

Church of South India
70th Anniversary Celebrations
Theme: Pilgrim Journey towards Forgiveness and Reconciliation
24th September 2017
Order of Service

Call to Worship

L: O God of eternal forgiveness, as we commemorate this CSI Sunday, we invoke your abiding presence amidst us!

O God, the Son, Christ of reconciliation, as we celebrate the spirit of oneness with all the other members of CSI we invoke your grace and mercy that have reconciled us to God, the Father!

O God, the Holy Spirit, as we continue to worship, inspire us to extend the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation to the broken humanity and the world!

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, we have gathered here in the name of the triune God who called us to experience fuller life, greater peace and closer fellowship through the Church of South India. Jesus Christ, through his death and resurrection, has broken down the walls of hostility to reconcile us and creation to God and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation. In this pilgrim journey of forgiveness and reconciliation, God keeps forgiving our trespasses, let us also commit to forgive the trespasses that are done against us.

C: God of forgiveness and reconciliation, enable us in this pilgrim journey to be channels of your love to ensure harmony with each other and among your creation. Amen

Opening Hymn:

Opening Prayer

L: Our creator God, who has sent the only begotten son on a pilgrim journey to the world, we remain grateful to you for granting the gift of life in this pilgrim journey on earth. You have always been the co-traveller with us and enabled us to experience your forgiveness in our individual and community lives. It is our prayer on this special day that you would continue to empower us to be your co-workers to channel your forgiveness to the hurting world. Enhance our commitment to continue the ministry of reconciliation that Jesus has entrusted on us through the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Pilgrim Journey of the Church of South India:

L: God of life and history, we recall your goodness and faithfulness all through the 70 years of life of the Church of South India. Through every session of the synod assembly you showed the way forward revealing your mission for this church.

L: In March 1948, January 1950 and January 1952, you inspired the Church of South India in its infancy as she started putting forth her first steps clinging to you in faith and love.

C: *Hallelu...Hallelu...Hallelu...Hallelujah...Praise ye the Lord! (to be sung after every prayer)*

L: In January 1954 at Madras, You encouraged the Church to discuss on the New Pattern for the Church in India towards its becoming. In January 1956 at Tiruchirapalli and January 1958

C: We are grateful for your faithfulness throughout the past. Trusting in the same faithfulness for the future may you now bless the Church of South India. Open our ears to sincerely listen to your word; open our eyes to see your image in each one of us; open our hearts to faithfully seek forgiveness and act towards reconciliation. Amen

Prayer of Confession

L: Dear brothers and sisters, sometimes we carry on our lives as if there was no God and we fall short of being a credible witness to God's mission. Hear to what God demands from us:

L: "Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff".

C: God, You have called us to be your witnesses but, we have been thinking more only about our needs and not prioritizing the needs of your mission. Forgive us, O God.

L: "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter, when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

C: God, You have called us to be your witnesses but, we have been mere spectators and insensitive to the needs of our fellow sojourners in this journey. We see, yet sightless, we hear, yet heedless, we speak, yet soundless. Forgive us, O God.

L: What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

C: God, You have called us to be your witnesses but, we are divided on the basis of socio-cultural barriers and broken on the basis of caste and class, we have failed to realize that we have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us, to be used only to edify each other's ministry and mission.

O Lord, there is a world of people around us who need to know your love, who need light to shine in their darkness, Love and mercy to bring them home. We have a word to give them; A sure and certain hope to share with them.

Lord, forgive our silence in the face of injustice, forgive our silence in the face of our neighbours' suffering, Forgive us for clinging to hope instead of sharing it, For our hesitant, selective, conditional love. Forgive us Lord, not because we deserve it, But because you promised it. Not because we have reached our destiny, but because we are still on a pilgrimage of forgiveness and reconciliation.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

L: *The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more. Psalms 121:8.*

Surely then God will count your steps and but not keep track of your sin. Job 14:16.

Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths. Isaiah 2:3

The Lord knows our journey, he watches our ways, he is ready to wash our tired and callous feet filled with stains of sin and marks of evil ways, The Lord will write his divine love on our

hearts again, Let our eyes reflect it, our mouths proclaim it, and our lives declare it, In the name of Jesus, our Lord, our Friend and our Life. **Amen.**

The Collect for the day:

O pilgrim God, who journeys with us, we thank you and praise you for your abiding presence and sustaining grace upon the united and uniting Church of South India for the past seventy years. Grant us grace to love the unloved, touch the untouched, heal the divisions, transform the exploitative structures, empower the margins and strive for justice, peace and integrity of all creation through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord who forgives and reconciles now and for ever. Amen

Ministry of the Word:

Old Testament: Genesis 33:1-20

Lyric/Hymn:

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Psalms 85

Hymn:

Gospel lesson: John 8:1-11

Sermon: Theme: "Pilgrim journey towards forgiveness and reconciliation"

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Announcements:

Offertory Hymn or Lyric:

Prayers of Intercession:

L: The Church of South India in its pilgrim journey is celebrating its 70 years of united life and witness in this nation. We acknowledge and thank you for the 70 years of independent India and the contribution of the Church towards its Nation Building. We pray, O Lord that you bless our President, the Prime Minister, the Governors and the Chief Ministers and all those who are in authority under them, give them wisdom and courage as they ponder upon decisions affecting peace and the future of the world. Bless our nation and make it true to the ideas of freedom and justice. Pilgrim with them as they uphold the values of your reign in building an egalitarian society with ethos of secularism and democracy

C: Dwell among us and set us on a pilgrim journey towards responsible citizenship

L: In our pilgrim journey, we remember and pray for the gift of children among us. You made them the citizens of your kin-dom and said that unless one becomes like them, one shall not

enter the kin-dom of God. At this time, we remember those children whose lives are always at risk, abused, rights denied and forced into labour and flesh trade. Children who are differently abled and those who are always aspiring for a safe space within family, school, church and wider community. Help us O Lord, to realize your reign in and through them and to create a violent-free, safe and friendly space grounded in the values of respect and dignity. Enable us to realize the potential you have placed in them by liberating them from the clutches of abuse, ignorance, commodification and neglect.

C: Dwell among us and set us on a pilgrim journey towards child centered communities

L: We remember women who suffer because what should be uncovered is covered up, women who have been humiliated, harassed and stigmatized and dare not tell, women who have been beaten, tortured and threatened, and cannot tell, have limitations and restrictions in the structure of life and in various forms are being used, abused and misused; forgive us for our complicity in silence and concealment, Transforming God, who turned the Samaritan woman from the excluded 'other' to be the bearer of your gospel, we pray that you will transform the minds and hearts of your people in building a just and egalitarian society where women can walk free without fear, where women and men become partners in your pilgrim mission of welcoming, embracing, relating, creating and weaving together into God's community on this earth.

C: Dwell among us and set us on a pilgrim journey towards achieving a Gender just society

L: Gracious God, we pray for the elderly who are placed among us as emblems of your grace and wisdom. We remember their feebleness and their yearnings of wanting to be embraced, loved and cared for. We recall the many who are neglected and ignored, left to suffer and die on the streets and those who are helpless due to their terminal illness. Give grace to those that find it difficult to come to terms with other people caring for them, knowing that Your grace is sufficient. Enable us to understand that You trusted an old man to build an ark and save humanity from the flood. You brought a child to Abraham and Sarah despite their years, a child who signalled the beginning of Israel. You guided an aging Moses through the desert so he could lead thousands to the promised-land. Help us to realize O lord that those were the hands which cleansed our soiled feet and those were the feet which walked miles to give us a living. Help us to love, support and respect the elderly as you do, Open our eyes to see those around us who are lonely, frightened or cold – and give us the compassion to take the time to listen to their stories, to bring them into our own homes and families, and to care for them as you do.

C: Dwell among us and set us on a pilgrim journey towards recognizing the potential and wisdom of the elders

L: Loving Lord we thank You for all the young people who have trusted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. We see that there is a vital need for them to grow in the faith and to become established in the truth of the gospel of grace. We pray that they may develop a spirit of reverence and humility towards You and a desire to walk in spirit and truth as they submit to the Holy Spirit - knowing that the fear of God and reverence towards the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. May they grow in grace and become more committed to the cause of the gospel. May they grow in courage and stand for the truth of your kingdom. Guard them from all that would cause them to stumble and guide them into all truth, give them the spirit of discernment and a heart of readiness to serve the community as Jesus modelled.

C: Dwell among us and set us on a pilgrim journey towards being committed Disciples of Christ.

L: Lord Jesus, when you multiplied the loaves and fishes, you provided more than food for the body, you offered us the gift of yourself, the gift which satisfies every hunger and quenches every thirst! When your disciples were filled with fear and doubt, you poured out your love and compassion on the migrant crowd, welcoming them as brothers and sisters. We remember before you O Lord those who suffer as refugees and migrants compelled to live a sectionalized life in the periphery of society. Their displacements and the forced eviction due to war and violence and the misery and sufferings of the migrant communities. Help us O Lord, to banish fear from our hearts, that we may embrace each of your children as our own brother and sister; to welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity, while responding to their many needs; to realize that you call all people to learn the ways of peace and justice; to share of our abundance as you spread a banquet before us; and to give witness to your love for all people, as we celebrate the many gifts they bring.

C: **Dwell among us and set us on a pilgrim journey towards building an egalitarian society.**

L: Dear God, in our pilgrim journey, we pray for the Marthoma Church, the Church of North India, their office bearers, Bishops, Clergy and members, World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Christian Conference of Asia, Communion of Churches in India, National Council of Churches in India, and all other Ecumenical endeavours and people of other faiths. We specially pray for the Church of South India, the office bearers, the episcopate, the presbyterate, the deaconate, the sisterhood, all the 24 Dioceses, churches mission fields, hospitals, colleges, schools, homes for differently abled, homes for the elderly and weak, the mission partners of the Church of South India and ourselves, your faith community.

C: **Dwell among us and set us on a pilgrim journey towards faithful fellowship**

Closing Hymn:

Lord's Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

L: Our most gracious God, we acknowledge your forgiving presence in our worship. enable us to forgive and reconcile in our pilgrim journey. Empower us to comprehend the implications of forgiveness and reconciliation as participating in the reign of God. Enlighten us to respond and accept your call to be the ministers of your reconciliation.

C: **God who is the beginning and the end, we thank you for enabling us to realize that we are only pilgrims in this legacy of this great Church of South India. You have enabled us to leave familiar things and to leave our "comfort zones". You have inspired us to open our eyes to new experiences, open our ears to hear you speaking to us and now, we open our hearts to your love. Grant that this time spent on pilgrimage may help us to see ourselves as we really are and may we strive to become the people you would want us to be. Amen**

Benediction

L: May God the Father who created you, guide your footsteps, May God the Son who redeemed you, share your journey, May God the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you, lead you on life's pilgrimage, and the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you wherever you may go. **Amen.**

(If case of a communion service kindly follow from the Breaking of the Bread part from the CSI Book of Common Worship)