

Reconcile Your People

Déan athmhuintearas le do mhuintir
Cymoda dy Bobl

WEEK OF PRAYER
FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2009




churches
together
IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

The pain of division was palpable. But amidst his overwhelming grief over the plight of his nation, the prophet Ezekiel received a vision of a future where God's people were united once more.

The promise of God is that of "one nation in the land, on the mountain of Israel".

The Churches in Korea have found that this passage in Ezekiel resonates with their own sense of sadness over the division of their own country since the Korean War and have brought some of the insights they have gained to the worship for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

We too may feel the pain of a divided church.

The "Charta Oecumenica" (Guidelines for the Growing Co-operation among the Churches in Europe) states "Fundamental differences in faith are still barriers to visible unity. There are different views of the church and its oneness, of the sacraments and ministries. We must not be satisfied with this situation. Jesus Christ revealed to us on the cross his love and the mystery of reconciliation; as his followers, we intend to do our utmost to overcome the problems and obstacles that still divide the churches."

A crucial part of this task is for us – people of different churches and traditions – to come together to pray for this unity, in faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ who prayed that his disciples might be one.

I therefore commend to you the worship and resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2009 and trust that they may help to resource your praying and working together for the full visible unity of the Church.

Revd Bob Fyffe
General Secretary
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Day 1

Face to Face with Difference

Ez 37: 15-24a They will have one shepherd
Ps 135: 1-5 I know that the Lord is great
1 Cor 3 3-7: 21-23 There are divisions among you
John 17: 17-21 That they may be one

Day 2

Face to Face with Violence

Is 2: 1-4 They shall learn war no more
Ps 74: 18-23 'Do not forget the life of your poor
forever'
Peter 2: 21-25 By his wounds you have been healed
Mt 26: 50-54 Put your sword back in place

Commentary

God calls us to unity. Do we confuse unity with uniformity, diversity with division?

The psalmist extols God's greatness; our divisions reflect the pettiness of human nature. The gospel message is to reflect the unity of the Godhead which is Trinity in unity.

We misuse history to excuse divisions and interpret scripture to make God in our image instead of ourselves in God's. We need to be one so the world may believe that the Father sent Christ.

Joining in prayer for unity we join in the prayer of Christ, affirming his incarnation. Unity in diversity can express the diversity of the Trinity and explore the greatness of God.

Prayer

God of diversity,
accept our desire for unity;
reconcile our divisions
but let us glorify you through our diversity;
let us know how great you are.
Amen

Action

Read a hymn or prayer from a different tradition during your daily prayers this week.

Commentary

Violence and war are major obstacles to unity. They spring from divisions within our communities and the arrogance which perpetuates the cycle of injustice and violence.

When Jesus' disciples react to violence and rage in all too human ways, he teaches the futility of violence (Mt 26: 51 - 52).

Jesus' death on the cross reveals the true paradox of violence. When by his death all sin is nailed to the cross Jesus marks the beginning of the new creation.

This hope, established by Jesus' death on the cross, makes us persevere for unity and for the end of all war and violence.

Prayer

Jesus,
giving yourself on the cross for the unity of all, reach out with compassion – even to those who hate us,
so that all may enjoy the peace and joy of your creation.
May we work for your justice.
Amen.

Action

How many ongoing armed conflicts around the world can you identify?

Day 3

Face to Face with Poverty

Zephaniah 2:3;
3:12-13 God deliberately leaves the poor
in the heart of our communities
Psalm 145 It is the Lord who feeds the poor
1 Cor 1: 26-31 God's preference is for the poor,
the weak and without influence.
Matthew 5: 1-11 The Beatitudes

Day 4

Face to Face with Creation

Gen 1: 31-2:3 God saw everything that He had made
Ps 148: 7-13 God's glory in creation
Rom 1: 18-23 The guilt of humankind
Mt 13: 31-32 The smallest of all the seeds

Commentary

Poverty in Darfur is numbingly visible. Poverty at home is different, more hidden, but no less real.

Poverty is neither virtue nor punishment. Some are poor because others are too greedy or have not yet recognised that all that we have is a gift from God, given to be shared.

Regardless of economic policies, the poor are still with us today. But, in choosing a visible encounter over complacency or theorising, Jesus transformed the pain and sorrow of those he met, bringing good news to the poor, asserting that they matter as individuals, that they are not invisible. This is a task for us.

Prayer

Give us this day our daily bread.
All good gifts of the earth come from your generous hands, God. Yet, this abundance is not shared equally among us. While some are satisfied, others are starving. Women often become the victims of exploitation because they are desperate to feed and care for their children. If only we would be mindful that each and every one of us must pray:
Give us this day our daily bread. Amen

World Day of Prayer Committee, Myanmar 1989. Printed with permission of World Day International Committee

Action

Walk in known local areas of poverty and observe how and where people live.

Commentary

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and made the human race its stewards.

Yet we have misused his gift, exploited the earth's resources and abused all living creatures. We are careless in our use of God's world, though we are dependent on it; it is our home. Paul shows us that we have not lived up to God's plan.

We bear a heavy responsibility for what we have done to God's creation. Now we must work together to heal the consequences of our greed. Every Christian must join in the work of saving creation.

Prayer

Creator God,
we have forgotten that you put us in your world to care for it,
and to sustain it for our children and our children's children.
We repent of our greed and commit ourselves to work together,
even by small steps, to restore your creation to wholeness.
Amen.

Action

Consider how your life style can be changed.
Think how the Parable of the Mustard Seed shows how a small action transforms the greatest problem.

Day 5

Face to Face with Prejudice

Isaiah 58: 6-10

Act positively

Ps 8

Live humbly

Gal 3: 26-29

Express equality

Lk 18: 9-14

Reject assumptions

Day 6

Face to Face with Pain

II Kings 20: 1-6

Remember me, O Lord!

Psalm 22: 1-11

Why have you forsaken me?

James 5: 13-15

The prayer of faith will save the sick

Mark 10: 46-52

"What do you want me to do for you?"

Commentary

In the beginning, human beings were created in the image of God. Sin, however, entered the hearts of people and since then we have built up different kinds of prejudice.

Negative discriminatory factors are dehumanising and a source of conflict. Contempt has no place in the hearts of believers.

Together we must struggle against all such discrimination. The restoration of the unity of all humankind is the common mission of all Christians. It is also our common hope because all are one in Christ and there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman.

Prayer

Lord help us to recognize damaging discrimination.
Direct our gaze and help us to recognize our own prejudices.
Teach us to banish all contempt and to taste the joy of living together in unity.
Amen.

Action

Think about your experience of prejudice and the experience of others you know who have a story to tell about discrimination.

Commentary

Pain focuses the mind, refusing to be ignored. King Hezekiah was in pain and was told his illness was terminal. His prayer for healing was answered but the extra years of his life may have contributed to the future suffering of his people. Praying can be dangerous, but this is part of the adventure of faith.

It might have seemed obvious that blind Bartimaeus wanted to see, but what he actually appealed to Jesus for was mercy. Healing would seriously rearrange his life; he would no longer be the blind beggar. So Jesus asks him what he really wants. Praying can be disturbing, but can lead to a greater wholeness.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
who was bound immobile to the Cross,
who cried out in the pain of God-forsakenness,
who was crucified in weakness,
help us to understand the pain of those who live with impairments of body and mind so that they are not further disabled by our ignorance or lack of concern.
Amen

Action

Make a journey familiar to you but this time make a note of every obstacle which might disable a person with impaired mobility or vision. Then decide with others what to do about what you have found.

Day 7**Face to Face
with Difference**

Exodus 23.9-12 Not oppressing the resident stranger
 Ps 117 Praise the Lord all nations
 Acts 17.16-34 Dialoguing with difference
 Luke 10.25-37 The Good Samaritan

Day 8**Face to Face
with Hope**

Ezekiel 37.1-14 Dry bones live
 Psalm 104. Earth's face renewed
 24-34
 Revelation 21. All things made new
 1-5a
 Matthew 5.1-12 Poor in spirit blessed

Commentary

We live in a world of many faiths. In our neighbourhoods there are people of different religions. We are aware of situations where there is tension, even violence, between people of different faiths.

This is not always the case and in Korea, Buddhists and Christians manage to co-exist in relative peace and friendship and certainly without bloodshed. Jesus calls us to show love, forgiveness and hospitality to those who are not like us, even those who reject and despise us.

Dialogue is not a diminishing of Christian identity and integrity but a humble expression of the self giving love of God in Jesus Christ.

Prayer

Almighty God,
 by your grace may our minds be open to understanding
 and our hearts be open to loving the stranger
 and, relying on your strength alone,
 may we live your Gospel of love and forgiveness.
 Amen.

Action

Take a look at the CTBI publication *Above Us and Between Us** which is a resource for developing Christian Muslim relations, and explore ways to use it in your local community

*available from CTBI at £5, or as a free download from the CTBI website (www.ctbi.org.uk/302/)

Commentary

Hope is not all it seems: sometimes more burden than delight. And hopelessness can be more welcome than we are comfortable to admit. Hope implies positive change but, after repeated setbacks, it can be easier to shrug shoulders and suggest there is no point and reconcile to a lesser lot.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit" offers perspective, like breath to the dry bones. Hope is fundamental to a resurrection faith, where all is made new and the chaos of conflict, division and separation is contradicted and healed, but it is hope born out of brokenness. Strangely, it is when we have every reason to lack hope we are most likely to find it.

Prayer

God, we pray we are broken:
 broken open to our fractured and fragmented world and Church;
 broken open to the hope of renewal;
 that healing to wholeness and unity becomes us.
 Amen.

Action

Review what you have read and learned from the eight days and reflect back to CTBI.

Using The Service

During the service you will need two pieces of wood and some rope or string. The wood should be about 4ft. long and 4in. x 2in. in section (To maintain the Korean theme bamboo sticks of about 4 inch section could be used). The string should be something strong but flexible like sash cord.

The Korean originators of this year's material are deeply conscious of the division between the north and south of their country. There are families where brothers and sisters have not met for fifty years or more. With this in mind, this service might begin with the exchange of the sign of peace, according to local custom.

During the reading from Ezekiel, three people stand nearby: two holding a piece of wood each, and one with the cord. At the point indicated in the reading, the reader pauses. The two pieces of wood are placed together lengthwise, and they are tied together at their midpoints (a mark could be made beforehand to show this point). When the pieces of wood have been tied together the reader completes the Ezekiel passage.

After the reading from Romans, during the hymn, the pieces of wood can be rotated about the tie, and lashed in the shape of a cross. For the Gospel reading, the cross is held behind the reader, and afterwards placed prominently before the people for the rest of the service.

The cross can be passed on a regular basis between the congregations in the Churches Together group throughout the year.

This service is a suggested order and may be adapted according to local circumstances. This service is also available as a download from the CTBI website (www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer) for convenience of editing.

The Service

Gathering

A gong or bell is sounded

Hymn or Song

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation"
(or another suitable song based on Psalm 146)

Greeting

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2009 is rooted in the experience of the churches in Korea. In their context of national division the churches have turned for inspiration to the prophet Ezekiel, who also lived in a tragically divided nation and longed for the unity of his people. The Christians of Korea greet each other and offer the peace in the words we now use:

Sign of Peace

LEADER God's peace be with you!

ALL And also with you!

LEADER Peace has been offered to you.
God has planted His peace in you.
Turn up the light of peace and let
everyone enjoy peace.

ALL Amen! Let us stay in peace!

Prayer of Approach

LEADER Come forward to God!

ALL You are the source of our hope

LEADER: We live in a broken world,
Where countries are divided,
Where tribe is at war with tribe,
Where the rich oppress the poor,
And the poor fight each other for crumbs,
And even the Body of Christ is broken –
Christian against Christian.
We are frustrated with our brokenness.

A VOICE: *Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!*

ALL O let your ears be attentive
To the voice of my pleading,

A VOICE *If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?*

ALL But with you is found forgiveness;
For this we revere you.

Hymn or Chant

(A suitable hymn of praise)

LEADER God spoke to the Prophet Ezekiel and
said, "They shall be one in my hand.
They will be my people and I shall be their God."
And so we pray:

ALL 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.

LEADER God, you alone are our hope.

ALL You alone are our hope.

Liturgy of the Word

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel,
chap 37, vv 15—24a**

The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it'; and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. And when your people say to you, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?' say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am about to take the stick of Joseph (which is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it, and make them one stick, in order that they may be one in my hand.

(at this point two sticks are brought forward and
joined together)

When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one

king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. They shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd.

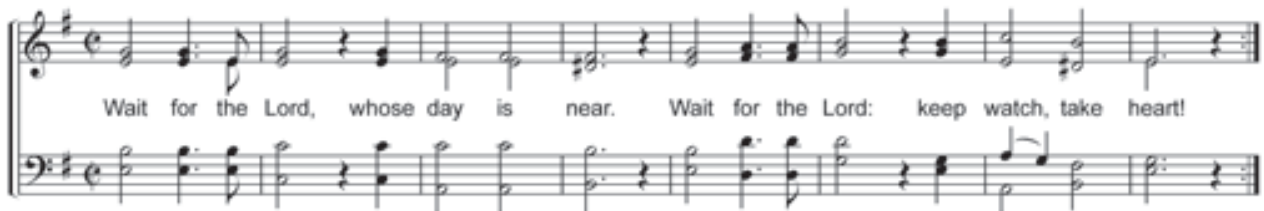
**A suitable hymn, song or chant
may be sung**

**A reading from Paul's letter to the
Romans chap 8, vv 18-25**

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Chant

Wait for the Lord (Taizé)



Music: Jacques Berthier 1923-1994,
© Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France.

**A reading from the Holy Gospel
according to John 10.14-16**

Sermon or Reflection

A period of silence is kept.

Song “Come Now O Prince of Peace”



- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Come now, O Prince of peace,
make us one body;
come, O Lord Jesus,
reconcile your people.</p> | <p>3. Come now and set us free,
O God, our Saviour;
come, O Lord Jesus,
reconcile all nations.</p> |
| <p>2. Come now, O God of love,
make us one body;
come, O Lord Jesus,
reconcile your people.</p> | <p>4. Come, Hope of unity,
make us one body;
come, O Lord Jesus,
reconcile all nations.</p> |

Geonyong Lee *revised* Marion Pope, *Music* Geonyong Lee
© Church of Scotland Panel on Worship

Prayers of Intercession

Leader In faith we pray to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Leader God who calls us to be one,

All Hear our cry, we pray.

Suggested orders for Intercessory prayer can be
found at www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

The Lord's Prayer

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.
 Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power
 and the glory are yours,
 now and for ever.
 Amen

Prayer of Acclamation and Commitment

Members of participating churches now lead in turn the following acclamation. In each case all are invited to respond

READER	Blessed are you O Christ:
ALL	When we are without hope your cross is our hope.
READER	Blessed are you O Christ:
ALL	When we are lost your cross is our guide.
READER	Blessed are you O Christ:
ALL	When we are blind your cross is our light.
READER	Blessed are you O Christ:
ALL	When we are weak your cross is our power.
READER	Blessed are you O Christ:
ALL	When we are oppressed your cross sets us free.
READER	Blessed are you O Christ:
ALL	When we are in peril your cross is our peace.
READER	Blessed are you O Christ:
ALL	When we are apart your cross unites.
LEADER	God of all the world:

ALL

We are united in your Cross.
 In you, O Christ, is love and your love has set us free.
 In Gethsemane, at the foot of the Cross,
 at the empty tomb and on the road,
 help us to recognize you.
 So may we find
 water for the thirsty,
 food for the hungry,
 shelter for the stranger,
 home for the exile,
 healing for the sick,
 freedom for the slave,
 love for the unloved.

Song

("I'll go in the strength of the Lord"
 or other suitable song)

I'll go in the strength of the Lord
 In paths He has marked for my feet;
 I'll follow the light of His word,
 Nor shrink from the dangers I meet.
 His presence my steps shall attend,
 His fullness my wants shall supply;
 On Him, till my journey shall end,
 My unwavering faith shall rely.

I'll go (I'll go,) I'll go in the strength,
 I'll go in the strength of the Lord,
 I'll go, (I'll go,) I'll go in the strength,
 I'll go in the strength of the Lord.

I'll go in the strength of the Lord
 To work He appoints me to do;
 In joy which His smile doth afford
 My soul shall her vigour renew.
 His wisdom shall guard me from harm,
 His power my sufficiency prove;
 I'll trust His omnipotent arm,
 And prove His unchangeable love.

I'll go (I'll go,) I'll go in the strength,
 I'll go in the strength of the Lord,
 I'll go, (I'll go,) I'll go in the strength,
 I'll go in the strength of the Lord.

I'll go in the strength of the Lord
 To conflicts which faith will require,
 His grace as my shield and reward,
 My courage and zeal shall inspire.
 Since He gives the word of command,
 To meet and encounter the foe,
 With His sword of truth in my hand,
 To suffer and triumph I'll go.

I'll go (I'll go,) I'll go in the strength,
I'll go in the strength of the Lord,
I'll go, (I'll go,) I'll go in the strength,
I'll go in the strength of the Lord.

Words and Music: Edward Turney (1816-72)

The Dismissal

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor
things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor
depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be
able to separate us from the love of God in Christ
Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8: 38-39)

The Blessing

The gong or bell is sounded

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