



A Prayer on International Mother Language Day

February 21 is International Mother Language Day, a day to celebrate the extraordinary range and variety of languages spoken on earth. The Christian Church because of its belief in the Incarnation, that God took on human form and became a human being, also believes the Bible is God's Word in whatever language into which it is translated. That is, the Bible becomes incarnated in the language of the people. This has led the Christian Church to be among the leaders in the preservation of languages around the world, preservation done primarily through translation work and the tasks related to translation work.

PRAYER:

Dios, Kalou, iNkosi, Jumal, God whose name is spoken in many languages, we celebrate the diversity of languages spoken on earth.

We celebrate the range of sounds the speaking of these languages makes, forming a symphony of voices. We celebrate the ways the languages of the earth are written; various alphabets, different syllabics, diverse characters: a calligraphy of art and beauty. We celebrate the diverse ways words and sentences are formed in the languages of the earth to express meaning in ways shaped by the language group's context and culture. Truly the languages of the earth show forth the diversity of humanity, you have made.

Dieu, who in the dawn of time spoke, on the day of Pentecost you wanted your Word heard by all those gathered, so the Holy Spirit enabled your praise to be proclaimed in the mother languages of each person. We rejoice that your Word, the Bible, has been translated into hundreds of languages so people can continue to hear your Word in their own language.

Manito, who speaks the languages of the earth, valuing each language group. We rejoice, God of speech, in the continuing work of translating the Bible into the many languages of the earth, so that all people may have your Word in their language. May we commit ourselves to the spiritual work of proclamation and justice, valuing all people and their languages by enabling the translation of your Word into the languages of Indigenous people and other groups.

God of glory, we look forward to that day when people of every language will praise your name in their mother language (Rev. 7:9,10).

We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

—*The Rev. Peter Bush, moderator of the 2017 General Assembly*