



# UNIVERSAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR STUDENTS 2023

WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION

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## 1. INTRODUCTION OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

### **Get up and do not be afraid**

This year the Universal Day of Prayer of Students -UDPS- is focusing on one of the main themes that were worked on with student delegates during the 37th General Assembly of the WSCF held in Berlin in 2022: the status of democracy and human rights and its relation with uprising fundamentalisms.

The advancement of conservative movements in their different -political, cultural, religious, and economic- faces maintains a contradictory relationship with the stability of democratic processes. It affects, as an utter phase, the fulfillment of the human rights agenda. On the one hand, we have seen how the fundamentalist narratives have slowly become a more central narrative, and anti-democratic movements have grown in followers, consequently, in parliaments and government offices. On the other hand, a world over(un)informed by digital media content and technological advances has become a less free and anomic world, with segmented audiences needing access to the right to information.

This analysis also correlates with the ambiguous misuse of religious symbols and scriptures, which strengthens a new worldwide wave of Christian conservatism that is opposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

From that analysis, the WSCF has been observing that the greater are the advances in technology and digital development, in a context of a hyper-connected society, and the least are the possibilities for communication and interdependence of people that pretend to work in solidarity when it comes to coordinating transformative practice to "stop evil" through new narratives of justice and abundant life. This paradox of a more connected but less informed and communicated world aims to continue to shape people into better consumers and create what we now call a new hegemony of post-truth to the detriment of socio-democratic and cultural hegemonies imposed by western societies after the 90s. This hegemony reinforced the idea of the end of history and a world with no more alternatives than the democratic liberal white and man-led capitalism.

One of the main consequences of this process is and will continue to be the loss of trust in the structures of modernity and the failure of faith once placed in the institutions of liberal democracy - so often criticised by the Federation and many progressive ecumenical organisations - now put into a diversity of liquid narratives that are powerful in convincing people. This can only generate more social control and loss of roots. And, therefore, a new desert and emptiness. Most humanity, particularly the working classes and marginalised people, lose their faith in collective processes the most they are susceptible to being controlled by engaging them in an aspirationally seeking the illusion of belonging to the elites to protect their status quo.

Fundamentalisms are then at the service of the digital age's new forms of corporate capitalism and, therefore, at the service of anti-democratic processes and social, religious and economic narratives that threaten the fulfillment of fundamental rights and people's self-determination.

The WSCF is a space for a critical analysis of the reality from a broad political perspective. It is fundamentally a space for biblical and theological reflection, and an ecumenical and liturgical celebration in favour of life.

This prayer we join as an international Federation and family puts us in communion with each other and with the love and hope that Jesus Christ gives to strengthen us mutually to continue to be a counter-hegemonic movement. Still, Jesus calls us to "get up and don't be afraid".

## 2. UDPS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Every year individuals, churches and communities around the world unite to lift up students in prayer on Student Sunday, also known as the Universal Day of Prayer for Students (UDPS). Student Sunday is coordinated by the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and has been celebrated since 1898, making it one of the oldest ecumenical days of prayer. It serves as one of the tangible signs of our common life and the connection between students and alumni of the WSCF all around the world. The UDPS was first celebrated on Sunday 13th February 1898 at the second meeting of what was then known as the General Committee of the World Student Christian Federation. The participants of the Federation's then ten-member movements believed intercessory prayer should be a vital ingredient in the life of a worldwide body of Christian students.

As a result, the early leaders of the Federation called on Christian students around the world to join together in February each year for observance of the Universal Day of Prayer for Students. During the world wars when it was impossible to hold the WSCF meetings, the major bond of unity between those separated from one another by the ravages of war was the annual observance of the Day of Prayer for Students. For more than a century students and friends of the WSCF have observed this Day of Prayer as a way to express their common commitment as witnesses of our faith in God and in each other, to the world both inside and outside our academic communities.

The WSCF publishes ecumenical worship services on a theme that relates to the Federation's theme of study for the year or responds to current events and issues of concern to the world's students.

## 3. PROPOSAL FOR THE 2023 UDPS CELEBRATION

The following suggestions can help developing the celebration. Please, feel free to consider them and/or adapt them according to your contexts and groups.

- Appoint a small committee of interested persons to organize the service and to assign parts to leaders and readers. Try to involve a diverse group of people to prepare for the liturgy.
- Try to organize a good choir to lead the singing. The choir may vary/change the sung parts and select different hymns or songs if desired. Parts to be sung may be spoken if preferred.
- You can also replace the suggested songs in this liturgy to adapt to your local language and customs. Brainstorm creative and symbolic acts in the service that would serve to highlight the theme.
- Give adequate time for the preacher (student, Senior Friend, or clergy) to prepare a short sermon (recommended 7-12 minutes). She, he, they may select other Bible readings for the service as the spirit leads.
- If you wish to add a service of Eucharist together with this prayer service, please do so according to your tradition.
- Organize the collection. This year, devote your collection to help support the work of the Federation.
- Inform churches in different parts of the country and invite them to organize this service in their local congregations or fellowship.

## 4. BIBLICAL READING

God-Community, God-Family, God-Trinity,

We thank you for this one and diverse community in which we meet and recognize each other as brothers and sisters. You have been, are and will be in our lives now and always. Your kairos is in everything and everyone.

Allow us to recognize your presence as that light that comes to disturb us and guide us. May we recognize You in the joy of praise, in the silence of prayer, in the depth of your Word.

Help us to follow You, so that we can think creatively and prophetically about the questions and answers of our time.

Help us to serve You by practicing justice so that your message of hope encourages your people; and your Gospel of freedom becomes more a reality and less a dream to conquer. That just as you called your disciples to accompany you to the mountain, or to the valley, to the sea or to the house, today we can stay by your side wherever we are to bear witness and show the sparkles of your love to those who need it.

Amen.

### The transfiguration (Matthew 17: 1-9)

**17** Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

**2** And he was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.

**3** Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

**4** Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

**5** While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

**6** When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.

**7** But Jesus came and touched them saying "Get up and do not be afraid."

**8** When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

**9** As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

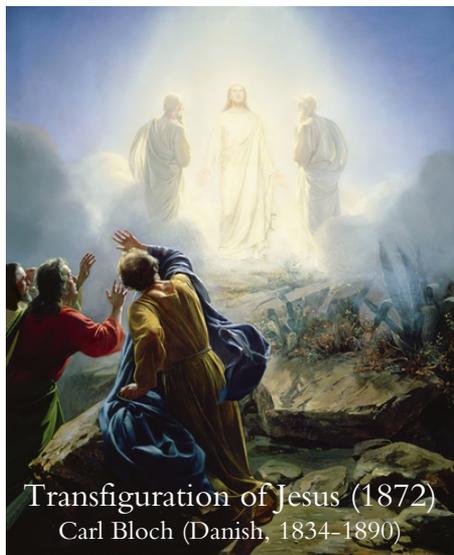
## 5. INTERACTIVE REFLECTION

“Get up and do not be afraid.”

Summary of text: Jesus goes to a mountain top to pray with Peter, James and John. He shines like the Sun, and speaks with Moses and Elijah. The disciples are terrified to hear the voice of God calling them to listen to Jesus, but Jesus tells them not to fear. They come down from the mountain.

### Themes for reflection:

- The call from Christ not to fear supports the WSCF themes of support for human rights and democracy and opposition to fundamentalism.
- God invites us to look at the true essence beyond the surface appearance.
- To reflect on the meaning of the Transfiguration of Christ helps us to see God in our lives and be transformed.
- Be unafraid, faith can transform the world.
- Overcoming fear enables us to join together in the spirit of truth and love and justice.
- Stand up in courage. Faith gives us confidence and ability and vision to confront the powers of the world.
- The Transfiguration symbolises how Christ connects us to the eternal truth of God.
- Taking time together for reflection and learning and prayer energises us to work for change and justice.
- Authentic faith can resonate with people.
- As we confront fear, we must challenge the false religion of fundamentalism.
- Fundamentalism is mistaken in claiming the only truth and denying the validity of other views.
- Such exclusive attitudes remove the Gospel call for liberation.
- God is revealed in a new way to every one of us.
- God's transforming revelation has to be open to God's revelation in others.
- Ecumenism embraces diverse experience, recognising other cultures with respect.
- Don't deny others through prejudice and fixed structures.
- Allow us to see God's presence in the experience of everyone.
- The Gospel calls us to change the world.
- Fear versus freedom - We are called by Christ to overcome fear through faith and love.
- Faith should be based on values of love, freedom, truth and inclusion - seeing possibilities
- Love can overcome obstacles to construct the reign of justice and truth.
- SCMs work to overcome fears of prejudice and difference
- Faith brings us together in honesty and openness



Transfiguration of Jesus (1872)  
Carl Bloch (Danish, 1834-1890)

## 6. PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

### **Prayer for Youth and Students**

**By Bob Luiz Botelho, SCM Brazil**

Today we want to join our prayers with our global community for our youth and for every student in our nation. We pray for an end to the institutional violence that our youth suffers by having their rights constantly withdrawn through parliamentarians and rulers who, instead of looking at our youth as a power, see our existence as a threat. We pray for each student who overcomes the challenges of investing and believing in education as a power of transformation and that feeds the collective dream of a country transformed by a liberating education. We pray with joy and happiness for student and youth movements that perpetuate historical legacies in the political transformation of our nation, and we intercede that the flame of youth committed to justice continues to reach every heart. We bless each person, institution and organization, public or organized civil society, which has united in supporting the struggle for youth rights and policies for access to quality education and student permanence. May the Sun of Justice rise over our horizon bringing hope and the announcement of a Good News that promotes life in fullness and dignity for our youth. Amen.

### **Prayer of intercession for a people that suffers**

**By Members of SCM Peru**

Creator, we are in a very hard time for our country. There is a political and social crisis with historical roots, the result of the oppression and greed of the "powerful" ones. The youth and students of the SCM of Peru, in intercessory prayer, we ask you:

- For the cessation of excessive violence, allowed, encouraged and conducted by the State, chaired by Dina Boluarte. Multiple human rights such as life, freedom of expression and protest are violated daily. We call for clear and forceful solutions to the just demands of the citizenry, which include ways for the participation of all.
- That the churches demonstrate with deeds and not only with words their identification, solidarity and empathy with people in need. That regardless of their political positions, they can be agents of peace and equal dialogue in their prophetic role. May they have the wisdom not to hide in "neutrality" in the face of rights violations, or in the face of the suffering of people whose voices are silenced or criminalized.
- That you help us to restore the historical wounds of our country and that justice be the daily bread. That we seek the good of the Other regardless of cultures, ethnic groups, races, or social classes, and that there be a single feeling for peace and justice in Peru. Likewise, we pray that the relatives of those killed and injured in this context find justice and manage to heal the pain they now experience.
- May this social conflict that we are experiencing today be an opportunity to start a new process of reconstruction of the State, the restructuring of the Police and a real inclusion of the rights of all sectors and ethnic peoples present in Peruvian territory.

We pray that the Holy Spirit infuses life for all the people of God so that they can fulfill their prophetic role in the midst of so much massacre, so much repression, so much injustice, so much exclusion, so much racism and so much discrimination.

In you we trust, oh God. Amen.

**Prayer from Belarus:**

Father of all people, Mighty God and Creator! You have not forsaken the world but, out of love, you sent your only Son to open the path to your Kingdom and to release us from the power of sin, evil, hell and death. You send your Holy Spirit to sanctify the world, so that our hearts may turn to you, our eyes may see the truth, our ears may hear the voice of conscience, our mouths may proclaim the Gospel, our hands may yield goodness, and our feet may walk by the way of justice.

You created your Church to continue the work of your Kingdom — the work of peace and justice, of caring love that heals wounds, of unshakable hope that strengthens the spirit.

Your Gospel, oh Lord, is the Gospel of peace, which is inseparable from justice, truth, freedom and love. For peace to prevail, we must partake in your works — strengthen us for this mission by your grace.

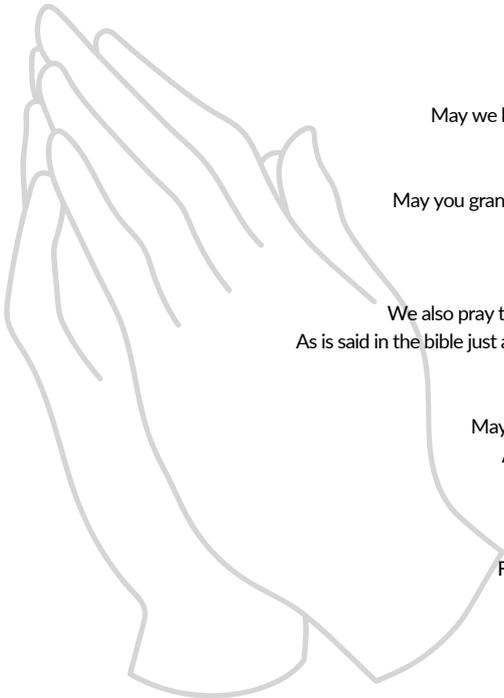
Your breath, oh Lord, is the breath of freedom. You stand on the side of the prosecuted, not the prosecutors. Save us from violence and oppression, and spare us from using freedom for evil and subjugation of the others. Lord, you love those who does justice. Give us conscience and reason to discern good from evil, truth from falsity, and strengthen us in our determination to stand up for justice.

We pray for all who suffer violence, imprisonment, denigration, persecution and torture. Lord, heal and strengthen them, enable them to overcome fear, guide them and give them assistance.

We pray also for those, who do evil and injustice. Lord, heal their hearts from brutality and insensibility and bring them to repentance.

Lord, we pray to you for Belarusian Churches: let them be aware of their mission and — in unity, solidarity and selflessness — seek your truth, do your will and be envoys of your Kingdom — of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit now and forever and to the ages of ages.

Amen.



**Prayer from Britain  
By Jennifer Blackledge**

God of Justice

May we live in a world where we can stand up to injustice

Where we can protest freely

Were striking workers are not suppressed

May you grant us the strength to carry on even in times of trial

God of mercy

We Pray for Refugees and Asylum seekers

We pray for their safety

We also pray that they may be treated with dignity and respect

As is said in the bible just as you did it to the least of these you did it to me.

God of love

May you fill our hearts with compassion

May you open our eyes to the injustices of the world

And fill our minds with the strength to fight them

Because through christ anything is possible

God of forgiveness

Forgive us when we don't speak out

Forgive us for when we have not been hospitable

Forgive us for when we ignore your call

In Jesus name we pray

Amen

### **Prayers for Asia Pacific Region**

Loving and gracious God of justice and hope, we pray to you in the name of Jesus Christ for a world without fear. Across the region of Asia and the Pacific, too many people live in fear. We pray for an end to fears of war, of oppression, of injustice, of violence, of poverty, of upheaval. May all people uphold the transforming values of respect for universal human rights and dignity. We call for ecumenical solidarity to create the just peace of God in all nations. Our prayers are with all students and people across our region. In Myanmar, the military coup of 1 February 2021 removed democracy and began the murder and arrest of thousands of people. We pray for an end to the climate of fear in Myanmar. We pray for justice in the Philippines, where the allegiance of the national government is to the powerful. We pray for an end to policies and laws in the Philippines that oppress the downtrodden, and that create poverty, harm and fear. We pray for Hong Kong and Taiwan, where intimidation by China has created the threat of war. In Australia we pray for the success of the coming referendum to establish an Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the national constitution. We pray for Student Christian Movements and their supporters across the Asia Pacific Region, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Timor Leste. May all SCMs be inspired by the call of the transfigured Christ to his disciples not to be afraid, and may all SCMs join Christ in confronting the powers of the world in the name of God. Amen

God of power and might, we pray for those beholden to the powerful, abused by the mighty and unassailable, and losing out in life's struggle for dignity. May we recognise the complexity of power and how we engage with it. In our global relationships tainted by Empire and colonialism, in our trade relationships swayed by wealth and private interests, in our ethical relationships poisoned by disinformation and misinformation, may we be ever vigilant over how we use the power that we have, and how we challenge the misuse of power in the world. May we find ways to bring life into situations where abuse of power has caused death and destruction, to create communities of love and truth, to stand in solidarity with all who seek to overcome the tyranny of the powerful, and to be a part of the patient challenge to the ways of power.

Amen

### **Prayer for Africa Region**

**By: Pastor MacDuff Nkhoma**

Thank you God for Africa, this continent belongs to you. We thank you for creating us in your image. We confess sins that we have committed as a continent, Lord forgive us and cleanse us from every unrighteousness in Jesus name. As young people in this continent we are facing a lot of opposition, spiritual and physical so help us and cover us with your blood that we may not stray. There is poverty among young people, lack of employment which leads to unrighteous activities among young people and students, we pray for your provision and strength so that we remain faithful to the calling. Protect us from any cyclone that may in danger our lives. We pray that you help us to love each other as you love us. Help us as young people not to compromise on your word and way of living. So we surrender African and all its nations in your hand as you help us to be faithful in all areas of life in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we have prayed Amen!

**"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on me a Sinner"  
(Opportunity to share more intercession prayers)**

## 7. SONGS

### ENGLISH HYMNS

#### Open eyes

Open my eyes, Lord  
Help me to see Your face  
Open my eyes, Lord  
Help me to see  
Open my ears, Lord  
Help me to hear Your voice  
Open my ears, Lord  
Help me to hear  
Open my heart, Lord  
Help me to love like You  
Open my heart, Lord  
Help me to love  
And the first shall be last  
And our eyes are opened  
And we'll hear like never before  
And we'll speak in new ways  
And we'll see God's face in places we've never  
known  
I live within You  
Deep in Your heart, oh love  
I live within You  
Rest now in me  
Open my eyes, Lord  
Help me to see Your face  
Open my eyes, Lord  
Help me to see  
Help me to see Your face  
Help me to hear  
Help me to hear Your voice  
Help me to love  
Help me to love like You  
Help me to see

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[Chords](#)



#### How Good Lord to be here

- 1 How good, Lord, to be here!  
your glory fills the night;  
your face and garments, like the sun,  
shine with unborrowed light.
- 2 How good, Lord, to be here,  
your beauty to behold,  
where Moses and Elijah stand,  
your messengers of old.
- 3 Fulfiller of the past,  
promise of things to be:  
we hail your body glorified,  
and our redemption see.
- 4 Before we taste of death,  
we see your Kingdom come;  
we still would hold the vision bright,  
and make this hill our home.
- 5 How good, Lord, to be here!  
yet we may not remain;  
but since you bid us leave the mount  
come with us to the plain.

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[Text](#)

[Music](#)

### Christ, upon the mountain peak

Christ, upon the mountain peak  
stands alone in glory blazing;  
Let us if we dare to speak,  
with the saints and angels praise him.  
Alleluia!  
Trembling at his feet we saw  
Moses and Elijah speaking.  
All the prophets and the law  
shout through them their joyful greeting.  
Alleluia!  
Swift the cloud of glory came,  
God proclaiming in its thunder  
Jesus as his Son by name!  
Nations, cry aloud in wonder.  
Alleluia!  
This is God's beloved Son!  
Law and prophets fade before him;  
First and last and only one,  
Let creation now adore him.  
Alleluia!  
Words © 1977 Hope Publishing Company, 380 S  
Main Pl, Carol Stream, IL 60188

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### SPANISH HYMN

#### Transfigúrame

Autor: Padre Juan Andrés Barrera. Colombia.  
/// "¡Que bueno es estar aquí!" ///  
dijo Pedro al contemplar tu gloria.  
Y se oyó una voz:  
// "Este es mi Hijo, él es mi amado: escuchádle" //  
// Y hoy estoy aquí a tus pies, Señor. //  
Transfigúrame y envuélveme en luz,  
contigo quiero ser amada del Padre.  
/// "¡Qué bueno es estar aquí!" ///  
puedo decir al contemplar tu gloria.  
// ¡Y hoy estás aquí, Oh, Hijo de Dios! //  
// Tranfigúrame y envuélveme en luz,  
contigo quiero ser amada del Padre. //

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## 8. BLESSING

God be above you, below you, beside you.  
Let not a day pass when you do not feel God's presence  
carrying you and protecting and strengthening you.  
May God be in you.  
Let not a day pass when you do not draw strength for your  
actions and confidence for your life from God.  
So bless you the merciful, the living.  
May God bless you.  
Amen.

## 9. CREDITS

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