

Using the Service

The service is meant for equal sharing. So, rather than having an entrance procession with LEADERS coming in, let all come to their places and the assembly begin with the striking of a gong (or bell) which announces the gathering hymn of praise based on Psalm 146.

- 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). Ensure that the wood is smooth and unlikely to get splinters into people's hands. The string should be something strong but flexible like sash cord.
- You also need a Bible for the readings.

The Korean originators of this year's material are deeply conscious of the divisions in their country and the need for peace. There are families where brothers and sisters have not met for fifty years or more.

With this in mind, the suggestion is that the service begins with the exchange of the sign of peace. It is God's peace that is exchanged not our peace. Exchange the sign with a few people, looking at them as you greet them, and let the exchange pass through the congregation like the ripple of a stone dropped into still water, rather than a rush from an opened sluice.

The service is a United Service and should be timed to allow as many people as possible from local churches to gather together. Use people from as diverse a selection as you can to lead the different parts of the service: from different traditions, ages and backgrounds.

- During the reading from Ezekiel, as the Reader goes to the lectern (reading desk) 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 Paul's letter to the Romans, during the hymn, the pieces of wood are 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.
- During the Acclamation and Commitment, the wooden cross can be held up before the assembly and remain there until the 'young person' dismisses the people, who can be led by the cross to where food will be shared.

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

Praying for unity throughout the year

Some people may find the exercise of joining in prayer on a cold, wet January day something not to look forward to. If many in your Churches Together group are of the same mind, why not move your United Service to one of the Bright after Easter or to Pentecost?

Praying for the unity of all the people of God is not restricted to one week a year! There are elements in the United Service and in the daily Commentary, Prayer and Action which could stand alone.

For instance the Acclamation and Commitment could be used to close a congregation's quiet day, or for the commissioning of youth workers or parish volunteer workers. The daily prayers could be used as additions to daily prayers throughout the year or a local mission might pick up the themes and use them as part of creating greater awareness in a locality.

The current timing is based on two feasts in the calendar of some churches; the Chair of St Peter and the Conversion of St Paul (18 and 25 January). As these feasts are little kept, and as no current reference is made to them in the material, any period could be used. If a Sunday to Sunday is used there could be greater opportunity to have distinct opening and closing services for the observance. Perhaps the period from Pentecost to Trinity Sunday could provide such a focused period.