



What does
require of us?

GOD

Study and reflection resource
for the 8 Days



www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013

Welcome



Introduction to this year's theme

The British and Irish resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2013 are based on the international material compiled this year by the Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI), along with the All India Catholic University Federation and the National Council of Churches in India.

In reflecting on the significance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity they decided that in a context of great injustice to Dalits in India and in the Church, the search for visible unity cannot be disassociated from the dismantling of casteism and the contribution to unity by the poorest of the poor. Casteism results in the Dalits being socially marginalized, politically under-represented, economically exploited and culturally subjugated. Almost 80% of Indian Christians have a Dalit background.

During the Week of Prayer, Christians all over the world will explore in ecumenical fellowship what it means to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8). This theme is developed over the eight days by the metaphor of walking. For Dalit communities, the walk towards liberation is inseparable from the walk towards unity. So our walk with Dalits this week, and with all who yearn for justice, is an integral part of the prayer for Christian unity.

Christians in India should reject caste divisions, just as Christians worldwide should not accept the divisions among them: "Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13). As we gather to pray for the unity which Christ wills for his Church, we are called to break down such walls of divisions among and between us.

The 8 days

The path of Christian discipleship involves walking the path of justice, mercy and humility. The metaphor of walking was chosen to link together the 8 days of prayer because it communicates the dynamism which characterises Christian discipleship. The eight subthemes enable us to focus on various dimensions of an authentic Christian discipleship which walks the path of righteousness that leads to life (Proverbs 12:28a).

Day 1 - Walking in conversation

We reflect on the importance of dialogue and conversation as a means of overcoming barriers, both in ecumenism and in the struggles for liberation of people across the globe and, in doing so, seeing Christ more clearly.

Day 2 - Walking with brokenness

Recognising the solidarity between Christ crucified and the 'broken peoples' of the world, such as the Dalits, we seek as Christians together to learn to be more deeply a part of this solidarity ourselves.

Day 3 - Walking towards freedom

As Christians committed to greater unity, we learn that the removal of all that separates people from one another is an essential part of fullness of life, freedom in the Spirit.

Day 4 - Walking as children of the earth

We focus on our place in God's creation and on our interdependence upon one another and the earth. Contemplation of the urgent calls to environmental care and proper sharing and justice calls us into lives of active witness.

Day 5 - Walking as the friends of Jesus

We reflect on biblical images of human friendship and love as models for God's love for every human being. Within the Church, all barriers of exclusion are inconsistent for a community in which all are equally the beloved friends of Jesus.

Day 6 - Walking beyond barriers

Walking with God means walking beyond barriers that divide and damage the

children of God. We look at ways in which human barriers are overcome, leading towards all becoming one in Christ.

Day 7 – Walking in solidarity

To walk humbly with God means walking in solidarity with all who struggle for peace and justice. Sharing the suffering of all by advocacy and by care of the poor, needy and marginalised, is implicit in our prayer for Christian unity this week.

Day 8 – Walking in celebration

The biblical texts speak of celebration in the sense of a sign of hope in God and God's justice. Celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is our sign of hope that our unity will be achieved according to God's time and God's means.

Go and Do

Each day includes 'Go and Do' action points. You'll find more information and links to follow at www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo

Commentaries

Please see the separate document for commentaries on the Bible readings for the 8 days, available from www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer

Acknowledgements

'Go and do' action points for the Eight Days and photos provided by Christian Aid.



YOU

1. What opportunities do you have to hold conversations with people with whom you disagree?
2. How often is your contribution aimed at winning an argument?
3. Are there ways in which you could become more open to new ideas?

THE WORD - Readings

Genesis 11: 1-9	The story of Babel and legacy of our diversity
Psalms 34: 11-18	"Come...listen". God's invitation to conversation
Acts 2: 1-12	The outpouring of the Spirit, the gift of understanding
Luke 24: 13-25	Conversation with the Risen Jesus on the road

Reflection

Towers of Babel fall to dust,
the scattered tongues of fractured folk,
distinguished in the way they talk,
divided in their lives.

And One there was who talked of love,
and challenged all to newly live,
to sacrifice and freely give
and never count the cost.

Communion torn apart by pride,
the darkness cloaks and chokes all hope,
and threatens like a hanging rope
the life we would have had.

Love's Spirit promised, Babel's foe,
uniting people's disparate ways:
its flames our barriers set to blaze
and clear the pilgrim path.

THE WORLD - Pray

We love to talk, Lord
forgive us when we fail to listen.
Christ talked of love;
challenge us to engage in costly conversations.
God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

Change happens when people talk and listen.

- Listen to the voices on the news or read the local and global stories in the newspaper. Consider what your contribution is or could be to this conversation.
- Organise a discussion on an issue of interest or concern; perhaps you could use a film clip or newspaper article as a discussion starter. Maybe invite your local political leader along to enter into the conversation of how we can all use our influence to address issues of injustice and concern to you.

YOU

1. How do churches around you try to heal brokenness?
2. What could Christian wholeness look like?
3. What might we do better to witness to our unity in Christ where people are broken and marginalised?

THE WORD - Readings

Genesis 32: 22-32	Wrestling Jacob limps away
Psalms 22: 1-8	God's servant, mocked and insulted, cries out to God
Hebrews 13: 12-16	The call to go to Jesus "outside the camp"
Luke 22: 14-23	Jesus breaks the bread, giving the gift of himself before his suffering

Reflection

In our throwaway culture, perfectly good goods are discarded because they have in some way become slightly flawed, slightly broken, or simply are no longer of a desired colour. The waste is atrocious.

In our throwaway culture, perfectly good people are discarded because they are presumed to be in some way flawed, in some way broken, or the wrong colour. The waste is abominable. Even insurance companies will refuse life-cover for some of these.

The presumption is perfection against which judgments are made and discarding decided. But perfection is as elusive as a rainbow's end. And Jesus, broken by the brutality of the Cross, showed in his life the broken-openness of compassion to those beyond any margins we dare to impose.

THE WORLD - Pray

In Christ's brokenness on the cross,
you transformed all sinful, flawed and fractured humanity.

Lord, we crucify you again with our disunity.

Walk with us as we stumble to the day
when we share in the one bread, one cup.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- It may be broken but could it be fixed? You could organise a clothes swap or recycle your old mobile phones or ink cartridges at Christian Aid.
- Consider the brokenness of humanity in a world where still 1 billion people do not have enough to eat. 'Live below the line' for one week in solidarity, walking with the brokenness of those who hunger for food and for justice.

YOU

1. How do prejudices and judgments stop us seeing each other in the light of Christ?
2. What steps can we take together to gain greater freedom for all God's people?

THE WORD - Readings

Exodus 1: 15-22	The Hebrew midwives obey God's law over Pharaoh's commands
Psalms 17: 1-6	The confident prayer of one open to God's gaze
2 Cor. 3: 17-18	The glorious freedom of God's children in Christ
John 4: 4-26	Talking with Jesus leads the Samaritan woman into freer living

Reflection

Alone with his thoughts he sat
By the well
He looked wearied by the heat and dust
Of our desert land
I approached quietly
Not wanting to disturb this man Jew
I was so used to being despised
I despised myself
A Samaritan woman – a nobody
Who had grown not to care
For herself
Or for what others thought ...
Grown comfortable just ...
Looking down...

Freedom came to me by degrees
With each word carried
On that day's gentle breeze
And when he finally said,
"I who speak to you am He ..."
I knew it was the truth
It was the Messiah who had asked me
For water ...

God's daughter returned
To her crushed people that day with a message
Come and see
Walk with me, head held high
Towards freedom

THE WORLD - Pray

Gracious God,
make us a prejudiced people:
passionate to pursue your loving justice;
passionately opposed to all that
obscures the hope
and destroys the purpose and denies
the reconciliation
that is your will for us.

Gracious God,
make us a prejudiced people:
united to seek to do and to bear your will;
divided from all that distracts us from being
the people you intend.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace.
Amen.

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- Jesus asked for water. Read about how communities across the world are realising freedom from the extreme kind of poverty that knows real thirst.
- Find out more about Christian Aid's work tackling gender inequality and discrimination across the world.

DAY 4 *Walking as children of the earth*

YOU

1. Where, as Christians together, do we practise the spirit of the Year of the Jubilee?
2. Where, as Christian communities, are we complicit with things that degrade and exploit the earth?
3. How can we better teach and learn reverence for God's creation?

THE WORD - Readings

Lev. 25: 8-17	The land is for the common good, not personal gain
Psalms 65: 5b-13	The fruitful outpouring of God's grace on the earth
Romans 8: 18-25	The longing of all creation for redemption
John 9: 1-11	Jesus' healing, mud, bodies and water

Reflection

From dawn to bitter dust
they work their master's forests and fields,
dig copper and coal from his earth,
cut slates from his mountains.

These things are his,
as are they,
to plunder and discard at will.

There is a better world,
a mightier Master

from the dust of whose earth
and in whose image
they were all made.

No mortal master here,
no slave,
no groaning of creation;
hands like those nailed to the cross
share bread and wine
and heal earth's wounds.

THE WORLD - Pray

Creator God,
In our selfish plundering of Mother Earth
we have sinned and dishonoured you.
Instil in us the gift of Wonder and Awe.
May the reconciled diversity in creation
find expression in our lives.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- Calculate your carbon footprint. Think how you could 'tread more lightly'.
- Watch and/or organise a viewing of the 2009 film *HOME*, in your community. Allow space for reflection and discussion after.
- Get involved with the latest Climate Justice campaign.

YOU

1. Who are those in and beyond your communities whom Christ calls you to befriend?
2. What prevents the friends of Jesus from being friends with one another?
3. How does being the friends of the same Jesus challenge the divided churches?

THE WORD - Readings

Song of Solomon 1: 5-8	Love and the beloved
Psalms 139: 1-6	You have searched me out and known me
3 John: 2-8	Hospitality to friends in Christ
John 15: 12-17	I call you friends

Reflection

This is no 'facebook' friending:
this is the real deal –
not the merest click (of mouse or finger)
presuming, thereby, closeness.

This is no virtual togetherness.
This is costly, lay-down-your-life stuff:
face to fleshly face.

This is not choosing but being chosen:
ours to respond or to renege.

THE WORLD - Pray

Lord,
In a world of never-ending possibilities
I often feel disorientated, lost...
Help me never to lose sight of you,
and the invitation to friendship, intimacy...
God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- Give thanks for the friendships that have endured through both difficult and delightful stages of your life. Buy or make a card to give or send to a friend, not because it is a birthday or special occasion.
- Find out about the Send my Friend campaign and see if you can get involved at www.sendmyfriend.org/

YOU

1. What are the barriers that separate Christians in your community?
2. What are the barriers that separate Christians from other religions in your community?
3. Is it easier to remove the barriers that separate Christians from one another than to remove those that separate them from other religions?

THE WORD - Readings

Ruth 4: 13-18	The offspring of Ruth and Boaz
Psalms 113	God the helper of the needy
Ephesians 2: 13-16	Christ has broken down the dividing wall between us
Matthew 15: 21-28	Jesus and the Canaanite woman

Reflection

Jesus was not for the chosen people alone,
though seemed to say that once he was.
And an encounter with a Canaanite clarified everything.

She, a woman with a sick daughter, distraught,
and disparagingly called a “dog”, responded with grace,
and showed narrow concern had no place.

And a barrier was broken,
and the width of ministry revealed.

THE WORLD - Pray

Gracious God

Forgive us for barriers we build
to separate those who are different.

Give us courage to go beyond
the limited horizons of self.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- Learn about the work being done to break down literal and metaphorical barriers in the Holy Land, and the work for peace there.
- Look at or listen to stories of how stigma and discrimination are barriers to health care and acceptance across the world.
- Find out what is being done to challenge the discrimination of the Dalit community in India.

YOU

1. Who in your community needs the solidarity of the Christian community?
2. What churches are, or have been, in solidarity with you?
3. In what ways would Christian unity enhance the Church's solidarity with those who are in need of justice and kindness?

THE WORD - Readings

Numbers 27: 1-11	The right of inheritance to daughters
Psalms 15	Who shall abide in God's sanctuary?
Acts 2: 43-47	The disciples held all things in common
Luke 10: 25-37	The Good Samaritan

Reflection

Apart from the parish church,
whose members, we are told,
worship a bishop,
there are in our village three chapels.

One is for us,
one for the neighbours,
and one for those people down the road.

What the difference between them is
we have not the foggiest idea,
and talk of Calvin and Armin,
infant and believers' baptism,
would leave us cold.

But we know in our hearts
that the body of Christ thus fragmented
will never reconcile a broken world.

And in our lazy conscience there
sometimes stir
some half-forgotten words
about bringing good news to the poor,
sight to the blind,
freedom to the captives and
the oppressed,
and that old proverb,
'Physician, heal yourself'.

THE WORLD - Pray

Triune God,

We give thanks for our Church community and for other Christian fellowships in
our locality.

You call all who follow you to service and healing and to proclaim your Kingdom to an
unbelieving, wounded world.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- 'Til every homeless & landless poor person in this country gets their land rights,
our journey won't stop.' In 2011 – 2012 the largest non-violent march took place
across India, hundreds marched in solidarity across India and the UK and Ireland.
Find out more on Christian Aid's March for Justice web pages.
- Churches across Britain and Ireland work together in unity to make Christian
Aid Week happen. Find out what churches are doing in your area.

YOU

1. What struggles towards justice are there in your community?
What cause do they give for celebration?
2. What struggles towards Christian unity are there in your community?
What cause do they give for celebration?

THE WORD - Readings

Habakkuk 3: 17-19	Celebrating in a time of hardship
Psalms 100	The worship of God through all the earth
Philippians 4: 4-9	Rejoice in the Lord always
Luke 1: 46-55	The Song of Mary

Reflection

Faith with a forlorn face persuades no one. Trust through gritted teeth seems grudging. Hope with hearts weighed heavy with weariness is hardly uplifting. "Rejoice in the Lord always," remains the challenge. And when that rejoicing comes from the midst of pain, loss, fear and despair, then how much more authentic it is; how much more inspiring it becomes.

The determination to see the glass half-full when that might seem optimistic at best, is the glorious folly of faith. It is easy, outside of any "time of trial", to smile. The real test comes when circumstance takes off its gloves and lands a sucker punch or two. To learn to laugh into troubled times is to allow an echo of heaven's assurance to sound on earth.

"Him serve with 'mirth'", the psalmist may have written. It seems, somehow, right.

THE WORLD- Pray

Faithful God,
May we REJOICE in the knowledge of you;
and be AWAKENED to the promise of each day.
Give us the grace to walk together in HOPE.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.

Go and Do (see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- Remember and celebrate how action has made change happen in the world.
- Celebrate a local community success.
- Celebrate our local and global communities coming together to learn from each other.