

Pershore Abbey Iona Service 25th January 2025 5pm

Theme: Excluded

Welcome and Introduction: This service was prompted by a question posed in Week of Prayer for Christian Unity resources:

“Where do you notice examples of exclusion and weaponising of difference in society?”

Day 7 of <https://ctbi.org.uk/resources/go-and-do-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2026/>

Feeling excluded happens to everyone at some time in their lives, and can happen in all groups including churches. There are many stories in the bible about Jesus and others, who experience exclusion, sometimes intentional, sometimes due to unquestioned social norms.

Gathering Song: 🎵 (x3)

God welcomes all, strangers and friends.

God’s love is strong and it never ends.

Opening Responses:

Leader: Creator of the world, eternal God,

ALL: **we have come from many places for a little while.**

Leader: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us,

ALL: **we have come with all our differences, seeking common ground.**

Leader: Spirit of unity, go-between God,

ALL: **we have come on journeys of our own, to a place where journeys meet.**

Leader: So here, in this shelter house, let us take time together.

For when paths cross and pilgrims gather, there is much to share.

ALL: **In your name, three-in-one God, pattern of community. AMEN.**

Song: 🎵 (*Paraphrase of Psalm 42 to the tune of ‘O waly, waly’ ‘The water is wide’*) (Known Unknown 43)

1. Just as a lost and thirsty deer, longs for a cool and running stream,
I thirst for you, the living God, anxious to know that you are near.
2. Both day and night, I cry aloud; tears have become my only food,
while all around cruel voices ask, ‘Where is your God? Where is your God?’
3. Broken and hurt, I call to mind, how in the past, I served the Lord,
worshipped and walked with happy crowds, singing and shouting praise to God.
4. Why am I now so lost and low? Why am I troubled and confused?
Given no answer, still I hope, and trust my Saviour and my God.

Our experience of exclusion: *Putting into words what exclusion means to us with stick-it notes on a board.*

Bible Readings: *Time to choose, read and discuss stories on the theme of exclusion. Who is feeling or being excluded and why? What stands out to you from these stories?*

Luke 4 13-30 Jesus is rejected in Nazareth

Luke 5 12-16 the leper

Luke 5 17-26 the paralytic

Luke 5 27-32 Levi

Luke 7 36-50 the sinful woman

Luke 8 26-39 Legion

Luke 15 11-32 the prodigal son

Prayer: *(by Kathy Galloway 'Talking to the Bones' p110)*

Leader: Do you see me? As I really am, not as the world sees me.
Flawed and faltering, yes, but full of possibilities.
Hurt, even hateful sometimes, but I also have my hopes.
I so much want someone to really see me.
God of clear sight,
we pray for people who are overlooked, excluded, even hidden away by policy,
in the corners of our minds, in the corners of society:

All: **beggars who embarrass us with their vulnerability and homelessness**

Leader: people whose illnesses arouse our deepest fears of blood and mortality

All: **people battered by the abuse of power, reminding us of our own complicity with violence**

Leader: people we find difficult to include and accept as they are.

PAUSE

Leader: We give thanks for the people:

All: **who look us in the eye**

Leader: who do not flinch at our humanity

All: **who do not turn away from our vulnerability**

Leader: who give us time and really listen.

PAUSE

Leader: People who really see us with the eyes of love, that different way of seeing.

All: **Amen**

Song: 🎵 *('Common Ground' 67)*

1. Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets;
no one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too.
Make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait on you.
2. Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets,
where injustice spirals, and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too.
In the kingdom's causes, let me rage with you.
3. Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets;
curing those who suffer, touching those he greets.

Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too.

Let my care be active, healing just like you.

4. Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets,
where each sign of hatred, he, with love, defeats.

Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too.

Where good conquers evil, let me dance with you.

5. Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets,
‘Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet’.

Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few.

Walk one step before me; I will follow you.

Questions posed by Church Action on Poverty: *(from ‘Dignity, Agency, Power’ p128)*

Church Action on Poverty encourages a discipleship that is in solidarity with people on the margins.

Their question prompts can be used to help us reflect, discuss and act on exclusion in our churches, exclusion in our communities and around the world.

Thinking about a particular situation or group, please consider:

- Why might people feel excluded?
- Whose voices are not heard or listened to in these groups?
- What could change to prevent or reduce exclusion or the feeling of exclusion?
- Are you encouraged to put Jesus’ teachings into practice? What are the obstacles to this?

Bringing our thoughts together: *(Write down issues or circumstances for prayer.)*

Candle Prayers: *(Time to pray and light a candle while music plays.)*

Song: *(Common Ground 38)*

1. Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away,
see in this space our fears and our dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in – the lost and forsaken,
gather us in – the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.
2. We are the young – our lives are a mystery,
we are the old who yearn for your face,
we have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in – the rich and the haughty,
gather us in – the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,

give us the courage to enter the song.

3. Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away,
but here in this place the new light is shining,
now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us for ever,
gather us in and make us your own;
gather us in – all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Closing Responses:

Leader: The blessing of the Trinity ...

All: **the blessing of God**

Leader: who is in this place and every place, dissolving our barriers;

All: **the blessing of Jesus**

Leader: who is among us, often unrecognised, often excluded;

All: **the blessing of Holy Spirit**

Leader: who disrupts us, challenging our bias, widening our welcome;

All: **.... be with us all.**

Leader: As we meet here in worship, sharing this place and time, may our lives in community reflect the dance of the Trinity,

All: **by which the world is blessed. Amen**

The Grace:

ALL: **May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God
and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with us all,
this night and always. Amen**

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Dignity, Agency, Power' edited by Niall Cooper, Chris Howson and Liam Purcell © The Iona Community

'Talking to the Bones' © Kathy Galloway

NEXT IONA SERVICE IS AT 5pm on SUNDAY 22nd FEBRUARY