



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service

Sunday 21 January 2024

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

18–25 January 2024

Go and do likewise

Order of Worship

Jesus prayed that we may all be one. Christians gather annually to pray that this be realised. Each year Christians from a different part of the world choose a theme and offer prayers and reflections that speak from their context. This year the form of our prayers is the gift of the churches of the West African nation of Burkina Faso.

Gathering and Sharing God's Love

Leader In Burkina Faso, a calabash – a hollowed out gourd – is used to share water with guests who arrive tired from their journey.

It expresses welcome, hospitality and fellowship. After the visitor has been refreshed, conversation can begin, and the purpose of the visit can be expressed.

As we arrived we were welcomed and now as we enter into prayer, we continue to share hospitality and welcome.

Let us hear how Abraham welcomed three visitors and provided for their refreshment.

Old Testament Reading

Genesis 18:1-8

Hymn 365 Let us build a house where love can dwell

1. Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome, in this place.*
2. Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome, in this place.*
3. Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees is:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome, in this place.*

4. Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome, in this place.*
5. Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
*all are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome, in this place.*

Marty Haugen (b. 1950)

Invitation to Pray

Leader We are gathered to pray for the visible unity of the Church. So
let us praise God, saying:

All **Glory to you, Father, for you reveal yourself in your creation
and call all people to live in your presence.
Glory to you, Christ Jesus,
for you give yourself entirely to each one of us and invite us
to do the same.**

Glory to you, Holy Spirit,
for you gather us together in love and unity.
Glory to you, God of love,
in whom we are created, redeemed and made one.
Amen.

Litany of Praise and Thanksgiving

Reader Let us turn our hearts to God in praise:

Praise to you Lord for you have poured out your love into our hearts so that we never lose hope.

All Lord, we praise you.

Reader By your love you free our lives from fear and dress our wounded and injured hearts.

All Lord, we praise you.

Reader For all who sow seeds of compassion and love for their neighbours around the world.

All Lord, we praise you.

Reader Eternal God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus your Son, the Redeemer of all creation.

All Lord, we thank you.

Reader For the grace that renews and the blossoming of faith, hope and love.

All Lord, we thank you.

Reader For the faith we received from the apostles, for Jesus' prayer for unity and for the gift of the Good News of salvation.

All Lord, we thank you.

Reader Gracious God, for the generosity of your love for all people, a love so perfect, it is beyond our comprehension.

All Lord, we adore you.

Reader For sending your Son, Jesus Christ, into the world.

All Lord, we adore you.

Reader For continuing to fill our lives with your love through the Holy Spirit.

All Lord, we adore you.

Prayers of Confession

Leader We come before you, O God, to confess our sins:

Reader By seeking happiness without God and ignoring the command to love, we have turned from our neighbour. Our selfishness and desire to possess and control separate us from God.

Silence

Reader Merciful God:

All forgive and heal us.

Reader When we disregard the humanity of others and build walls of division, we sow seeds of hatred and violence, abandoning the Lord's command to love.

Silence

Reader Merciful God:

All forgive and heal us.

Reader When our lack of compassion hardens our hearts, we no longer see Jesus in those different from ourselves.

Silence

Reader Merciful God:

All forgive and heal us.

Reader When we fail to open our hearts and minds to God's infinite and unconditional love, the world is darkened by selfishness, violence, and indifference.

Silence

Reader Merciful God:

All forgive and heal us.

Leader God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and transform us by your Holy Spirit.

**All Holy God! Holy and Strong!
Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us!**

**Holy God! Holy and Strong!
Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us!**

**Holy God! Holy and Strong!
Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us!**

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 138

Reader I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
I bow down towards your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your
faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word above
everything.

All On the day I called, you answered me.

Reader On the day I called, you answered me;
you increased my strength of soul.
All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.
Assembly On the day I called, you answered me.
Reader They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
for great is the glory of the Lord.
For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far away.

All On the day I called, you answered me.

Reader Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures for ever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

All On the day I called, you answered me.

Reader Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

All As it was in the beginning, is now,
 and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Gospel Reading

Luke 10:25-37

Hymn 575 When I needed a neighbour

1. When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

Refrain:

*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
were you there?*

2. I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there? [Refrain]

3. I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there? [Refrain]

4. When I needed a shelter, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter, were you there? [Refrain]

5. When I needed a healer, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there? [Refrain]

6. Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,
wherever you travel I'll be there.

*And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
I'll be there.*

Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

Sermon

Anthem sung by Abbey Choir

Blessed be the God and Father by S.S Wesley (1810-1876)

Love one another with a pure heart fervently.

See that ye love one another.

Love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Being born again,

not of corruptible seed,

but of incorruptible,

by the word of God.

For all flesh is as grass,

and all the glory of man

as the flower of grass.

The grass withereth,

and the flower thereof falleth away.

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever,

Amen.

Affirmation of Love

(verses from 1 Corinthians 13)

Read antiphonally, with one half of the congregation reading the first part of each stanza and the other half reading the second.

- I If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels,
but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
- II And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all
knowledge,
and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have
love, I am nothing.

- I If I give away all my possessions,
and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love,
I gain nothing.
- II Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or
arrogant or rude.
- I It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;
- II It does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
- I It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all
things.
- II Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as
for tongues,
they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.
- I For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when
the complete
comes, the partial will come to an end.
- II And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
- All And the greatest of these is love.**

Hymn 604 Brother, sister, let me serve you

During which the collection will be taken.

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| 1. Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too. | 2. We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load. |
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| 3. I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear. | 4. I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh, I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through. |
| 5. When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony. | 6. Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too. |

Richard A. M. Gillard (b. 1953)

Prayers of Intercession

Leader We have been called to love God and our neighbour as ourselves.
As we renew our commitment to this calling, may love strengthen
our unity as Christians.

Reader God of boundless love, we pray that all people may come to know
your unlimited mercy and your infinite love.

All Fill us with your love. Make us one in you.

Reader God, our shepherd, we who are scattered ask you to gather us into
one fold.

All Fill us with your love. Make us one in you.

Reader God of mission, enliven us by your Spirit and send us again to be
the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

All Fill us with your love. Make us one in you.

Reader God of our journey, in our weakness and fear we often pass by on
the other side. Grant us grace to risk embracing the stranger in
need, tending their wounds of body, mind and spirit.

All Fill us with your love. Make us one in you.

Reader God of communion, we pray that we may work together for your greater glory and spread the Good News of salvation for all.

All Fill us with your love. Make us one in you.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader We join our prayers to that of Jesus, who taught us when we pray to say

All Our Father in heaven
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Lead us not into temptation
 but deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power,
 and the glory are yours
 now and for ever.
 Amen

Hymn 493 Hope of our calling

1. Hope of our calling: hope through courage won
by those who dared to share all Christ had done.
Saints of today, Christ's banner now unfurled,
will bring his gospel to a waiting world.
2. Hope of our calling: hope with strength empowered,
inspired by all that we have seen and heard;
this call is ours, for we are chosen too,
to live for God in all we say and do.

3. Hope of our calling: hope with grace outpoured,
from death's despair the gift of life restored;
our call to serve, to wash each other's feet,
to bring Christ's healing touch to all we meet.
4. Hope of our calling: hope by faith made bold
to sow God's righteousness throughout the world;
bring peace from conflict, fruitfulness from weeds,
the kingdom's harvest from the kingdom's seeds.
5. Hope of our calling: Spirit-filled, unbound,
old joys remembered and new purpose found,
our call refreshed by sacrament and word,
we go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Ally Barrett (b. 1975)

Closing Prayer

(from the Daily Prayer for Christian Unity of the Chemin Neuf Community).

All Lord Jesus, who prayed that all might be
 one, we pray to you for the unity of all
 Christians, according to your will,
 according to your means.
 May your Spirit enable us to experience the suffering
 caused by division,
 to see our sin and to hope beyond all hope. Amen.

Sending and Blessing

Leader You have been refreshed by the water of life, united in Christ and
 enlivened by the Holy Spirit: go forth to love God, and your
 neighbour as yourself.
 And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy
 Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

All Amen! Thanks be to God!

Please stay and join us after the service for refreshments.

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