

You are Witnesses

WEEK OF PRAYER
FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2010




churches
together
IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND®

www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

The resurrection stories in the Gospel have immense power that touch upon so many different aspects of human experience - dashed hopes, disappointments, grief and loss. But they also speak of a difficulty to accept change and recognise new realities.

This year, the host nation for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is my own, Scotland, and they have chosen the vivid account of Jesus' Resurrection as the focus for our thought and prayers about Christian unity.

The unity in Christ that we seek and pray for implies that we are called to embrace something new, something that will change us and the church – from something disunited to a Church that is one in Christ.

At the present time, some commentators have observed that the ecumenical movement is 'becalmed'. Recently, CTBI has been pondering that metaphor and have related it to another - the desert. In Christian spirituality the desert is not only a lonely, sometimes hostile place, but also a place of spiritual renewal and growth, a place where faith is strengthened and deepened. So if there is a sense that we are 'becalmed' in our ecumenical journey we might see this not as a cause for mourning but an opportunity for renewal and rekindled hope.

During this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity I hope you will join with us to pray for that renewed passion for Christian Unity and see in particular the risen Christ in our midst.

Revd Bob Fyffe
General Secretary
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Important Note for this Year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

This year we have continued the format of previous years with the worship service as a 'pull out' in the booklet. However, for the first time we are offering two versions of the service: "Order of Service A" if you wish to use a liturgical form and "Order of Service B" if you prefer a more informal approach. We hope this offers you the flexibility for your own context.

Day 1

Theme: Witness through celebrating life

YOU

1. *How do you and your church celebrate life?*
2. *How might others learn through you that Christ is alive?*
3. *In what ways do you feel you are growing more Christ-like, and in what ways do you feel you are not?*

THE WORD

READ: *Genesis 1:1. 26-31, Psalm 104:1-24, 1 Corinthians 15:12-20, Luke 24:1-5* – The resurrection is revealed to the women first.

FOCUS: **Why do you look for the living among the dead?**
(Luke 24: 5)

REFLECTION

A time to mourn,
and not to celebrate;
to anoint lovingly
the tortured corpse
of a beloved master.

Who are the shining strangers?

Resurrection dawns
at the pit of deepest despair;
at the end of a restless night,
fear of what was to come,
oil and spices,
women in tears,
blurred vision and leaden-like limbs.

Morning dawns,
light breaks through,
awesome truth,
the world is changed,
a penny drops.

THE WORLD

O God, who created us out of your love
and who longs for love to flourish,
we pray for those whose spirits are grieved,
whose hope has died,
enduring the gloom of half light
and longing for morning to come.

Day 2

Theme: Witness through sharing stories

YOU

1. *Have you ever been drawn into the stories of others?*
2. *Has there been an occasion when you were able to share a story of faith?*
3. *Where can we find the “Gospel Gossiped” using modern communications?*

THE WORD

READ: *Jeremiah 1:4-8; Psalm 98; Acts 14:21-23; Luke 24:13-17a - The Road to Emmaus*

FOCUS: **What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?**
(Luke 24: 17)

REFLECTION

Your story encompasses mine:
all my messy-worded-meanings,
mis-spellings,
crossings out and alterations.
Somehow your story crafts mine,
erasing what I thought was indelible,
weaving your golden threads
through my many-worded-meanings,
making my life a miracle
of your mercy and your grace.

THE WORLD

Author of life and perfect conversation,
we travel life's journey,
sharing our stories,
so often not knowing you walk with us.
Thank you, for you are always there,
listening to our questions
and giving your answers,
Ask us your questions
and guide us into your Truth.

Day 3

Theme: Witness through awareness

YOU

1. *When and in what ways are you aware of God's presence?*
2. *Are you aware of today's global celebrations and tragedies, and how do you respond to these in your daily life?*
3. *Is there something more that you or your church could do to respond to these situations?*

THE WORD

READ: *1 Samuel 3:1-10; Psalm 23; Acts 8:26-40; Luke 24:13-19a – Jesus, the unrecognised companion on the road*

FOCUS: **Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?**
(Luke 24: 18)

REFLECTION

Walking the rough road
back from Jerusalem,
the air heavy with our disappointment,
with sadness, loss, regret.
("Where is the one who should redeem Israel?")
We were aware of the stranger
matching his footsteps to our own.
How could we guess
that this unrecognised companion
would yet reveal himself
in such a simple action
as the sharing of a loaf of bread?

THE WORLD

Lord Jesus,
you encounter us
and walk alongside us in everyday life.
We pray for the grace to be aware of your
loving presence
and of all that you offer us,
so that we may give greater witness
to our faith and trust in you.

God we walk the same road as those from
whom the incidents of history have divided us.
Draw us ever closer,
so that together we may reflect the unity
for which your son prayed.

Day 4

Theme: Witness through heritage and tradition

YOU

1. *Who has inspired your faith?*
2. *What is it in your faith that inspires you each day?*
3. *How has your history shaped you?*
4. *How can you pass on the good things of your tradition?*

THE WORD

READ: *Deuteronomy 6.3-9; Psalm 34; Acts 4,32-35; Luke 24: 19-27 – He opened the Scriptures to them.*

FOCUS: **What things?**

REFLECTION

The past is not entirely past
but flows unseen; a hidden stream,
life-giving source in barren seasons
yet sometimes, sadly, trapped in
stagnant pools.

When broken dreams disorientate disciples,
leaving them orphaned from meaning
and hope, there comes, afresh, traditions
transforming truth
to reassemble God's life-giving pattern.

Moses and the prophets heard long ago
the promise of one who was yet to come,
in whose life and death and resurrection
earth and heaven were reconciled as one.

THE WORLD

Grant us, O Living and Redeeming Lord,
the eyes to see into and beyond
our traditions.
Give us the gift of discernment
so we can pass to each other those things
which build up your Body, which is
your Church.

Give me eyes to see,
and ears to hear your voice of love.
Lead me so to act each day
that I may display the Unity which is in your
Church and World.

God, we pray for overwhelmed souls
broken by shattering events,
dismayed by fading dreams,
grieving and grasping in equal measure.
May salvation's story in Jesus Christ be
their strength and song.

Day 5

Theme: Witness through suffering

YOU

1. How does the suffering of people you know affect you?
2. How has your own experience of suffering affected your faith?
3. How do reports of the suffering, oppression and poverty of people you don't know affect your life?
4. How does Jesus bring hope for those who suffer?

THE WORD

READ: *Isaiah 50.5-9; Psalm 124; Romans 8.35-39; Luke 24:25-27* How foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe

FOCUS: **Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer? (Luke 24: 26)**

REFLECTION

Words known from childhood, Moses and prophets, marks of identity, source of security, now burst with new meaning.

Was it not necessary?
Unavoidable?
Suffering and glory inseparable;
life lost for life gained
and all our pain redeemed in his rising.

THE WORLD

God, we praise you for the faithfulness of Jesus, embracing us through the suffering of the cross and drawing us deep into your amazing love.

We thank you that we have a Suffering Saviour who has known betrayal, persecution and injustice; who has endured torture of body and mind.

We thank you for all whose suffering has reflected your grace and dignity. We pray, O God, for all who suffer: those who feel forsaken, those who bravely struggle on and those who simply want it to end.

Day 6

Theme: Witness through faithfulness to the scriptures

YOU

1. What are the passages of Scripture that mean most to you?
2. Who or what in your life makes your heart burn with a passion for the gospel and a desire to give witness to Christ?
3. Which Biblical passages have helped you to understand more fully the witness of other Christians?

THE WORD

READ: *Isaiah 55:10; Psalm 119:17-40; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Luke 24.28-35* – Jesus opens the Scriptures for two travellers

FOCUS: **Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us? (Luke 24:28-35)**

REFLECTION

The Word was made flesh and words about the Word made print: mere shapes on a page, potent symbols and signs of God's purpose.

And, balanced by bread broken before them, travellers, burned by digestion of the words, saw and understood.

Words and bread, minds and hearts: twin pillars of persuasion, of staggering truth, turning stumbling travellers into delighted disciples, tripping back to share their joy.

THE WORLD

God, we praise and thank you for your saving Word reaching out to us through the Sacred Scriptures.

We thank you, too, for the brothers and sisters with whom we share your Word and discover together the abundance of your love.

We pray for the light of your Holy Spirit, so that your Word may lead and direct us into the unity you will for the sake of the world.

God, we pray for troubled travellers: disappointed by disunity, devastated by loss, submerged in sorrow, fearful of the future, needing hope.

Day 7

Theme: Witness through hope and trust

YOU

1. *How do you cope with your own fears and doubts?*
2. *How might you be a cause of fear and anxiety for others?*
3. *How may Christian communities encourage one another in faith and hope?*

THE WORD

READ: *Job 19:23-27; Psalm 63; Acts 3:1-10; Luke 24: 36-40 - The disciples were startled and terrified*

FOCUS: **Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? (Luke 24:36-40)**

REFLECTION

We shrink life to fit,
and hope is drained
and trust is strained,
and doubt dominates.

It is not that we don't see,
it is precisely that we do:
that death does not lay to rest
the troublesome truth of faith.

And in the chaos Christ's rising brings,
terror is not ghostly discomfort,
but worldly disquiet,
that now it all changes:
hope is healing
but a heartache too,
and trust costs lives.

THE WORLD

God our comfort and guide,
when our doubts are deepest
and our fears are darkest,
you are there,
though our clouded perception may
miss your presence.
Make us each secure and supportive,
atune to the sensitivities of others,
that we may be encouraged in faith and hope
on our journey to you.

Day 8

Theme: Witness through hospitality

YOU

1. *What hinders your own hospitality?*
2. *Is the place where you live hospitable to strangers?*
3. *What difference does the church make?*
4. *Whose hospitality has touched you deeply?*

THE WORD

READ: *Gen 18:1-8; Psalm 146; Romans 14:17-19; Luke 24:41-48 – Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures*

FOCUS: **Have you anything here to eat? (Luke 24:41)**

REFLECTION

Fasting is fine,
focusing minds;
feasting is great,
sharing the meat.

Fasting is personal,
quite self-referral;
feasting is communal
where spirits meet.

Loving in giving,
donating approval,
needs of the body
attended with grace.

Each one important,
the first and the least,
all must be welcome
and all have a place.

THE WORLD

God of the open hand,
in whom all find a welcome:
help us to

feed the hungry,
give refreshment to the thirsty,
provide covering for the naked,
care for the sick,
extend a hand of friendship to
the isolated,

as fellow pilgrims of Love's embrace.

Order of Service A

GATHERING

As people arrive they may be given a card with the question "What are you hoping for?". They are invited to fill in their responses, turning their answer into a prayer, and these are collected during the prayers of intercession.

Devotional songs, drawing together the traditions represented, are sung as the congregation gathers. The congregation is invited to stand for a culminating hymn of praise

Call to worship

My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples.

A light for revelation to the nations and for the glory of your people.

I: THE NEWS AT THE EMPTY TOMB

Gathering Gospel Luke 24:1-12

This could be read by different voices, each saying one sentence, from within the congregation. The last reader then places a Bible before the congregation saying

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Praise for the dawning of your truth.

Song of resurrection praise

See *Additional resources* for suggestions

Welcome

A shared welcome is given by all leaders at front of the worship space.

An explanation of the service and the key text: Luke 24:48 'You are witnesses of these things'

Opening prayer of gratitude for God's presence

Let us pray that we may be ready to be called by God's Holy Word.

*Almighty God,
who gave such grace
to your apostle Saint Andrew
that he readily obeyed
the call of your Son Jesus Christ
and brought his brother with him:
call us by your holy word,
and give us grace to follow you without delay
and tell the good news of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit.
one God, now and for ever.*

Amen.

Word

II: THE STORY ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Reading Luke 24:13-24

Song or Psalm

For example, Haven't you heard? (CG46)

Meditation

See Additional resources for options.

Reading Luke 24:25-35

This may be announced.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Praise for the dawning of your truth.

Song: "Will you come and follow me?"

(R&S 558; CH5 533; Common Ground 148)

Address, Sermon or Reflection

"This is the Gospel we share."

III: YOU ARE WITNESSES

Reading Luke 24:36-49

This may be announced.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Praise for the dawning of your truth.

We believe that Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah suffered and rose from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations.

Prayers

Prayers of Intercession

The response "Bring your best to their worst" (in "There is One Among Us", Wild Goose Publications) may be said or sung several times while the cards "What are you hoping for?" are collected prior to the prayers. The response may also be sung during the prayers. Other responses may be used.

The Lord's Prayer

The Peace

LEADER The risen Christ came and stood amongst his disciples and said 'peace be with you'. They were glad when they saw the Lord.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

ALL And also with you.

Hymn or Song

See Additional resources for suggestions,

INVITATION TO COMMITMENT

LEADER Where do we commit ourselves to be?

Prayer of commitment (said by all)

Take us from where we are,
to where you want us to be;
make us not merely guardians of a heritage,
but living signs of your coming Kingdom;
fire us with passion for justice and peace
between all people;

fill us with that faith, hope and love which
embody the Gospel;
and through the power of the Holy Spirit make us one.
That the world may believe,
that your name may be enthroned in our nation,
that your church may more effectively be your body,
we commit ourselves to love you, serve you,
and follow you as pilgrims not strangers.

Amen.

(Taken from the commitment used at the Inaugural Service of Action of Churches Together in Scotland.)

DISMISSAL

The Blessing/Benediction

God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead give you confidence to trust in the kingdom to come.

Amen.

Christ who broke bread and walks with his friends feed you with his Word and lead you in truth.

Amen.

The Spirit who empowers the Church for all time give you unity to witness in the power of his name.

Amen.

And the blessing ...

Amen.

Song of thanksgiving

Many, yet one, are the gifts of God's people,
summoned and challenged to love and declare
witness to God, who is love never ending,
work for God's kingdom of justice and peace.

*Chorus: All who have faith shall share in God's mission,
travelling people who dream and inspire,
sharing our lives with all those we encounter.
Offering hope as we journey with God.*

Talents and skills have been given for service,
sharing with others so God may be known,
gifts given freely and willingly offered,
blessed by the Spirit whose presence is near.

Chorus:

Singing and baking, accounting and teaching,
friendship and comfort and mending the roof,
visiting, preaching, empowering or praying,
such are the gifts which we offer to God.

Chorus:

People so varied, yet one in our purpose,
coming together as one family.
Sharing the Gospel, enabling each other,
this is our goal and the source of our hope.

Chorus:

Many yet one are the gifts of God's people

Words: Lindsey Sanderson
Legato, flowing

Music: Susan Heafield
Tune: SANDERSON

G Em

Ma - ny yet one are the gifts of God's peo - ple,
Ta - lents and skills have been gi - ven for ser - vice,
Sing - ing and bak - ing, ac - count - ing and teach - ing,
Peo - ple so va - ried, yet one in our pur - pose,

C D D7

sum - moned and chal - lenged to love and de - clare
shar - ing with o - thers that God may be known,
friend - ship and com - fort and mend - ing the roof,
com - ing to - geth - er as one fa - mi - ly,

G Em

wit - ness to God, who is love ne - ver end - ing,
gifts gi - ven free - ly and wil - ling - ly of - fered,
vi - si - ting, preach - ing, em - power - ing, or pray - ing,
shar - ing the Gos - pel, en - a - bling each o - ther,

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Dismissal Gospel

read from the church door.

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy! (Luke 24:50-53)

Sending out song

He is Lord

John Bradley

He is Lord, Lord of all; Je sus Christ: Lord of all. He is Lord, Lord of all; Je sus Christ: Lord of all.

Though they

He is Lord, Lord of all; Je sus Christ: Lord of all. He is

nailed him to the tree He has won the vic tor y!

Lord, Lord of all; Je sus Christ: Lord of all. He is Lord, Lord of all; Je sus

Love is strong er than the grave

Christ: Lord of all. He is Lord, Lord of all; Je sus Christ: Lord of all.

He has all the power to save!

'He is Lord of all' © John Bradley, reproduced with permission

Order of Service B

As people come in, they are given a postcard with a question mark on the front.

Gathering song

suggestions can be found on the “additional resources” page: www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

Welcome and introduction

Hymn/Song

Reading 1: Luke 24. 1-12

read from the congregation

Poem: Why do you look for the living among the dead?

The question hangs in the air before touching me
 In the depths of my soul
 Why have I been perplexed when peace stands so near?
 Why have I not been dazzled daily by the light of the world?
 Why have I been still afraid when you say there is nothing to fear?

'Remember' whispers a voice
 'How he spoke to you,
 Return from the tomb,
 He is not there! Nor ever shall be!'

Out of the many words that I speak
 In prayer may some rise to the heavens ...
 In faith may others believe what I say,
 run to that tomb
 and see for themselves linen wrappings
 fallen to the ground
 And marvel as they journey towards home

A song, dance or drama may be performed here.

Reading 2: Luke 24.13-27

This might be read by three different voices.

Poem: Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?

Walking the rough road back from Jerusalem,
 the air heavy with our disappointment,
 with sadness, loss, regret.
 (“Where is the one who should redeem Israel?”)
 We were aware of the stranger matching his footsteps to our own.
 How could we guess that this unrecognised companion
 would yet reveal himself in such a simple action
 as the sharing of a loaf of bread?

Question reflection:

What are you looking for?

People are invited to write their answer on the postcard they have been given.

These can be gathered at this point or after the address – to be offered to God in a simple act, (wall hanging, offering basket ...), a few may be read out.

Hymn/Song**Reading 3: Luke 24.28-44**
The breaking of bread**Reflection/address/meditation**

Option to use the dramatic presentation 'You are Witnesses' as a dramatic reading or as a PowerPoint™ presentation with voices off stage (available on the "additional resources" pages at www.ctbi.org.uk)

Prayer of Commitment said by all:

**Take us from where we are,
to where you want us to be;
make us not merely guardians of a heritage,
but living signs of your coming Kingdom;
fire us with passion for justice and peace between all people;
fill us with that faith, hope and love which embody the Gospel;
and through the power of the Holy Spirit make us one.
That the world may believe, that your name may be enthroned in our nation,
that your church may more effectively be your body,
we commit ourselves to love you, serve you,
and follow you as pilgrims not strangers.
Amen.**

(Taken from the commitment used at the Inaugural Service of Action of Churches Together in Scotland.)

Closing song**Dismissal**

The congregation turns to face the door

Reading 4: Luke 24.45-53

All say together:

**We believe that Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah
suffered and rose from the dead on the third day,
and that repentance and forgiveness of sins
is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations.**

Hymn/Song

**Additional prayers and meditations can be found at:
www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer**