fell during the period 17 to 24 January. In the Marseille area, several events were held to mark this occasion. One of the largest was the service held at the Abbey of St Victor on Place Saint-Victor, 13007 Marseille. This diverse service was sponsored and conducted by the Comité Œcuménique Interconfessionnel de Marseille.

The President and overall host of the service was Monsignor Georges Pontier, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Marseille. He was accompanied at the service by Monsignor Jean-Marc Aveline, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese.

As usual, the worship service, was designed by Christians of a specific area of the world and then jointly endorsed and published by the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. Late last summer, this year's service was designed by the people of Latvia. The service format was received and adapted by the local Ecumenical Committee to meet the needs of Marseille. The 2016 Latvian service was focussed on the great gifts that come from God and it used as its symbols Salt and Light.

Marseille is a very religiously diverse community and one which prides itself on religious tolerance and communal acceptance. Along with vibrant Jewish and Islamic communities stand many expressions of Christian faith and these Christian denominations work together faithfully and respectfully. This week's 2016 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service saw active participation from the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Anglican, Baptist, Evangelical Lutheran, and Evangelical Protestant clergy and religious leaders.

At one moment during the service, the entire congregation was invited to come forward and the local Scouts distributed a teaspoon of salt and a candle into each pair of faithful hands. This was to reflect the scripture that says "You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world". During the distribution of these symbols an Orthodox priest sang the *Phos Hilaron*, which is sung at sunset in Orthodox and Anglican liturgies.

All Saints' Anglican Church was well represented at the service. Our Father David was one of the five religious leaders selected to sit at the front of the Abbey as co-leaders with Monsignor Pontier and to represent the breath of Christianity. Our Honorary Assistant Priest, the Reverend Riitta Granroth proclaimed the gospel of St Matthew.



The Scouts, in their yellow tunics, distribute the symbols of Salt and Light to the congregation.

It was a grand gathering and a visual and spiritual nourishment. Using the images of the service it was a visible light and a well-seasoned expression of the ongoing desire that all Christians should be one as Christ and the Father are one.



Our Pastor, the Reverend Riitta Granroth (wearing the red stole) proclaims the gospel of St Matthew, while our Father David Greenwood sits, at centre, with the other designed co-leaders of the service.