

WEEK 5 “Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship” FOR THE DIVERSITY OF RACES AND CULTURES, Book of Common Prayer, p. 840

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.




CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

This prayer is included in the “Prayers and Thanksgivings” section toward the back of the Prayer Book. It is found under the heading, *Thanksgiving for the Social Order* (p. 840). It was drafted by a laywoman, Caroline Rose (Mrs. Lawrence), who also wrote Prayer 22, *For Sound Government* (p. 821-822), and drafted Prayer 8, *For the Mission of the Church* (pp. 816-817), and Prayer 36, *For the Oppressed* (p. 826).

It was first included in the 1979 Prayer Book. What changed/happened during the 50 years between the publication of the 1928 Prayer Book and the 1979 Prayer Book that you think may have prompted the addition of this single prayer of thanksgiving along with so many new prayers about concerns for the social order?

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

I Corinthians 12. Pay particular attention to verses 14, and 26-27. Consider that Paul wrote this letter in response to reports of conflict in the Church at Corinth. How does that affect your understanding of the text?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *Again, these questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

1. How have you seen God at work through people coming together across different cultures and perspectives to accomplish a mission?
2. To what new places or communities outside your familiar experiences may the Spirit be sending you in order to expand your knowledge of God's love?
3. How might you build into your life a commitment to cross boundaries, listen carefully, and take part in growing in your love for all God's children? With whom could you partner to support you in that commitment?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group.*

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*