

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012



We will all be **Changed**

Yr ydym i gyd i gael ein newid
Tiochfaidh 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**

Psalm 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.

Order of Service for an Ecumenical Act of Worship

GATHERING and INTRODUCTION

Preparation: A number of readers are needed, although items are not formally allocated to the leader or a particular reader. Ideally, readers should be drawn from across the different churches participating. Items in bold are for everyone to join in

Before the service the Leader may explain the context of the Act of Worship, drawing attention to the Polish origin of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity material, and the fact that the secular history of Poland 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."

This Act of Worship begins by focussing on the **personal change needed in order to play a full and active part in this search for unity** and, reflecting the daily themes, a narrative towards unity is offered.

*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.*



Gathering suggestion

Extract from Handel's Messiah ("Behold I tell you a mystery") either as a recording or a live performance.

The serving, the waiting, the suffering and the struggling...

Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:24 (NRSV)

Though the fig tree does not blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails
and the fields yield no food;

though the flock is cut off from the fold
and there is no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will exult in the God of my salvation.

God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the heights.

Habakkuk 3 17-19 (NRSV)

OPENING PRAYER

SONG: BLESSED BE YOUR NAME

(Images 1, abundance, and 2, desert place)

Blessed be your name
In the land that is plentiful,
Where Your streams of abundance flow,
Blessed be Your name.
And blessed be Your name
When I'm found in the desert place,
Though I walk through the wilderness,
Blessed be Your name.

Every blessing You pour out I'll
Turn back to praise.
When the darkness closes in, Lord,
Still I will say:

Blessed be the name of the Lord,
Blessed be Your name.
Blessed be the name of the Lord,
Blessed be Your glorious name.

(Images 3, sun shining, and 4, road marked with suffering)

Blessed be Your name
When the sun's shining down on me,
When the world's 'all as it should be',
Blessed be Your name.
And blessed be Your name
On the road marked with suffering,
Though there's pain in the offering,
Blessed be Your name.

You give and take away,
You give and take away.
My heart will choose to say:
Lord, blessed be Your name.

Matt Redman / Beth Redman
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The peacemaking

SILENCE

Then: People from within the congregation speak the following verses, with sung choruses in between:

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
He drew me up from the desolate pit,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.

Psalm 40: 1-3 (NRSV)

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.'

Psalm 91: 1-2 (NRSV)

SUNG BY ALL:

You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord, blessed be Your name

I lift up my eyes to the hills –
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 121: 1-2 (NRSV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139: 23-24 (NRSV)

Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

Psalm 86: 11 (NRSV)

SUNG BY ALL:

**Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your name
Blessed be the name of the Lord
Blessed be Your glorious name.**

SILENCE

SONG: IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

Horatio Spafford (1828-1888). Tune by Philip Bliss (1838-1876)

Introduce the story of the song

“It Is Well with My Soul”, was written after several traumatic events in Horatio Spafford’s life: The first was the death of his only son in 1871 at the age of four, shortly followed by the great Chicago Fire which ruined him financially (he had been a successful lawyer). Then in 1873, he had planned to travel to Europe with his family on the SS Ville du Havre, but sent the family ahead while he was delayed on business concerning zoning problems following the Great Chicago Fire. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship sank rapidly after a collision with a sailing ship, the Loch Earn, and all four of Spafford’s daughters died. His wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, “Saved alone.” Shortly afterwards, as Spafford travelled to meet his grieving wife, he was inspired to write these words as his ship passed near where his daughters had died.

**When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.**

Refrain

*It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

**Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.**

Refrain

**My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!**

Refrain

**For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.**

Refrain

**But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord!
Blessèd hope, blessèd rest of my soul!**

Refrain

**And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.**

Refrain

The loving and the feeding

READING

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us **the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15: 51-58 (NRSV)

FURTHER READINGS

Testimonies are offered or poems are read in the voices of those changed by Jesus: Zaccheus, the Samaritan woman, Lazarus...

Zaccheus

He knew my name
That's the thing
How did he know my name?
This man passing through
Stops at my tree
And invites himself round
Nobody asks to come and see me
Ever

I was so blown away
I didn't think of the unmade bed
Or the washing up
Or the weeds springing up
All the way along the path to my
Special extra-security hard-to-break-
down reinforced door
Me

The man everyone hated
Abraham's son
Salvation came that day
To a house filled only with fine things
I knew by the way he looked up at me
That I would give away half of all

that I owned
To the poor
It didn't matter what it cost
I was so happy
Because for the first time in my life
Ever
I wasn't lost

Sarah Fordham

The Samaritan woman

I found myself wondering,
"Who does he think he is?"
And, more to the point,
"Who does he think I am?"

It was a hot day, to be sure:
the kind of day that tugs at
your throat,
and sticks your tongue to the roof
of your mouth.
The well was welcome –

wells always are:
it must be good to be that
source of relief.
People just have good things to say
about you.
Unless, of course, you run dry:
then blessings turn to curses.

And there I was, bucket in hand;
and there he was, just stood there.
And I wondered, and I felt uneasy,
and was determined not to
catch his eye.
Just do what you have come to do,
I said to myself,
keep your head down
keep yourself to yourself,
draw your water and be on your way.

I could see he was a Jew.
Could he not see what I was?
“Give me a drink!” he said.
The cheek, I thought.
“Why do you ask?” I replied.
The cheek, he probably thought.
But we were different peoples.
“I’ll give you living water!” he said.
I paused, then pressed on,
“You have no bucket - and wells
require buckets,
whatever the water is called!”
No pause from him, he pressed on,
“Drink this stuff here, and you will
thirst again.
Your throat will tug again.
But my stuff will last a lifetime –
a bottomless bucket if you like.”

And there and then I realised,
he was my source of true relief.
I felt an overwhelming sense
of wanting to say good things
about him.

No man – no one – had ever cared
that much about me.
This one better not let me down.

Stephen Brown

“Lazarus, come forth”

Imagine the shock
In the earth’s depths resting
And to hear a sound, faint at first
And then becoming distinct
My name sounded like a trumpet blast
coming from the world
Where I had wandered and whispered
prayers I hoped were heard

I had been laid down four days since
And an unearthly stench had gathered
Decay added to the darkness within my
sealed cell
Believe me, this was a place no man is
designed to enter
No woman should ever know what
lies inside

After the unsealing they told me
That He did not close his eyes when
he prayed
But raised them heavenwards as was
his custom
I imagine the sky reflected in His tears
When He cried out with a voice so
charged with electric life
That death stopped dead in its tracks and
then reversed

Rumbling and then a mighty roar was
His shout
And I could do nothing else but
in shuffling
Faltering steps
Come out

Sarah Fordham

REFLECTION/SERMON

Focussing on one of the characters above

or MEDITATION

Read the story of one of these characters 3 times, each time people listening out for:

- What strikes you most about these verses?
- What is Jesus saying to you through what is striking you?
- What is Jesus then asking of you?

HYMN: I HEARD THE VOICE OF JESUS SAY

Horatius Bonar (1808 – 1889). Possible tunes: Rowan Tree, Kingsfold, Vox Dilecti

First verse could be sung as a solo

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down,
Thy head upon My breast.”
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live.”
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream.
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
“I am this dark world’s Light.
Look unto Me; thy morn shall rise
And all thy day be bright.”
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that Light of Life I’ll walk
Till traveling days are done.

The unity

READING: Jesus' prayer for us

But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.'

John 17: 13-21 (NRSV)

CONCLUSION

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. We want to make this effort together, in humility, serving God and our neighbour according to the example of Jesus Christ. Let us all say together:

PRAYER

**Almighty God,
Through Jesus you say to us
that whoever wishes to be first must become the least and the servant of all.
We leave this place,
knowing that your victory is won through the powerlessness of the cross.
We pray that your church may be one.
Teach us to accept humbly that this unity is a gift of your Spirit;
Through this gift, change and transform us
and make us more like your Son Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Let us also pray as our Lord taught us to pray:

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,
forever.
Amen.**

PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD may be said here

COMMISSIONING

Changed by Jesus in our serving
Send us and together we will go!

Changed by Jesus in our waiting
Send us and together we will go!

Changed by Jesus in our suffering
Send us and together we will go!

Changed by Jesus in our struggling
Send us and together we will go!

Changed by Jesus in our peace-making
Send us and together we will go!

Changed by Jesus in our loving
Send us and together we will go!

Changed by Jesus in our fellowship
Send us and together we will go!

Changed by Jesus as we unite
Send us and together we will go!

HYMN: ALL MY HOPE ON GOD IS FOUNDED

Lyrics: Joachim Neander (1650 - 1680), translated by Robert Bridges (1844 - 1930).

Tune: Michael, by Herbert Howells.

This tune is named after Howells' son Michael who died suddenly from polio in 1935, aged 9.

**All my hope on God is founded;
He doth still my trust renew,
Me through change and chance He guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown, He alone
Calls my heart to be His own.**

**Pride of man and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray His trust;
What with care and toil He buildeth,
Tower and temple fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.**

**God's great goodness aye endureth,
Deep His wisdom, passing thought:
Splendor, light and life attend him,
Beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore from His store
Newborn worlds rise and adore.**

**Daily doth th'almighty Giver
Bounteous gifts on us bestow;
His desire our soul delighteth,
Pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand at His hand;
Joy doth wait on His command.**

**Still from man to God eternal
Sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
For the gift of Christ, His Son.
Christ doth call one and all:
Ye who follow shall not fall.**

THE BLESSING

The minister says to the congregation:

The Lord bless you and keep you
The Lord make his face to smile upon you,
And be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
And give you peace.

The members of the congregation say to each other:

The Lord bless you and keep you
The Lord make his face to smile upon you,
And be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
And give you peace.

Recessional suggestion: "The Trumpet Shall Sound" from Handel's Messiah, either as a recording or a live performance.



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-week-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 (pages 7 - 18) 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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