

***Prayers from Africa* (adapted from *A Procession of Prayers*, ed. John Carden, c. 1998 by World Council of Churches Publications.)**

Call to Worship (Africa: prepared by women on behalf of their children)

Jesus, we want to grow in knowledge.

Help us to grow in body, mind and spirit.

Jesus, we want to grow in faith.

We thank you for the people of faith in bible times and in our times whose lives are an example to us.

Jesus, we want to grow in hope.

We pray for all who are helping to bring freedom, peace and justice in our world.

Jesus, we want to grow in love.

Help us to love one another as you have loved us and given yourself for us.

We pray for those who today are giving their lives for others.

Unison Prayer (from Zimbabwe)

Open my eyes that they may see the deepest needs of the people; move my hands that they may feed the hungry; touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing; teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers; let me share my possessions to clothe the naked; give me the care that strengthens the sick; make me share in the quest to set the prisoner free. In sharing our anxieties and our love, our poverty and our prosperity, we partake of your divine presence.

Unison Prayer of Dedication: (Prayer for the Hungry, Kenya)

O Lord, and heavenly Father, we commend to your care the men, women, and children of our country and of all Africa who are suffering distress and anxiety because of lack of food. Strengthen and support them, we pray, and grant that the world may grow in understanding of your ways and in sharing with each other the good gifts which you have given us; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Suggested Hymns

From the New Century Hymnal you might choose:

Siyahamb' (526)

Jesu, Jesu, Fill us with Your Love (498)

Called as Partners in Christ's Service (495)

Blessed Be the Tie That Binds (393)

Thank Our God for Sisters, Brothers (397)

Consider using Masithi (760) instead of the Gloria Patri.

Customs:

Here is some information about customs in the church in Zimbabwe that might be interesting to share on Ukama/Partnership Sunday.

Hand washing is an act of hospitality among members of the churches and a ritual that begins every church meal. This is how it is done: Two people stand together, one with a pitcher of water, the other with a basin and towel draped over the arm. (Usually these are women or young girls) The twosome moves around the community to serve. The one with the pitcher pours a small amount of water slowly over the person's hands. The water is caught in the basin and the towel is offered. Every one participates, then the event begins. This happens in homes, in churches at pot-lucks or other common meals, even at meetings (whether it's a break for a meal or for afternoon tea!) There is a lot of eye contact while all this is going on, and always smiles. It is a gracious custom, and quite moving.

At the communion table, the same ritual is observed by the officiant before touching any of the elements. Sometimes the pitcher is omitted, and the minister simply rinses his or her hands in a small basin.

Offering: The reception of the offering is also quite interesting. The offering is gathered up by a number of people who walk through the congregation and receive it in bags, baskets, bowls and even on open hymn books or Bibles. Sometimes it is brought forward, often with people dancing! At many of the churches the offering is counted as it is received, so that the amount given can be announced and celebrated!

Relinquishing Seats: As newcomers arrive, those who have been sitting on benches move out of their seats and onto the floor (or ground) so that those who have walked a long way can have a comfortable seat. (There are seemingly always more people than seats!) One pastor in Zimbabwe, commenting on this act of hospitality said, "Remember it is very hot, and someone has been walking for a long distance in sun to come to church. When the chair is given it is a gesture of welcome and recognition that you have come far and must rest in the best place." It might also interest you to know that worship seating is still most often segregated by gender.

Worship is filled with singing and dancing, accompanied by drumming and hoshos (gourd-like seed-filled shakers). Most every aspect of worship is wrapped in song. Generally, one person simply begins singing, and the others will join in on the hymn. And the dancing also seems to begin spontaneously, until all are in the act! It seems that most know all the verses to all the hymns! Not everyone has a hymnal. When someone is asked to pray, he or she will usually sing a verse of a hymn before praying.