

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018

That All May Be Free



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Fel y Bo Pawb yn Rhydd / Go saortar sinn go léir
18-25 January www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer


**churches
together**
IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

WELCOME

Praying for the unity of the Church involves a recognition not only of the brokenness of Christian relationships but also how injustice in the world at large rends asunder Christian communities and impedes our participation in God's mission. History too plays a part, casting a shadow over how we live our lives together in community.

All of these issues emerge from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity materials for 2018. The churches of the Caribbean region describe to us their own context, how the hand of God was active in ending slavery, and how God's mission in the world is a call to us all to unite together in ending injustice, that which casts a shadow from the past and current forms of injustice such as poverty, trafficking and discrimination.

This particular Caribbean experience is a challenge to us in our context to reflect more deeply on the injustices in our own nations in Britain and Ireland which create the divisions that impede our participation in God's mission, with the call to actively work to end all division.

Within these resources you will find not only the worship service derived from the International material that is resourced by the Caribbean churches, but also additional material written by the CTBI Writers Group. I hope and pray that you will find these materials inspiring as you seek to participate in the life that sets us free to be one in God.

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

Introduction to this year's theme and background

The material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018 has been produced in the Caribbean. There are 1.4 Million Christians living in the Caribbean region, across a vast geographical spread of island and mainland territories. They represent a rich and diverse tapestry of ethnic, linguistic and religious traditions, with a complex variety of governmental and constitutional arrangements.

The contemporary context is deeply marked by the history of the colonialism which stripped people of their identity, dignity and freedom. Christian missionary activity, closely tied to the colonial system, seemed to support, encourage and excuse it. During five-hundred years of the colonial system, scripture was used to justify the enslavement of the indigenous people. In a dynamic reversal, those same scriptures became the inspiration and motivation for people to reclaim their liberty. Recognising the hand of God in the ending of enslavement, the Caribbean Christians offer Exodus 15, a song of triumph over oppression, as the motif of the Week of Prayer. The hymn, The Right Hand of God, reflecting the song of Miriam and Moses in praise of the liberating action of God, has become the anthem of the ecumenical movement in the region.

Like the Israelites, the people of the Caribbean have a song of victory and freedom to sing. Yet, contemporary challenges continue to enslave and threaten the dignity

of the people. Many of the contemporary challenges are the legacy of the colonial past. The Caribbean economies have traditionally been based upon the production of materials for the European market – sometimes producing only a single commodity. They have never been self-sustaining and their development has required borrowing on the international market. The servicing of the debt has caused a reduction in spending upon the development that it was meant to facilitate.

The chosen passage from Exodus 15 allows us to see that the road to unity must often pass through a communal experience of suffering. The Israelites' liberation from enslavement is the foundational event in the constitution of the people. Although our liberation and salvation is at God's initiative, human agencies are engaged in their realisation. Christians participate in God's ministry of reconciliation, yet our divisions hamper our witness to a world in need of God's healing.

The themes of the daily material raise some of the contemporary issues addressed by the churches of the Caribbean. Abuses of human rights are found across the region and we are challenged to consider our manner of welcoming of the stranger into our midst. Human trafficking and modern-day slavery continue to be huge issues. Addiction to pornography and drugs, continue to be serious challenges to all societies. The debt crisis has a negative impact upon the nations and upon individuals – the economies of the nations and people have become precarious. Family life continues to be challenged by the economic restrictions which lead to migration, domestic abuse and violence.

The Caribbean Churches work together to heal the wounds in the body of Christ. Reconciliation demands repentance, reparation and the healing of memories. The whole Church is called to be both a sign and an active agent of this reconciliation.



DAY 1 WELCOMING THE STRANGER

STARTING POINT

The memory of a liberated people, that they were once enslaved, should compel us to welcome the stranger in our midst. The experience of Biblical Israel resonates with the experiences of the peoples of the Caribbean region, the majority of whom were once slaves. We remember how God restores the dignity of God's people and the churches of the region play an important role in reminding their society of the duty to welcome refugees and displaced persons.

Leviticus 19.33-34 You shall love the alien as yourself

Psalms 146 The Lord watches over the strangers

Hebrews 13.1-3 Some have entertained angels without knowing it

Matthew 25.31-46 I was a stranger and you welcomed me

REFLECTION

We are good because we are loved,
not loved because we are good.
If it was up to each one of us to earn it,
we might not be loved very much.
Too much goat and not enough sheep.
And yet loved we are, since God is in all things,
even the bits we think are ugly and unmentionable.

We are loved,
but God wants us to give some love back,
giving and receiving
in a mutual relationship.
Love makes us better
holds us together
reaching out to the other.

Being in relationship with God means being with other people,
doing some good.
Looking after the creation
and not seeing everything as being there for our enjoyment.

It means being fair and not exploiting others.
It means giving and not taking.
It means being alongside not overpowering others.
It even means welcoming and respecting the stranger in our midst since
it may be the Christ unannounced.



QUESTIONS

- † How have you experienced being a stranger?
- † Have you visited another church (perhaps whilst on holiday)? How were you welcomed? How did you feel?
- † How might being truly hospitable be challenging? What might hold us back from being genuinely hospitable?

PRAYER

Barrier-breaking God,
You embrace all cultures and lands,
But keep a special place in your heart
For the stranger, the widow and the orphan.
Grant us the gift of your Spirit
That we may become as You are,
Welcoming all as brothers and sisters,
Your cherished children,
Citizens together in Christ's kingdom of justice and peace.
Amen



GO AND DO

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

The Caribbean Council of Churches has been involved in advocacy to challenge those nations that are restricting or stripping Haitians of citizenship rights.

Visit Go and Do to read Milciades story about being denied his rights in the Dominican Republic.

Visit Go and Do to find inspiration and encouragement to keep helping those who have been forced from their homes across the world.



DAY 2 RESISTING MODERN SLAVERY

STARTING POINT

Human trafficking is modern day slavery. How should this be challenged and ended? In the parable of the Good Samaritan and in Paul's response to the slave Onesimus we see how transgressing social norms affirms the image of God in every individual, and thereby challenges those things that exclude people or hold them in chains. A united Christian voice is essential and unless Christians act together, modern day slavery will be too strong to resist.

Genesis 1.26-28 God created humankind in God's own image

Psalms 10.1-10 Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?

Philemon No longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother

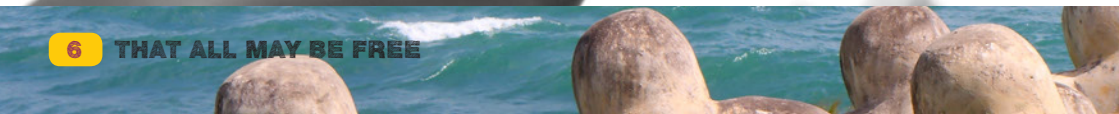
Luke 10.25-37 The Parable of the Good Samaritan

REFLECTION

Not a daughter, but a dollar
not a sister, but profit gained
not a brother, but cheap labour
not a family fleeing terror
but a fortune to be made.

Captured by a web of lies
Snared by fear and manipulation
Seized by deceitful hands
Bound by broken promises
All dignity denied

Heart hard
a commodity to exploit
Heart sore
a beloved child of God
Heart held
in hope of liberation.



QUESTIONS

- † What do the words 'human trafficking' and 'slavery' evoke for you?
- † To what extent do you think Paul challenges slavery in the letter to Philemon?
- † How does a united Christian response make a difference in challenging injustices, such as human trafficking?

PRAYER

Just and righteous God
You called your people out of slavery
And onwards to the new humanity
Where all are one in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Enfold with your love those trafficked as slaves today.
Empower your Church
To denounce and work to end that evil trade
Living out the love and compassion of Christ
As we tend its victims.
Amen.



GO AND DO

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

Reformed Churches in the Caribbean have joined with the Council for World Mission and the Caribbean and North American Council for Mission to educate Christian communities to end the scourge of human trafficking.

Visit Go and Do to read the story of Sanlaap, helping those who have been trafficked.

Organise a meeting between the churches in your area and invite a speaker from an anti-trafficking organisation to come along to inform, educate and inspire you to take action together against human trafficking. Visit Go and Do to find out more.



DAY 3 UPHOLDING HUMAN DIGNITY

STARTING POINT

Our image of a slave is often of someone wearing iron chains and being forced to work against their will. But there are other forms of enslavement where the chains may be less visible. Pornography, especially via the internet, is an assault on human dignity, and, because it commodifies the human person, it is as destructive as slavery, where women, children and young people can be the first victims. As Christians we are called to uphold human dignity, recognize God's gift to sexuality and to work against those things that damage that dignity and gift.

Exodus 3.4-10 God frees those who are in human bondage

Psalms 24.1-6 Lord, we are the people who see your face

1 Corinthians 6.9-20 Therefore glorify God in your body

Matthew 18.1-7 Woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!

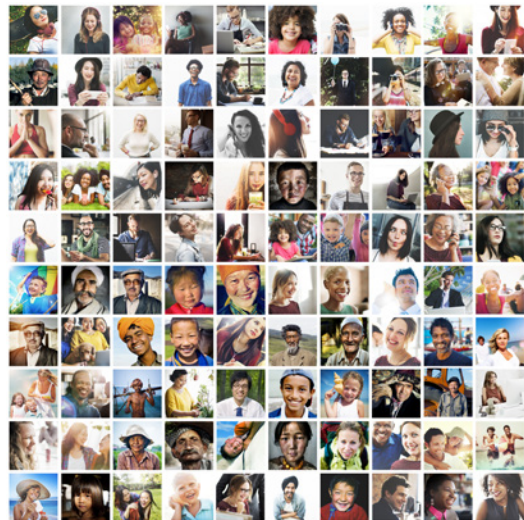
REFLECTION

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder
the saying goes;
but what if those who look on
are not interested in beauty?

A rose by any other name
can still be pruned
too early,
before it is in bloom;
petals not allowed to unfurl as yet
fall between the weeds that would choke.

Beauty held
captive,
by the hand that wants only for itself.
Hands can be washed,
but the stain of shame
is not so easily removed.

Beauty held
tenderly;
precious.
Tears wiped away,
tables turned
in our temples;
where is God's hand
in all of this?



QUESTIONS

- † What do the words 'pornography' and 'exploitation' evoke for you?
- † How do the internet, social media and other forms of modern technology liberate or enslave us?
- † How in the modern world might we uphold human dignity?

PRAYER

God of beauty,
You made us in your image
Endowed us with a loveliness
Little lower than the angels'.
Save us from the exploitation
Of each other's bodies.
For the sake of Christ,
Who became flesh and reigns in glory.
Teach us that
Our bodies are sacraments of grace,
And vessels of your beauty.
Amen.



GO AND DO

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

Many Christian churches in the Caribbean share a concern about the issue of pornography, especially via the internet.

Visit Go and Do to find information about how you can provide information about pornography addiction support groups in your churches.

Explore and discuss in your church small group or bible study group where bodies can be viewed positively and holistically in our culture, e.g. art galleries. You could read a book together to explore a positive perspective on how to view the body. e.g. *Body* by Paula Gooder.

DAY 4 OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

STARTING POINT

Christian discipleship lived out in the world cannot avoid the reality of violence. Most religions declare themselves to be peaceful and against violence. However, churches, called into unity and called to be part of God's mission in the world, are also called to discern the Gospel of hope. This is a Gospel that can be proclaimed to those who live with the consequences of gang warfare, domestic violence or the fear of violence.

Isaiah 9.2-7a His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace

Psalms 34.1-14 Seek peace, and pursue it

Revelation 7.13-17 God will wipe away every tear from their eyes

John 14.25-27 Peace I leave with you

REFLECTION

In our beautiful (is)land
violence breeds violence;
 ('an eye for an eye...')
and abuse, murder, rape,
 ('limb from limb....')
become a way of life
as teenage bodies are ravaged beyond repair,
neighbourhoods are gang-violated,
and lives abused –
domestically
 ('heads dashed against rock?')

We see.

We know,

and we wail: "For the love of God. In the name of Jesus. Stop."

The hand of God stretches into the pain saying:
'I bring comfort, justice, righteousness,'
and we remember that

 veiled by the violence;
 obscured by our walled communities,
 beneath the facade of this island-idyll

lie true all-inclusive packages of
beauty
seen and known
by our God of hope.



Each single sacramental life,
precious beyond measure,
is made whole
in the healing
hand of God.

We believe that
in the paradise-heaven
as close to us as the waves
lapping our golden shores
there is

no hunger
no thirst
no torching of lives
or scorching of earth.

Here our tears are wiped away.
Springs of living water
revive our worn-out bodies,
our weary earth.

PRAYER

Reconciling God,
Christ's nail-pierced hands
Are your intent from eternity
You call us to be signs of peace
In the midst of violence,
The embodiment of hope
In the midst of despair.
May Christ so live in us
That we might spend and be spent
In his ministry of reconciliation.
Amen.



QUESTIONS

- † Have you felt threatened in a place where you previously felt safe?
- † In what ways are you concerned about increasing violence in your area and in society?
- † What is the message of hope that Christians can bring in a world troubled by violence?

GO AND DO

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

Within the Caribbean, violence is a problem to which the churches are called to respond.

Visit Go and Do to find out more about the story behind the holiday images of the Caribbean.

Contact your nearest Women's Aid to find out what supplies they currently need and organise a joint collection between churches in your area.

Wear black on Thursdays in solidarity with victims of rape and domestic violence, visit Go and Do to find out more.

DATES

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from 18th to 25th January (the octave of St Peter and St Paul). However, some groups choose other times of the year, particularly around Pentecost which is a symbolic date for the unity of the church. Do make your own decision, taking local factors into account. To allow for use at any time in the year, the Days material uses the notation 1-8.

ORDER OF SERVICE

The order of service in the centre of the pamphlet can be pulled out and photocopied if you wish. Alternatively, all resources can be downloaded from the CTBI website and you are welcome to further edit or adapt them for local use. Please acknowledge the source of material as Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity resources.

CHRISTIAN UNITY WALL

Please add details and photos of your events, prayers and messages of unity to the Christian unity 'wall' at www.weekofprayer.org by posting to Twitter using #wpcuwall hashtag. Posts appear automatically (after a slight delay).

FREE FORM WORSHIP

This year, the member writers of the WPCU 2018 materials, have provided an additional resource available to download online at: www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer. The Free Form Worship which makes use of some of the material in the main service is simple and straight forward and available as a PowerPoint presentation.



OPENING WORSHIP SERVICE



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Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power (Ex 15:6)



GATHERING

Song

During the singing of the song, those leading the worship enter behind someone carrying the Bible, which is placed in a prominent place.

Words of Welcome

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

We are here to be thankful for God's goodness to the Christian Churches throughout the world. Today we share in the experience of the Churches of the Caribbean and their history of oppression, colonisation and slavery. We also celebrate that through the scriptures they found their lives transformed by the liberating action of God.

By the Grace of God their chains of enslavement were replaced by new human bonds of love and community. In this action of God they found their unity. May God speak to us through their experience.

INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The response to the invocation may be sung.

Unite your servants in the bond of unity.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Teach us to pray.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Liberate us from the slavery of sin.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Help us in our weakness.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Restore us as your children.

Come, Holy Spirit!



Song of Praise

PRAYERS OF RECONCILIATION

God calls us to liberation in Christ. We have not received a spirit of slavery and fear but adoption into His family. But still old sins and habits enslave us, so let us pray and call on the mercy of God's saving power.

(PowerPoint images of chains can be found in the online additional resources which can be found at see www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer)

Forgive us when we fall into old habits of sin that undermine the dignity of others.

Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

Forgive us when our choices perpetuate enslavement and poverty.

Christe eleison.

Christe eleison.

Forgive us when fear and suspicion separate us from each other and place limits on hope and healing.

Kyrie eleison.

Kyrie eleison.

An assurance of pardon may be given

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

Exodus 15:1-17

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

'I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name.

'Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power— your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

‘Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

‘In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.’

Listen and you will be set free.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 118: 5-7, 10-24

The Psalm could be sung: Suggested metrical versions can be found in the additional resources

Romans 8:12-27

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

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.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Listen, that all may be free.

Thanks be to God.

A suitable acclamation may be sung before and after the Gospel; alternatively, hymns may be sung or music played.

Mark 5:21-43

This could be read in a dramatized version

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?"' He looked all round to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Listen, that all may be free.

Thanks be to God.

HOMILY / SERMON / REFLECTION

The Apostles' Creed (or an alternative confession of faith may be used)

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn

This hymn was specially written by Patrick Prescod for the Conference of Caribbean Churches and has a long association with the Caribbean Ecumenical Movement. An audio file and details of where the music can be found is available at <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer>.

The right hand of God
is writing in our land,
Writing with power and with love;
Our conflicts and our fears,
Our triumphs and our tears,
Are recorded by the right hand of God.

The right hand of God
is striking in our land,
Striking out at envy, hate and greed;
Our selfishness and lust,
Our pride and deeds unjust,
Are destroyed by the right hand of God.

The right hand of God
is lifting in our land,
Lifting the fallen one by one;
Each one is known by name,
And rescued now from shame,
By the lifting of the right hand of God.

The right hand of God
is healing in our land,
Healing broken bodies, minds and souls;
So wondrous is its touch,
With love that means so much,
When we're healed
by the right hand of God.



PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us place our needs before the Lord.

Each intercession is read by a different reader. As they finish, the readers each join hands or link arms with members of the assembly, thus creating a human chain.

God of the Exodus, you led your people through the Red Sea from slavery into freedom. Free us from all forms of slavery and everything that obscures human dignity.

Lead us by your hand, that we may live.

God of abundance, you provide for all our needs. Help us to rise above selfishness and greed and give us the courage to be agents of justice in the world.

Lead us by your hand, that we may live.

God of love, you created us in your image and have redeemed us in Christ. Empower us to love our neighbour and to welcome the stranger.

Lead us by your hand, that we may live.

God of the covenant you remain faithful to us even when we have wandered into violence. Put a new spirit and a new heart within us that we may instead be servants of your peace.

Lead us by your hand, that we may live.

God of glory, in Jesus you chose to humble yourself and become part of our story. You made your home with a human family, and have adopted us as your children. Help us to remain faithful to our families and communities, and make us one in Christ.

Lead us by your hand, that we may live.

God of the Trinity, you make us one with you and each other. Free us from the self-centredness, arrogance and fear that hinders the full visible unity of your Church.

Lead us by your hand, that we may live.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us join our hands, bound not by chains but by the love of Christ that has been poured into our hearts, and pray to our Father in the words that Jesus taught us.

The Lord's Prayer may be said or sung in the form most appropriate to your context.

Our Father....

A familiar song may be sung that celebrates unity.

After the song, the Sign of Peace may be exchanged.

COMMISSIONING

Redeemed by God and united in the One Body of Christ, let us go out into the world in the power of the Spirit.

**The Spirit of the Lord is upon us,
because the Lord has anointed us
to bring good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.
Amen! Alleluia!**

Luke 4: 18-19 (NRSV)

Song/Hymn

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DAY 5 PURSUING ECONOMIC JUSTICE

STARTING POINT

The inheritance of slavery and colonialism has meant that the economies of the Caribbean have never been self-sustaining. As a result, they have become dependent upon borrowing on the international markets in order to sustain economic development, which impacts upon the poorest, with regard to things such as transport, health and education. The Church is called to hear the voice of the poor that is often silenced but the disunity of the Church hinders this prophetic voice. Therefore, Christian unity is critical for the Church in its vocation to be on the side of the poor.

Deuteronomy 1.19-35 The Lord God goes before you and carried you

Psalms 145.9-20 The Lord upholds all who are falling

James 1.9-11 The rich will disappear like a flower in the field

Luke 18.35-43 Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!

REFLECTION

I don't have time to hear
beyond the din of the crowd
the pointless bleating of some sightless tramp.
Just a nuisance.
More important things to do.
Plans to be completed.
Status to be sustained.

The field lies barren,
faded flowers crunching under foot.
Until God comes
to sow from bountiful hand
a meadow of new hope
and a feast for eyes that were blind.



QUESTIONS

- † How do you work with other Christians to engage with social issues?
- † How do churches working together in service to the community contribute to Christian unity?
- † How has the unity of Christians enabled the prophetic voice? What can be learned from this?

PRAYER

God of the poor and dispossessed,
You hear the cries of your despised ones.
You look with favour on the lowly
And bring down the powerful from their thrones.
Hear our cries for those who are silenced,
Our protests for those pushed to the margins.
In our advocacy with them
May we find the unity to which you call us
In Christ's name.
Amen.



GO AND DO

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

The Caribbean Conference of Churches has launched an initiative to address the current debt crisis in the region and through their international networks to come to the aid of the poor.

Visit Go and Do to read of how debt relief has made an enormous difference to one farmer's life.

Visit Go and Do to find out more about the Jubilee debt campaign and how you can take action as churches together and be part of the global movement to break the chains of debt

DAY 6 GOD ACTS FOR THE POWERLESS

STARTING POINT

People from the Caribbean working overseas who send money home find this more difficult because of changes due to international banking regulations. This has had a negative impact on the Caribbean region with increased economic hardship for many families. In response to this the churches of the region have introduced Credit Unions. This preferential option for the poor is also God's option: the right hand of God always acts for the powerless against the powerful. Christians are therefore called to live across the divisions of the global North and South and affirm our common humanity together.

Isaiah 25.1-9 Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation

Psalms 82 Maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute

Philippians 2.1-4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others

Luke 12.13-21 Be on your guard against all kinds of greed

REFLECTION

To have, or not to have,
that is the question.
If we have, we have control,
the future's in our hands: life's assured.

And as we eat and drink and just enjoy,
we boast about our handouts
so we can forget the rest

who have not.
Who know no power or control.
And look to just tomorrow as a land unknown.

And yet,
when God hands out his justice,
brim full barns and sure investments fall
and then we see
our greed for what it is.
Then, dare we
stand as one
and ask, instead,
how best to be?



QUESTIONS

- † What are the realities of economic hardship in your community?
- † How do overseas partnerships enable solidarity between the global North and South?
- † In our partnerships with churches in the global South, how do we ensure genuine partnership and equal exchange?

PRAYER

Generous God
Your overflowing love gave birth to creation;
Your redeeming love journeyed
Through lands of forsakenness
So that the tomb might be empty,
And our life with you unending.
Teach us your logic –
That to give is to receive,
To empty ourselves is to be filled,
That as we point away from ourselves
We might discover anew our unity in Christ.
Amen.



GO AND DO

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

The Churches in the Caribbean introduced the Credit Union movement in order for the poor to have access to finance for economic activity.

Visit Go and Do to find out how micro-credit schemes can make a difference to communities across the world.

Find out more about the Churches Mutual Credit Union and how your churches can get involved.

DAY 7 DIFFERENT FAMILIES

STARTING POINT

The protection and nurture of children are important functions for any family. The experience of the holy family fleeing an atrocity, for example, offers one model of family life that demonstrates God's fidelity to us. Life today also poses significant challenges for carers in the protection and nurture of children. The churches of the Caribbean aim to respond to this, wrestling with factors that include migration, financial problems and domestic violence. As Christians, we are called to be communities where all families are supported and strengthened so that all are safe and may flourish.

Exodus 2.1-10 The Birth of Moses

Psalms 127 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain

Hebrew 11.23-24 Moses was hidden by his parents...because they saw that the child was beautiful

Matthew 2.13-15 Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt

REFLECTION

The head of the family
gathers us all in...
ushered from near and far,
we each take time to find our place;
so we can take our seat at the table.

The meal is prepared,
the banquet set.

For some, the table is just out of reach for now;
we lift them up
so they can see the others,
reach the food that seemed distant before.

For others, the chairs are too heavy to move;
so we swap places,
shuffle around
and help them get comfortable.

Couples move around,
gaps are filled,
odd numbers don't matter;
after all...
it wouldn't be a proper family gathering
if we weren't all there.



QUESTIONS

- † How is our understanding about what is 'family' changing?
- † In what ways do you experience 'family' in your church?
- † What role does the church have in supporting families during turbulent times?

PRAYER

God of love
You risked your life
Through the womb of a teenager,
And shared the nurture of your Son
With a village carpenter.
You understand families, communities, relationships –
Mixes all of beauty and brokenness.
Bless all those who raise children
And care for the vulnerable
And through your grace
Gather them into the life of your kingdom,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



GO AND DO

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

The churches of the Caribbean are working to give support to both nuclear and extended families.

Organise an 'extended family' dinner between the churches in your area. Each church could offer to provide a course, drinks or the venue.

Invite those in your community who are living away from their family for a Sunday lunch in your home.

Visit Go and Do to find ideas of how you might best support families in your area and across the world.



DAY 8 THE CALL TO RECONCILIATION

STARTING POINT

The formation of a united covenanted people is part of God's intention towards a reconciled world. The historic legacies of colonialism have led to apologies which have transformed relationships for example between British and Jamaican Baptists. This serves as an illustration of how the Church in its unity is called, like Biblical Israel, to be both a sign and an active agent of reconciliation. The work of reconciliation therefore extends beyond the walls of the church and means that Christians are called to work for reconciliation in the world.

Isaiah 11.12-13 Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not be hostile towards Ephraim

Psalms 106.1-14, 43-48 Gather is to give thanks to your holy name

Ephesians 2.13-19 He has broken down the dividing wall

John 17.1-12 I have been glorified in them

REFLECTION

Past hurts rooted in slavery and dominance have left a legacy of deep divisions among God's children. The lack of repentance for history and memories make us cling to hurts; we let ourselves be defined by them. And our embarrassment in having caused them and the pride which will not let us admit it ensure that hurts and divisions are perpetuated. The Body of Christ remains broken; we are pulled ever further from the reconciler of our faith and the unity that is possible through His love. The Spirit speaks but are we listening? Can we not hear? Enough! Enough!

We can say sorry,
seek forgiveness,
forgive,
let go.



What should be rendered to God? Are we willing to surrender to God the hostility, jealousy, bitterness and guilt that separates us from God's reconciling grace and mercy?

Lord reveal to us our failings, that becoming aware of them and seeking your grace and forgiveness, we may be united in a relationship of love where institutional divisions fall away.

Then together we will move towards a spiritual reconciliation which unites in the dance of the Triune God.

QUESTIONS

- † What does the word 'reconciliation' evoke for you?
- † How might the church make a difference, bringing reconciliation, in situations of conflict and division (both inter-personal and in society)?
- † Does reconciliation between churches help to foster a wider reconciliation in the world?

PRAYER

God of unity,
Trinity of the Three,
You call your people to be one
That the world may believe.
Grant us your Spirit
That we might act and speak with one voice
So that our world's pains and divisions
May be transformed by healing, hope and reconciliation,
Our Lord's prayer be answered,
And your name glorified and hallowed.
Amen.



GO AND DO

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

The Caribbean churches work together to heal the wounds in the Body of Christ in the region, which are a legacy left by colonization. Visit Go and Do for stories of inspiration and challenge from the Caribbean.

Create a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity paper prayer chain – find instructions on the Go and Do website.

Create a (scratch) choir which includes representatives from each of the churches in your area to sing a song together at the next Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service.



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