

“Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit”.

This week is a part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and I have decided to draw on the material provided by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland which is prepared by the Grandchamp Community in Switzerland and follows a slightly different form to our traditional worship.

Opening prayer:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us always!

Hymn 395 StF

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYfzcYohWZg>

Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me,
mould me, Fill me
Spirit of the living God
fall afresh on me.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this year the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, is: “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit”. It is the great desire of God, expressed by Jesus, that we might come to him and abide in him. He waits for us tirelessly, hoping that, united to him in love, we will bear fruit that will bring life to all. Faced with our differences, we risk withdrawing into ourselves and seeing only that which separates us. But let us listen to how Christ calls us to abide in his love, and so bear much fruit. We remember the call of Christ, we turn to his love, to him who is the centre of our life. For the path of unity begins in our intimate relationship with God. Abiding in God’s love strengthens the desire to seek unity and reconciliation with others. God opens us up to those who are different from us. This is an important fruit, a gift of healing for the divisions within us, between us, and in the world.

Let us pray.

In peace let us pray to the Lord: Lord, you are the vinedresser who cares for us with love. You call on us to see the beauty of each branch united to the vine, the beauty of each person. And yet, too often the differences in others make us afraid. We withdraw into ourselves. Our trust in you is forsaken. Enmity develops between us. Come and direct our hearts toward you once again. Grant us to live from your forgiveness so that we may be together and praise your name. **Amen**

The first vigil – Abiding in Christ: The unity of the whole person.

Bible Reading John 15: 1-17

Sit in silence a few moments, reflecting on the words you have just read.

Look again at the Bible passage.

- Jot down any thoughts that occur to you.
- The passage talks about being connected with one another. In this time of isolation for many, how “connected” do you feel?
- Think about abiding in God’s love, how deeply rooted is your faith?

Intercessions

God of love, through Christ you said to us: “You did not choose me, but I chose you.” You seek us, you invite us to receive your friendship and abide in it. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation and grow in a life that is ever more complete.

The joy of our heart is in God.

God of life, you call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to welcome one another as a gift of your grace. May your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, open us to receive each other just as we are.

The joy of our heart is in God.

God you who gather, you knit us together as one vine in your Son Jesus. May your loving Spirit abide in us at local church and community meetings and ecumenical gatherings. Grant that together we celebrate you with joy.

The joy of our heart is in God.

God of the one vineyard, you call us to abide in your love in all we do and say. Touched by your goodness, grant us to be a reflection of that love in our homes and workplaces. May we bridge rivalries and overcome tensions.

Holy Spirit, you create and re-create the Church in all places. Come and whisper in our hearts the prayer which Jesus addressed to his Father on the eve of his passion: "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe". **Amen**

Second Vigil – The visible unity of Christians

Bible Reading 1 Corinthians 1: 10-13

Sit in silence a few moments, reflecting on the words you have just read.

Look again at the Bible passage.

- Jot down any thoughts that occur to you.
- What experiences do you have of divisions within the Church? How might they have been avoided? How might they be resolved? What happens when we have conflicting opinions? How can we deal with our differences?
- Are there any people that you feel have wronged you? Or you have wronged? Think about how you might reconcile the situation.

Intercession:

Holy Spirit, you create and re-create the Church in all places. Come and whisper in our hearts the prayer which Jesus addressed to his Father on the eve of his passion: "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe".

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, light the fire of your love in us so that suspicions, contempt and misunderstanding cease in the Church. May the walls that separate us fall. Holy Spirit, Consoler of all, open our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation and bring us back from our wanderings. Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, give us poverty of spirit so that we may welcome the unexpectedness of your grace. Holy Spirit, you never abandon the men, women and children who are persecuted for their fidelity to the gospel. Give them strength and courage, and support those who help them.

Hymn StF 689

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fM8ZoAKhPw>

Summoned by the God who made us
Rich in our diversity,
Gathered in the name of Jesus,
Richer still in unity:
*Let us bring the gifts that differ
And, in splendid, varied ways,
Sing a new church into being,
One of faith and love and praise.*

Radiant risen from the water;
Robed in holiness and light,
Male and female in God's image
Male and female God's delight:
Chorus

Trust the goodness of creation;
Trust the Spirit strong within.
Dare to dream the vision promised
Sprung from seed of what has been.
Chorus

Bring the hopes of every nation;
Bring the art of every race.
Weave a song of peace and justice:
Let it sound through time and space.
Chorus

Draw together at one table
All the human family;
Shape a circle ever wider
And a people ever free.

Third Vigil – The unity of all peoples with all creation.

Reading: Revelation 7: 9-12

Sit in silence a few moments, reflecting on the words you have just read.

Look again at the Bible passage.

- Jot down any thoughts that occur to you.
- Think about the image of Salvation being God's. Can you imagine a world where God's word reign's supreme, where all people of every race and culture can stand side by side and worship God? Where words of scripture come alive throughout the world?
- What do you need to do to take the first step? How might we in our local Churches work to make this dream a reality?

Intercessions:

God of life, you have created every human being in your image and likeness. We sing your praise for the gift of our many cultures, expressions of faith, traditions, and ethnicities. Grant us the courage always to stand against injustice and hatred based on race, class, gender, religion, and fear of those not like ourselves.

God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Merciful God, you have shown us in Christ that we are one in you. Teach us to use this gift in the world so that believers of all faiths in every country may be able to listen to each other and live in peace.

God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

O Jesus, you came into the world and shared fully in our humanity. You know the hardships of life for people who suffer in so many different ways. May the Spirit of compassion move us to share our time, life and goods with all those in need.

God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Holy Spirit, you hear the fury of your wounded creation and the cries of those already suffering from climate change. Guide us toward new behaviours. May we learn to live in harmony as part of your creation.

God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

The Lord's Prayer:

Hymn 692 StF <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1a13cRtXqRw>

Thy hand, O God, has guided
Thy flock, from age to age;
The wondrous tale is written,
Full clear, on every page;
Our fathers owned thy goodness,
And we their deeds record;
And both of this bear witness:
One Church, one faith, one Lord.

Thy heralds brought glad tidings
To greatest, as to least;
They bade men rise, and hasten
To share the great King's feast;

And this was all their teaching,
In every deed and word,
To all alike proclaiming
One Church, one faith, one Lord
Thy mercy will not fail us,
Nor leave thy work undone;
With thy right hand to help us,
The victory shall be won;
And then, by men and angels,
Thy name shall be adored,
And this shall be their anthem:
One Church, one faith, one Lord.

Blessing

May we one, so that the world may believe! We abide in God's love, We go into the world and bear the fruits of this love. May the God of hope fill us with all joy and all peace in faith, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen