



We will all be **Changed**

Yr ydym i gyd i gael ein newid
Tiocfaidh claochlú orainn go léir



www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer


churches
together
IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND®

Welcome

Change is at the heart of our Christian faith. Saint Paul said that anyone who is in Christ is a new creation, and we are called to live as children in the light.

Change is at the heart of human life. The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012 comes to us from the churches in Poland, who have reflected upon their own experience as a nation, and in particular how, as a nation, they have been changed and transformed by the many upheavals of their history, and sustained by their faith.

Change is also at the heart of the ecumenical movement. When we pray for the unity of the church we are praying that the churches that we know and which are so familiar to us will change as they conform more closely to Christ. This is an exciting vision, but also a challenging one. Furthermore, when we pray for this transforming unity we are also praying for change in the world.

We are pleased that this year, for the first time, Christian Aid has participated in the preparation of these materials and you will find within the resources some important pointers to the vital work of Christian Aid in the relief of poverty and in changing our world to one which is more just.

I am delighted once again to commend these resources to you.

Revd Bob Fyffe, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Introduction to this year's theme

The particular history of Poland gives rise to emphases within the worship material provided by the churches in Poland for this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The secular and ecclesiastical histories of Poland intertwine. The Polish writers remind us of “the many times that Poland was invaded, the partitions, oppression by foreign powers and hostile systems. The constant striving to overcome all enslavement and the desire for freedom are features of Polish history which have led to significant changes in the life of the nation.”

The secular history has prompted a particular perspective for the issue of church unity. “As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of the church we – and the traditions to which we belong – will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ. The unity for which we pray may require the renewal of forms of Church life with which we are

familiar. This is an exciting vision but it may fill us with some fear!” Poland, like many other nations, has a chequered history of religious tolerance, but now displays a generosity of spirit leading to an understanding that change is necessary for unity to happen. The – often heartbreaking – history of the Polish nation makes such a perspective all the more inspiring.

The Polish churches’ choice of subjects for the Eight Days of reflection offers an insight into the whole process of diverse and distinct churches moving towards unity. The words in bold type that follow are the daily themes in order and, together, they offer a narrative towards unity.

Beginning, in the mould of the messiah, as the **Servant**, there is patience required in the **Waiting** time while unity moves grind their slow ways, bringing no little **Suffering** to the body of Christ, involving heroic **Struggling** as that body wrestles to understand the will of God, resolving the struggle into acts of **Peacemaking** as the call to the mutual ministry of reconciliation is heard and heeded, undergirded by relationships with the hallmark of Christ-inspired **Loving**, so that, **Feeding** from one another’s faith, the **Uniting** that God wills is achieved.

It is also possible to discern through these themes – in the order in which they are set – the shape of conventional public worship which involves the three pillars of Approach to God, Ministry of the Word and Response. The Eight Days can then be seen as, together, an act of worship that moves through the week.



More specifically, the **Serving** and **Waiting** are our Approach to God and commitment to open our hearts in patience and praise. The **Suffering** can be seen as, in part, our confession before God of our flaws and failings – opening our hearts in penitence. We then move into the Ministry of the Word, described in part by **Struggling** as we hunger and thirst for our right relationship with God and one another. Worship then would normally move to Response to the Word, in prayer and commitment. **Peacemaking** and **Loving** and **Feeding** and **Uniting** offer powerful expressions of just such a Response.

YOU

- 1 In what ways do you serve?
- 2 In what ways can you serve?
- 3 What can you do to make the answers to questions 1 and 2 the same?

THE WORD

Readings

Zechariah 9:9-10	The king on the donkey
Psalms 131	A heart in the right place
Romans 12:3-8	Different gifts, same service
Mark 10:42-45	The serving Son of Man

Reflection

Preparation is the thing –
 says the painter –
 gathering resources,
 sizing the task,
 planning the job;
 then offering effort,
 using gifts,
 giving self:
 decorating canvas or
 conservatory –
 change comes.

Preparation is the thing –
 says the athlete –
 scheduling training,
 eating well,
 warming up;
 then playing hard,
 straining sinew,
 giving self:
 performing on pitch or track –
 change comes.

Preparation is the thing –
 says the psalmist –
 eyes not raised too high,
 thoughts not too elevated,
 soul calmed and quieted;

then service in worship,
 giving heart and mind,
 giving self:
 praising in cottage or
 cathedral –

change comes.

THE WORLD

Pray

Gracious God,
 we gather, united in praise,
 longing for heavenly greatness in our
 earthly lives:
 serving one another in the way of Jesus,
 finding the overflowing joy of unity,
 and so to scatter, united in
 service.

Go and Do

Stand in the “GAP” created by global injustice.

- Give. Act. Pray.
- Christian Aid unites people from all denominations in prayer and service. Access regularly updated materials to help your church respond to poverty and injustice at:

www.christianaid.org.uk/churches

YOU

- 1 What in your church are you waiting for?
- 2 What in your church are you impatient about?
- 3 Is 'patient waiting' something that we readily embrace or are we anxious to get things done?

THE WORD

Readings

Psalms 62	Waiting in Silence
Isaiah 40:27-31	Waiting on God
James 5:7-11	Waiting in Patience
Matthew 26:36-46	Waiting in the Garden

Reflection

Waiting requires patience -
I have little.

Waiting requires prayer -
I have no words.

Waiting anticipates the change that
may come -
I am afraid.

Waiting needs time -
I am busy.

But if I wait, what will I hear?
What do I hope for?

Will I recognise it when it comes?
Perhaps I will not wait?

Perhaps I will flick to the last chapter and
write it myself
and live with the disunity.

THE WORLD

Pray

God of hope,
you are patient with your Church, and with me.
Maybe I too will wait -
disconcerting though this may be -
and risk the change, and the pain, that may come
as I wait to be free and released into your unity.

Go and Do

Waiting in the face of urgency is perhaps the most challenging
waiting of all. Millions of people across the world are already being affected by a
changing climate.

- It's Time for Climate Justice. Take action now by writing to your MP to do all they can to ensure strong international action. Find out more
www.christianaid.org.uk/actnow
- Hold a climate change vigil to pray for the government not to forget the world's poor.

YOU

- 1 In what ways does the church emphasise Christ's triumph at the expense of his suffering?
- 2 In what ways have you been enriched by your personal experience of suffering?
- 3 Why is the Christian witness of those who suffer so persuasive?

THE WORD

Readings

Isaiah 53:3-11	Wounded by our transgressions
Psalms 22:14-16	A sufferer's complaint
I Peter 2:21-25	When he suffered, he uttered no threats
Luke 24:25-27	Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things?

Reflection

In the half light of dawn they brought my Lord,
broken and bleeding to the cruel cross.

And I stood by,
watching and waiting by the shameful tree.
Yet suffering Jesus there redeemed my guilt,
softened my heart, inspired me to repent,
that, chastened and forgiven, I could go
to stand with those who suffer in their turn –
those lonely, lost, or sick, or dispossessed,
the dying and the persecuted ones –
and take his message to a suffering world:
that Love triumphant reigns, transforming us
in the reflected light of his bright day.

THE WORLD

Pray

God of consolation, who changed suffering into a sign of victory, unite us round the cross of Jesus, who obtained salvation for us through his obedience. Show us how we can help those who suffer to experience your living presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Go and Do

Rarely are we presented with such suffering as we see when a seemingly natural disaster strikes.

- Find out how your donations have helped respond in the past
www.christianaid.org.uk/emergencies.
- Set up a disasters emergency fund so that your community can respond when the next disaster strikes.

YOU

- 1 Have you struggled to believe at times? Are you struggling now?
- 2 Why is Christian unity a struggle when God wants to give us this gift (Eph 4.3)?
- 3 Do other Christians have a struggle to understand what is precious to you?

THE WORD

Readings

Genesis 32:22-31	Jacob struggled with God and humans
Psalms 46	Though the earth shakes, we are not afraid
Romans 12:17-21	Overcome evil with good
Matthew 4:1-11	Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only

Reflection

Jacob struggled on the night before he re-entered the territory of his brother Esau. He received a new name which implied a new nature. Instead of Jacob, the Grasper, deceiving even his own family to get what he wanted, he became Israel, God's Contender. But even then there remained an ambiguity: was he contending for God or against God? His descendants would do both.

In one of his finest hymns, little known today, Charles Wesley takes the story of Wrestling Jacob and links it with the pilgrimage of someone who is desperate to know the nature of God. 'Wrestling, I will not let thee go 'til I thy name, thy nature know!' The breakthrough comes when he realises 'Thy nature and thy name is Love!'

Sometimes our struggles are over names; 'denominations' are varieties of 'me, the name I call myself!' Living tradition is the hands through which the faith passed before it reached you. It will include fingerprints of that part of the Church which nurtured you.

We are changed by our struggles: some make us stronger but others can leave scars of painful memories. We will not overcome the disunity of the Church by tolerating its present state. We have more struggles ahead but we can rely on God without fear.

THE WORLD

Pray

Lord God, help us in our everyday struggle with adversity.
May the Holy Spirit give us strength and wisdom
so that, following you, we may overcome evil with good,
and division with reconciliation. Amen.

Go and Do

Is there someone you know who needs a phone call or a visit? Or an unresolved issue that needs to be discussed?

- If we are struggling have we asked for help from someone we know who cares.
- The struggle to survive is a daily reality for many across the world.
- Go to www.christianaid.org.uk to make a donation to help partners across the world overcome the struggle.

YOU

- 1 What does peacemaking mean to you?
- 2 How do we heal tensions that affect our relationship with one another?
- 3 What stops us welcoming each other as Christ welcomes us?

THE WORD**Readings**

Malachi 4:5-6	Turning hearts
Psalms 133	How good unity is!
Ephesians 2:14-20	Peace to the far off and to the near
John 20:19-23	"Peace be with you!"

Reflection

Peace is not the absence of guns
but the presence of restraint.

Peace is not the absence of bombs
but the presence of compassion.

Peace is not the absence of vengeance
but the presence of mercy.

Peace is not the absence of retribution
but the presence of reconciliation.

Peace is not the absence of division
but the presence of grace.

Peace is not the absence of greed
but the presence of justice.

Peace is not the absence of difference
but the presence of unity.

THE WORLD**Pray**

Loving and merciful God,
speak peace to our hearts and minds
that we may make peace in the world:
breaching divisions to bring reconciliation,
bringing justice to bear where prejudice prevails,
bearing your grace in and through our lives.

Go and Do

- Pray for discernment for how you can bring peace to the world today rather than conflict.
- Conflict scars many countries across the world. Find out more about Christian Aid's work in conflict affected areas – www.christianaid.org.uk/conflict
- Discuss with others the sensitivities of the arms industry and whether you should get involved in a campaign against the arms trade – www.caat.org.uk

YOU

- 1 Love can be life-changing; how much love have you to give?
- 2 Have you missed opportunities to show love to your neighbour?
- 3 Have you refused to let others come close enough to love you?

THE WORD

Readings

Micah 7:18-20	What is God like?
Psalms 136:1-9	His love endures forever
I John 2:7-11	Living in the light
John 15:9-13	Greater love has no-one than this

Reflection

We need to receive God's love;
to lay ourselves open to forgiveness.

What have I done wrong?

We have sinned; we have strayed from God's paths
yet in love God brought us back.

Do I want to return to God?

In this great love we have received everything that is good.

Haven't I earned for myself what I've got?

Yet, when we claim to live in this love,
we do not love our brother or sister whom we live beside each day.

But I do find that person annoying!

There is no love greater than God's love;
before we turned to God, he loved us and gave himself for us.

Must I go this far in my life?

THE WORLD

Pray

You, our God, are perfect love;
perfect in our hearts that same love
so that we may be drawn into that peace and unity
which is your desire for us all.

God, in your love, teach us how to love.

Yes, Lord, your will be done.

Go and Do

Loving our world means working for justice.

A global culture of financial secrecy allows some unscrupulous firms to dodge tax - and rob poor countries of more than \$160bn a year.

- Call for economic justice now www.christianaid.org.uk/tax

YOU

- 1 What are the signs for us today of 'the Lord for whom we have waited'?
- 2 What is your personal experience of the Lord 'preparing a table before you'?
- 3 Why do you think Jesus chose food and drink with which to remember him?

THE WORD

Readings

Exodus 16:14-18, 31	The manna in the wilderness
Psalms 23	You prepare a table before me
I Corinthians 11:23-26	The Lord's Supper
John 21:15-17	Feed my sheep

Reflection

Out of the dew of our doubts
the white, honeyed wafers
illuminated the wilderness of our misery.
This was the bread of unity
that the Lord had given us to eat.

And now
the white wafer of his body,
kneaded in suffering,
baked in the furnace of pain,
illuminates the wilderness of our guilt.

'Feed on me, if you love me,' he says;
'the wafer of my salvation makes my people one.
Feed on me,
feed my sheep,
feed my lambs.'

THE WORLD

Pray

Generous God, whose fruitful earth sustains us, and who, in your mysteries, offers us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, strengthen us to support one another in life's journey that, by working together to transform society through love and service, we may bring in your kingdom, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

Go and Do

Nearly a billion people go hungry every day.

- www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/policy/christian-aid-green-report-2011.aspx to find out more.
- Fast one meal or one day as an act of solidarity with those who hunger.
- Christian Aid has imaginative ways for you to raise money for projects that ensure food security in countries across the world – www.christianaid.org.uk/events

YOU

- 1 How have you been changed in your appreciation of other Christians?
- 2 Where do you see change happening now in you and in your community?
- 3 Is there another step you can take now towards unity?

THE WORD

Readings

I Chronicles 29:10-13	Everything is the Lord's
Psalms 86:9-12	Worship God with undivided heart
Colossians 1:13-20	In Christ all things hold together
John 17:1-8	United in the Son who is sent

Reflection

In the languages of the Bible, the heart is the seat of the emotions, desires and will. Whatever controls the heart pushes the whole person, just as the physical heart pushes blood around the whole body. Often our problem is a 'divided heart', pushing in several directions at the same time and thereby weakening the whole. So the Psalmist prays for an undivided heart with which to worship God.

People are often resistant to change, yet loving human relationships always change us. It is the same with the partnership of Christian unity. We will all be changed but need to change together, not by one partner dominating the others but when all move towards unity.

Some changes can only happen at the right moment. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus frequently says that his 'hour' has not yet come until, at the beginning of his 'High Priestly Prayer' (17:1), he prays "Father, the hour has come." We pray for discernment of the right moment – neither too soon nor too late – to change together from where we are to where we should be and then to act boldly.

THE WORLD

Pray

Creator God,
in whom all life is held together,
help all Christians to unite
in the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Go and Do

Partnership lies at the heart of Christian Aid's work.

- Explore the Christian Aid partnership programme and consider taking the challenge to work in partnership with others.

www.christianaid.org.uk/partnerships

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012

This ecumenical act of worship has been put together by The Week of Prayer writers group for Britain and Ireland. You are welcome to further edit or adapt it for use in your local situation. This pamphlet is arranged so that the order of service is in the centre of the pamphlet so those pages can be pulled out and photocopied if you wish.

For any group wanting a more formal service, the international liturgy is offered this year as an alternative. This and other additional material, including Welsh and Irish translations, and a PowerPoint presentation, are available to download from www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

An all age service is available at www.rootsontheweb.com

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