

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2027

'Do not be afraid'



Peidiwch ag ofni
Ná bíodh eagla oraibh
Na biodh eagal ort

18-25 JANUARY 2027



www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer



This year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity resources were prepared against a backdrop of continued instability in international relations, national politics and local community relations. So deep and pervasive was the sense of uncertainty that it seemed futile to even attempt to predict how the situation might have changed by the time Christians around the world would come to engage with the material some months later.

In the midst of this instability, uncertainty and fear for the future, the representatives of the Irish churches sought to bring us back to the deeper truths of our faith with the theme, 'Do not be afraid little flock,' from Luke 12:22-34. We are reminded that in times of fear and trial, not only does God's love and care for us remain unchanged and unchanging, but the truth of that love can feel more real and present as we find refuge in our faith.

The Irish churches write from a place of lived experience of accompanying people through the pain of conflict, loss and hopelessness. The journey Christian communities in Ireland have been on together has brought them to a place of repentance for the times in which the absence of solidarity and unity among Christians exacerbated conflict and compounded the hurt it caused. They also bear

witness to the hope that is generated by a collective Christian witness to the gift of reconciliation, offered in a humble spirit of dialogue to the wider society.

There are unique aspects to the Irish experience that impact how the churches relate in the Irish context, but in this resource the various contributors have sought to emphasise the wider applications of the learning to be gleaned from that experience. The 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement has rightly been held up as a beacon of hope for societies in conflict around the world. At this time of widening and deepening identity-based conflict, locally and globally, what can be learned from the ongoing engagement with an imperfect, unfinished peace in Ireland? In particular, what might be the learning for the Church about the balance to be struck between the need to support struggling communities and the need to challenge unjust attitudes and dangerous and damaging behaviours?

The experience of secularisation came later to Ireland than to many other Western European contexts and was particularly painful in the context of horrific revelations of abuse in both jurisdictions on the island. There is much that will resonate with others in the experience of churches finding themselves increasingly marginalised in the life of communities and the call to explore the new opportunities for witness and renewal for the margins.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity brings a powerful reminder that, whatever our struggles, we are not alone, and an encouragement to reflect on the strength we can draw from our fellowship as we face shared challenges.

Dr Nicola Brady, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland



Introduction



The prayers and reflections for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by representatives of the churches in Ireland. Although the island of Ireland is divided between two political jurisdictions¹, the churches represented by the Irish Council of Churches and the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference are organised on an all-island basis. The leaders of the churches meet regularly and, as a Church Leaders Group, engage with governments, public bodies and communities in order to bring the voice of the gospel into shared public discourse.

Jesus is our Good Shepherd, the one who can be trusted to lead us on the good path of life towards lifegiving waters of abundance. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus models sacrificial leadership that moves towards the one sheep that has lost its way. In Luke 12:22-34, Jesus calls his followers out of fear and towards this life of radical trust, vigilant hope and responsible service. These teachings aren't meant for lone disciples but for a gathered community: a 'little flock' called to live, pray and work together. This year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity invites us to explore what it means to be followers of the Good Shepherd: how letting go of fear and keeping watchful hearts become powerful catalysts for reconciliation and shared witness.

Local context in Ireland: marginality as opportunity

Once synonymous with Irish identity, Christianity increasingly exists as a somewhat smaller, more marginal presence in a rapidly secularising society. Far from signalling decline or irrelevance, this shift opens fresh opportunities for reflection, renewal and reconciliation. The churches continue to remain committed to a living witness across the island of Ireland. In the spirit of Christ's assurance to the 'little flock' (Luke 12:32), the Irish Christian community is called to embrace its place in the public square with faith-filled hope and a united witness. By acknowledging our weakness, limitations and vulnerability, we depend more fully on God and experience transformative grace.



Christian unity in practice also brings healing to the broader society. As churches work together to serve the marginalised, they testify to the kingdom values Jesus proclaimed. Here the hope of Luke 12:32 becomes tangible: the ‘little flock’, while no longer culturally dominant, stands as a sign of the Kingdom – one built not on power but on love, mercy and service. Today’s Irish Church is enriched through the presence and participation of people from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and beyond, whose diverse expressions of life and worship deepen our collective witness.

Moving forward together

God’s call to the little flock is a call to unity in diversity – a shared life in Christ that casts out fear, watches over one another and stewards his gifts with common purpose. In Ireland’s evolving landscape and across the globe, this unity shines brightest when we embrace it not as uniformity, but as a journey of deep listening, humble witness and mutual care. Though differences in theology, memory and tradition remain, we walk forward together, reconciled and reconciling, repenting of past failings and renewing our focus on Christ, who prayed ‘that they may all be one’ (John 17:21). As we enter this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, may we point the world toward the Kingdom of mercy, mutual service and steadfast love.

(A more detailed overview of the biblical text is available on the CTBI website: <https://ctbi.org.uk/wpcu2027/>).

¹ In 1921 the island of Ireland was partitioned, resulting in the establishment of Northern Ireland, which forms part of the United Kingdom and today is governed by the devolved Stormont Assembly in Belfast, with the rest of the island under the jurisdiction of the Irish Government in Dublin.

Day 1

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want

‘Therefore, I tell you do not worry about your life’ (Luke 12:22)

Psalm for the day: Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall
not want.

He makes me lie down in green
pastures;

he leads me beside still waters;

he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the
darkest valley,

I fear no evil;

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff –
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall
follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of
the LORD
my whole life long.

Additional Scripture passages

Luke 12:22-34; Isaiah 40:9-11;
John 10:7-15

Commentary

The psalmist speaks with quiet confidence that God provides all we need, even in life’s darkest valleys, where God is our faithful companion. Psalm 23 draws on deep human emotions: fear, isolation and vulnerability – experiences that echo in many homes as people face an uncertain future. Yet, as Christians and as the Church, we are called to be a people of hope, trusting in the transforming love of Christ for all. Rooted in faith and assured of God’s care, we look to the familiar image of the compassionate shepherd who guides and protects his flock. In Jesus, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:15), we find both courage and peace. With such a shepherd, fear gives way to hope, and we are invited to turn outward, united in purpose and love. For it is Christ who gathers us together and reminds us, ‘Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom’ (Luke 12:32).

Reflection

'Fear not, little flock.'

'Fear not, little flock.'

Though the shadows stretch wide, a
tender voice calls to the weary.

Across trembling lands, restless fears,
shifting ground.

A prayer for unity still resounds.

As we walk through the valley of
change and disquiet,
we are held by a Shepherd and in him
we find peace.

Our journey of hope through the
unknown we trace,
all secure in his love, our identity held
by his grace.

Prayer

I bind unto myself today,
the power of God to hold and lead,

his eye to watch, his might to stay,
his ear to hearken to my need;
the wisdom of my God to teach,
his hand to guide, his shield to ward,
the word of God to give me speech
his heavenly host to be my guard.

*(From Saint Patrick's Breastplate,
versified by Cecil Frances Alexander)*

Questions

Personal: How have you been aware of God accompanying you through a dark valley?

Local: How might you join with others in creating a more hopeful narrative within your locality?

Global: What can we offer, so that we can be part of God's work in restoring hope to a frightened world?

Go and do

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

Personal: Who do you know that is living in a place of fear? Consider how you can walk alongside them.

Local: Find out what Christians are doing together in your area to share Christ's hope, and get involved.

Global: Join the World Council of Churches Prayer Cycle and commit to praying regularly for your neighbours and understanding them better:
<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/prayer-cycle>

Day 2

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord

‘Of how much more value are you...’ (Luke 12:24b)

Psalm for the day: Psalm 130:1-6

Out of the depths I cry to you,
O LORD.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O LORD, should mark
iniquities,

Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
in his word I hope;

my soul waits for the Lord
more than those who watch for the
morning,

more than those who watch for the
morning.

lament. No one is ‘right’; each of us bears responsibility. Will we determine to seek out the place of Jesus’ passing and cry out to him from the depths of our pain? Hope must be mined by each for it to be shared by the many. Bartimaeus knew that to receive he must divest himself from warmth (his cloak) to cry, ‘Have mercy on me!’ Jesus saw him, stopped and cut to the quick: ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ And that is the question Jesus asks us. The pain of Christian division is great, it blinds us, but if we cry out as many individuals and faith communities, God will hear us.

Additional Scripture passages

Luke 12:24b; John 5:1-5;

Mark 10:46-52

Reflection

A solitary worm
in soil will squirm,
for it can scarcely cope
despite hard work.
But soil recharged
with clew askew,
like heroes will
the earth renew.

Commentary

Tension, relationship breakdown,
isolation, friction, violence,
destruction – all will catapult a
community into a frozen winter of

Prayer

Help me to journey beyond
the familiar
and into the unknown.
Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with you.
Christ of the mysteries, I trust you
to be stronger than each storm
within me.
I will trust in the darkness and know
that my times, even now, are in
your hand.
Tune my spirit to the music of heaven,
and somehow, make my obedience
count for you. Amen.

*(Inspired by the story of Saint Brendan
the Navigator (c. 484-577))*

Questions

Personal: When things are bad, do you seek comfort and faith from the Lord who holds all things, or do you remain wrapped in lament?

Local: Can you identify any personal pain in yourself and others around you, from your experience of disunity?

Global: As you look at our world, what can you identify and name as the cost of disunity?

Go and do

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

Personal: As Bartimaeus leaves his cloak behind to journey with Jesus, consider what clothing you can give to a local clothes bank.

Local: After naming disunity around us, identify a bridge that needs to be built. Take the first steps in doing this.

Global: Connect with a charity that works with people with visual impairment. (For instance: <https://www.sightsavers.org/about-us/>)

Day 3

From where will my help come?

‘... where no thief comes near ...’ (Luke 12:33)

Psalm for the day: Psalm 121:1-2

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.

Additional Scripture passages

Luke 12:33; Joshua 1:7-9;
Ephesians 6:10-17

Commentary

As we turn our eyes towards the future with anxiety about increased polarisation, violence and division, both in society and in our churches, Psalm 121 invites us to notice where the threat is, to recognise the dangers and to seek help from the LORD (‘who made heaven and earth’). In paying attention to the rise of far-right movements across the world and the concerning creep of Christian nationalism, it is important to name these threats and disrupt false narratives, and it is vital that we look to God for guidance and strength. We are encouraged not to respond from a place of fear, but from a place of peace

and fullness. We are empowered to live and act in the shared hope of God and invited to remember the truth of God – that courage, strength and power are given, not to subdue and conquer, but to serve and reconcile.

Prayer

Be thou a bright flame before me;
be thou a guiding star above me;
be thou a smooth path below me;
be thou a kindly Shepherd behind me
today, tonight and for evermore.
Amen.

*(Attributed to Saint Columba
(521-597))*

Reflection

We look to our screens –
where does our dread come from?
Fuelled by snake oil,
that peddles power and prosperity.
The brood of vipers seek to coerce us
into loving only those who look
like us,
fool us into creating principalities that
serve greed alone.
But what do you see when you look
past the screen,
when you catch the glint of light
shining in from the other Kingdom,
when you peel back the façade and
let the ‘not yet’ paint truth upon an
untainted canvas?

Questions

Personal: What different things help you to be hopeful when fear, anxiety and threat become apparent?

Local: What scriptures, songs and stories have encouraged your community through challenging times in the past? Consider sharing what might be meaningful now.

Global: The journey towards unity might be seen as an uphill struggle – what may be the obstacles in our path? What examples from other places can you share that give hope and encourage you and your community to engage more deeply?

Go and do

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

Personal: Consider what makes you fearful and find ways to gain a deeper understanding of what is really going on, allowing for God’s hope to be present.

Local: Explore ways of sharing local stories of unity, peacemaking and the building of God’s Kingdom where you are, that cannot be tainted or tarnished by hearsay or spin.

Global: Engage with a number of different sources to hear stories from around the world of God’s Kingdom being made real, and explore how your faith community can join in.

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 weekofprayer.org by posting to Facebook, Instagram or X using the #wpcuwall hashtag. Posts appear automatically (after a slight delay).

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Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2027

‘Do not be afraid’



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Order of worship



Introduction

This year the ecumenical celebration was prepared by a team representing different Christian traditions in Ireland, facilitated by the Irish Council of Churches and the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference.

Theme

The choice of biblical and liturgical texts is inspired by the image of the 'little flock' (Luke 12:32). Christians in many parts of the world live in situations where they are a little flock, and sometimes a persecuted flock. We find the expression 'God's flock' used in the Old and New Testaments to describe the people of God, who are like sheep under the care of a shepherd. It is an image deeply rooted in the pastoral culture of biblical lands, where shepherding was one of the principal occupations. The imagery of the loving care of a shepherd assures the flock that they need not be afraid, but can trust in his protection and provision.

In these troubled and uncertain times, we give thanks for the refuge we find in our faith and the strength we draw from our fellowship with one another. We challenge ourselves to resist the temptation to retreat from the world in search of safety. We pray for the courage to bring to our divided world a courageous collective witness to God's love for all people, especially those who suffer as a result of injustice, violence and persecution, close to home and all around the world.

Drawing on the image of the rising sun, Irish Celtic crosses have a circle at their centre, representing the risen Christ, the light of the world. During the act of worship, printed outlines of a Celtic cross may be provided for the congregation. Prayers and concerns can be written on the templates and brought forward to a central place.

The texts assigned to the leader may be divided between the various voices from the different traditions present. Likewise, texts assigned to a reader may be distributed among several persons. The concluding prayer and the blessing may be proclaimed jointly by representatives of the different communities present.



Hymn

Introduction

Leader Peace be with you.

Assembly **And also with you.**

Leader Christ is among us.

Assembly **He is and always will be.**

Leader We are gathered in Christ's name to pray for the unity of all Christians. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity this year is guided by the words of Jesus: 'Do not be afraid, little flock,' from a passage in Luke's Gospel.

This year's ecumenical service has been prepared by Christians from different churches across the island of Ireland. With them, we give thanks that, following many years of estrangement, they have come to know that the Christian heritage first brought to their land by Saint Patrick and other early saints is a treasure they hold in common.

Opening prayer

Reader Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation.
Blessed are you, Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life.
Blessed are you, Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.
Blessed are you, O Holy Trinity.



Blessed are you in your saints.
Blessed be this gathering as we come together in your
divine presence
to celebrate in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Assembly

Amen.

Hymn

Prayer of thanksgiving and lament

Reader

We give thanks that we are called to be one, *(brief pause)*
but we lament that we often betray our unity.

Assembly

Christ our Shepherd, unite us as one flock.

Reader

We give thanks that we have one Shepherd, *(brief pause)*
but we lament that we often fail to recognise others as
his own.

Assembly

Christ our Shepherd, unite us as one flock.

Reader

We give thanks that we have been baptised into one faith,
(brief pause) but we lament that we often act otherwise.

Assembly

Christ our Shepherd, unite us as one flock.

Reader

We give thanks that we have one hope, *(brief pause)*
but we lament that we often exclude others from it.

Assembly

Christ our Shepherd, unite us as one flock.





Reader We give thanks for the love that unites us in mutual care,
(*brief pause*) but we lament that we often care chiefly
for ourselves.

Assembly **Christ our Shepherd, unite us as one flock.**

The Peace

Leader As many as have been baptised into Christ
have put on Christ.

Assembly **Alleluia!**

Leader The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Assembly **And also with you.**

Scripture readings

First reading – Ezekiel 34:15-22

Reader I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your



feet? And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet?

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

Psalm 23

(A sung version may be used.)

Gospel reading – Luke 12.22-34

Reader The Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Luke.

Assembly **Glory to you, Lord our God.**

Reader [Jesus] said to his disciples, ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how





much more will he clothe you – you of little faith! And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

‘Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

Sermon/homily

Silence or an instrumental interlude.

Symbolic action

(an image of the Irish Celtic cross can be projected onto a screen at this point)

Reader

Drawn to Christ and his cross, in prayer for the unity of Christians, let us remember that as his little flock, we need not be afraid. Drawing on the image of the rising sun, Irish Celtic crosses have a circle at their centre, representing the risen Christ, the light of the world.

While music is playing, the image of the Celtic cross provides the focus as we pray for situations of fear and anxiety, that the risen Christ would be present. The leader then invites the congregation to write on the outline of the cross (provided beforehand) the concerns of our prayers.

Confession of faith

Reader

Patrick, Ireland's principal patron saint, lived in the fifth century. As a youth, he was taken into slavery in Ireland and put to work tending a flock of sheep. Later, as an adult, he received the call to be a missionary, and soon he was evangelising and shepherding God's flock in the land where he had once been enslaved. We hear his own voice:

Reader 2

'When I had arrived in Ireland and was looking after the flocks the whole time, I prayed frequently each day. And more and more, the love of God and the fear of him grew in me, and my faith was increased and my spirit enlivened. So much so that I prayed up to a hundred times in the day, and almost as often at night. I even remained in the wood and on the mountain to pray. And – come hail, rain or snow – I was up before dawn to pray, and I sensed no evil nor spiritual laziness within. I now understand this: at that time "the Spirit was fervent" in me.'

(From the Confessio of Saint Patrick)

Leader

With our spirits enlivened by the love of God, let us love one another, so that with oneness of mind we may confess our common faith:

Assembly

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made; of one Being with the Father.**





Through him all things were made.
For us all, and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose from the dead in accordance with
the scriptures.
He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of
the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and
the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father.
Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped
and glorified,
who has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
and to life in the age to come. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Reader

Good Shepherd,
we pray for your Church, gathered in your abundant grace.
May we be a people who value one another,
who embrace diversity and celebrate difference.
May your Church be a place where unity is our
natural expression.



In your mercy,

Assembly

hear our prayer.

Reader

Good Shepherd,
we pray for your world dependent on your life-giving love.
May we be a people who strive for the well-being of all.
May those who have power and influence act with justice.
May your world be a place where all can have fullness of life.

In your mercy,

Assembly

hear our prayer.

Reader

Good Shepherd,
we pray for all who are persecuted for their faith,
and those victimised because of their identity, beliefs
or background.
May we be emboldened to challenge offensive systems
and powers.
May our communities be transformed by the coming of
your Kingdom.

In your mercy,

Assembly

hear our prayer.

Reader

Good Shepherd,
we pray for the planet, our fragile home,
lamenting our wilful neglect.
May we be a people who act justly for the whole of creation.
May the whole earth be filled with the glory of God.

In your mercy,

Assembly

hear our prayer.





Reader

Good Shepherd,
we pray for ourselves, standing in the light of your grace.
May we be filled with compassion to reach out to those
in need,
and to those whose lives are places of turmoil and conflict.
May we bring your healing to lives of brokenness.

In your mercy,

Assembly

hear our prayer.

Reader

Good Shepherd,
hear the prayers that we have offered.
Hear also the unspoken prayers that come from the longings
of our spirits.
As we receive your call to seek first your Kingdom,
so we pray,

Assembly

Our Father...

Hymn

Concluding prayer

Leader

Kindle our lamps, Saviour most dear to us,
that we may always shine in your presence
and always receive light from you, the Light Perpetual,
so that our own personal darkness may be overcome,
and the world's darkness driven from us.

Assembly

Amen.

(Inspired by a sermon of Saint Columbanus)





Blessing

Leader

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious
to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give
you peace.

Assembly

Amen.

(Numbers 6:24-26)



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Day 4

The Lord surrounds his people

‘If God so clothes the grass of the field...’ (Luke 12:28)

Psalm for the day: Psalm 125:1-3

Those who trust in the LORD are like
Mount Zion,
which cannot be moved, but abides
for ever.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so the LORD surrounds his people,
from this time on and for evermore.

For the sceptre of wickedness shall
not rest
on the land allotted to the righteous,
so that the righteous may not
stretch out
their hands to do wrong.

Additional Scripture passages

Luke 12:28; Matthew 6:25-33;
Romans 8:31-32

Commentary

The imagery in this psalm calls us to wonder. What is it like to emulate the dwelling place of God? Like Mount Zion, do those who trust in the LORD rise; do they stay and embody protection for the vulnerable; do they wrap their arms around others like the mountains surround Jerusalem? The psalm sings that this is what

is truly immovable – love, justice, care for each other that provides life enough for all who dwell in God’s creation. The sceptre of wickedness, a showy symbol of false and oppressive power, has no place to rest or hide or take hold in the land and lives of the righteous.

In Romans, we are assured that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus; therefore, we should strive to ensure that nothing separates us from each other. We, because of the Holy Spirit’s presence within us, can change the landscape wherever we go, breaking down barriers and finding pathways to each other. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, God’s inexhaustible love, through us, embraces our shared humanity. We belong to each other; we are made for each other.

Reflection

I am a small dwelling,
not made of stone,
but dust made luminous,
where eternity knows my name

and lives within.

Filling my every breath,
edging into my every thought
healing the razors
that cut, his voice
softening and soothing memory
into forgiveness.

God lives in me,
presence unassailable.
May I believe it
and live it
every day,
as he teaches my heart
to break like his.

Prayer

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,

Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

*(From Saint Patrick's Breastplate,
versified by Cecil Frances Alexander)*

Questions

Personal: Consider what separates you from others and reflect on how you might address it.

Local: Where in your community do people gather, and what enables them to know they are welcome? How might your faith community learn from this?

Global: What might wrapping our arms around our global neighbours look like?

Go and do

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

Personal: Reflect on areas in your life where challenges may become opportunities, and act on one of those opportunities.

Local: Volunteer at an event or with a local organisation that offers comfort and support in the community.

Global: Explore how you can give, act and pray with a global international development organisation. For example <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/> or <https://cafod.org.uk>

Day 5

The LORD Almighty is with us

‘For where your treasure is...’ (Luke 12:34)

Psalm for the day: Psalm 46:10-11

‘Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth.’
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Additional Scripture passages

Luke 12:34; Proverbs 3:21-26;
Luke 9:1-6

Commentary

In times of difficulty, we tend to have a feeling that we must ‘do’ something, that action is required, and that our ‘doing’ will improve the situation. However, very often, the better thing is to stop and simply ‘be there’, to be ‘present’ with those who are under pressure. Before proclaiming, ‘Be still,’ the psalmist paints a vivid picture of a world in turmoil, which can seem all too familiar. We can often get swept up in the torrent and tumult of all that is happening and be fooled into responding with frenetic activity, or be frozen by fear. Nevertheless, God is with us, a perennial source of gladness, our shared space of refuge and

strength. Perhaps this psalm and these moments before you are an invitation to stop. To be still. To be present to those around you. To recognise that there is a community, a wider Church family, who are empowered by Jesus to model strength and unity in this fractured world.

Reflection

Come.
Come together.
Come, and I’ll show you what it means
to build something of true worth.
You may never see the finished article,
yet,
in the act of coming together,
in the presence of one another,
in the sacred space of our being,
you have more than a glimpse of what
God is dreaming.

Prayer

Be thou my vision, O Lord of
my heart;

Be all else but naught to me, save that
thou art.

Be thou my best thought in the day
and the night;

Both waking and sleeping, thy
presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my
true word;

Be thou ever with me, and I with thee,
Lord.

Be thou my great Father, thy child let
me be;

Be thou in me dwelling, and I one
with thee.

*(Attributed to Saint Dallan Forgaill
(c. 530–598); versified by Eleanor Hull)*

Questions

Personal: ‘Be still, and know that I am God!’ What might this be like for you?

Local: In a time of insecurity, how can you embody together the justice, peace and joy that flow from God, in your particular community?

Global: How might your faith community model unity in a fractured world?

Go and do

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

Personal: Take time to stop, to be still and to notice meaningful moments of unity that you have been involved in. Explore some ways of deepening this experience.

Local: Find meaningful ways for your faith community to ‘wait with’ and to ‘be present with’ people in your community.

Global: Develop relationships with Christian communities around the world and share stories of how Jesus is empowering strength and unity.

Day 6

The Lord has done great things for us

‘It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom’
(Luke 12:32)

Psalm for the day: Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the
fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled
with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then it was said among the nations,
‘The LORD has done great things
for them.’

Additional Scripture passages

Luke 12:22-34; Isaiah 35:5-7; 2
Corinthians 5:11-21

Commentary

Our Scripture readings for today inspire us with the promise that in God all things can be renewed, while also reminding us of the responsibility to make our own contribution to this work of healing. In our context we recall how the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement described as ‘a truly historic opportunity for a new beginning’ transformed landscapes and relationships. A sense of safety slowly spread and new friendships began to grow. This incomplete,

imperfect work of peace radiated a new hope to other societies in conflict, restoring faith in the potential for reconciliation. As we work to heal the wounds that remain and break free from the shadows of the past we give thanks for the blessings God gives us to share.

Reflection

Wait.
Can you hear it?
Not the tottering and toppling
of kingdoms.

Wait.
Can you feel it?
The grit, the rub of that yet-to-be
pearl.

Wait.
Can you sense it?
The stillness before you draw breath,
the place in between the ebb and
the flow.

There is a moment each of us knows,
when we are touched by your Spirit,

when your breath clings to our skin.
We recognise that it's no longer the
gust of our own busyness,
but the deep longing to join together
in the unfurling of a space,
to simply
be.

Prayer

We will never stop giving thanks to
you, O God,
who have kept us faithful in times
of temptation.
You have defended us in all
our difficulties.
Who are we, Lord, or what is
our calling,
that you have worked with us with
such divine presence?
We will praise and magnify your name
among the nations,
not only in good times but in the
difficult times too,

for you have shown us that we can put
our trust in you without wavering.
You are the Holy One, world without
end. Amen.

*(Adapted from the Confessio of
Saint Patrick)*

Questions

Personal: Where do you feel yourself
called to contribute to the work of
reconciliation? What may be holding
you back from responding to that call?

Local: Where do you see the greatest
need for reconciliation and healing of
relationships in your local community
at the present time?

Global: Can you identify leaders or
organisations engaged in the work of
global peace and justice that inspire
you to hope?

Go and do

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

Personal: Reflecting on where you hope God will bring renewal and healing in
your own life, write a prayer to express that hope.

Local: Identify an aspect of the work of reconciliation that has been neglected
or marginalised in your local church community and take action to bring
attention to this need.

Global: Share a hopeful message or news story from a different international
context using social media or other forms of communication.

Day 7

Let us go to the house of the Lord

‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’

(Luke 12:34)

Psalm for the day: Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me,
‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’

Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem – built as a city
that is bound firmly together.

To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of
the LORD.

For there the thrones for judgement
were set up,

the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:

‘May they prosper who love you.

Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers.’

For the sake of my relatives
and friends

I will say, ‘Peace be within you.’

For the sake of the house of the LORD
our God,

I will seek your good.

Additional Scripture passages

Luke 12:22-34; Isaiah 2:1-4;

Ephesians 4:1-6

Commentary

The psalmist sees the city of Jerusalem and the Temple within the city and imagines the tortuous journey up the steep hill until finally standing in the Temple court. He has come with others from many places to worship together. The psalmist prays for peace for those around him, all gathered in the name of the LORD. Jesus sent his disciples from Jerusalem to ‘Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8), bearing the gospel of peace, that shalom which signifies not only the absence of conflict but a wholeness, completeness. The additional readings, in varying ways, speak of what it means to walk in the light of the Lord, to maintain the bond of peace and to know for ourselves and between each other that peace which is Jesus’ prayer for us.

Prayer

Kindle in our hearts, O God,
the flame of that love which
never ceases,
that it may burn in us, giving light
to others.
May we shine forever in your
holy temple,
set on fire with your eternal light,
even your Son, Jesus Christ,
our Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

*(Attributed to Saint Columba
(521-597))*

Reflection

We don't understand
your peace.
We just know it.
And we must live it
and let its love
make complete our lives
together.

Questions

Personal: What is the significance of worshipping our God together as Christians of different traditions?

Local: How challenging is it for you/your congregation to cross the threshold of the church of a different Christian community?

Global: Is peace really possible in our world today? What would it take?

Go and do

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

Personal: Visit a church of a radically different tradition from your own (ideally with others from your church) and reflect on the experience.

Local: Find groups in your community that advocate for peace and seek to make common ground with them.

Global: Make contact with one church or other faith group living in the midst of conflict and engage with them.

Day 8

*How very good and pleasant it is when
kindred live together in unity!*

‘Even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these’
(Luke 12:27b)

Psalm for the day: Psalm 133

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of
his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the LORD ordained
his blessing,
life for evermore.

Additional Scripture passages

Genesis 50:15-21; John 15:12-17;
Luke 12:22-34

Commentary

‘How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!’
But our sacred texts and our lived
experience remind us that oftentimes
we have to get over ourselves to get to
each other. Jesus steps in and stills the
arguing of his disciples (Luke 22:24-

26), Paul reprimands the Christians in
Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:3-9; 11:17-22)
and encourages others to be ‘of the same
mind in the Lord’ (Philippians 4:2).

Joseph’s genuine forgiveness towards the
brothers who sold him into captivity is
striking. Even though they continued to
act from a place of fear, he responded
with love. Unity overwhelmed fear and
empowered him to respond with grace,
not grudge (Genesis 42:25).

Jesus’ challenge and command is that we
love one another, without distinction of
gender, sexual orientation, class, status,
race or tongue; that we live together in
unity and mutual respect. He calls us to
get over ourselves to get to each other.

Reflection

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the laugh of a child,
bubbling up through
unguarded innocence.

It is like the tears of the wise,
welling up wherever they find sorrow
or beauty.

It is like the dream unformed,
dancing with an air of unperturbed
possibility.

It is like the being of the Divine
becoming in you and me until we
meld into one.

Prayer

The sun which we see rising for us
each day at your command,
O Christ, will not endure, and its
splendour will not shine for ever.
But you, Lord Christ, are the true Sun,
the Light that will never perish, whom
we adore.

We rejoice in the knowledge that we
will rise again in the radiance of

your glory, O bright heaven's Son,
who abide with the Father and the
Holy Spirit, now and for all the ages
of ages. Amen.

*(Adapted from the Confessio of
Saint Patrick)*

Questions

Personal: As this Week of Prayer for
Christian Unity draws to a close, how
might our faith communities have a
renewed sense of togetherness?

Local: How might we be ambassadors
of togetherness in our wider
community?

Global: How might we amplify the
voice of the marginalised across our
global neighbourhood?

Go and do

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

Personal: Reach out to someone you are estranged from and seek
reconciliation.

Local: Explore a local issue where there is tension. Find ways of being
intentional in your listening, focusing on understanding rather than
responding.

Global: Pray and act for peace in an overlooked place mired in civil war or
internal conflict.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2027



Websites

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