

Christian Aid week worship 2020

Welcome to our worship.

Today is the beginning of Christian Aid Week. Like many church activities at the moment, Christian Aid Week is being done differently and digitally this year. During this time together we'll have space to read and listen, sing and pray, and remember and acknowledge that we are part of a global community. We are neighbours near and far who are going through this coronavirus pandemic together. May our shared experience unite us in praise and prayer as one human family, separate but together in the home that is God's world.

Let us say together the Gathering prayer

God of all the Earth,

**be present with us now, in each of our
homes, as we connect together.**

**Build us into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood,
offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you
through Jesus Christ,
our risen redeemer and healer. Amen.**

Opening song

Let us build a house where love can dwell

Introduction to the song

It may seem strange to sing the lyric: 'All are welcome in this place' at a time when no one is welcome into our homes (except those who live there) or to collective worship in our church building. However, at this time more than ever, we are learning that the church is not the building but it is us, the people.

Peter calls us living stones in his epistle. Though separate, we can build up together into a spiritual house where love can dwell, and be lived out in our everyday actions.

1. Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive,
built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace,
here the love of Christ shall end all divisions

Chorus:

All are welcome

All are welcome

All are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak
and words are strong and true,
where God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.

Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace.

here as one we claim the faith of Jesus.

Chorus:

Let us build a house where the all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.

Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor and rafter

Chorus

Marty Haugen (b1950)

Prayer of confession and absolution

Introduction: How many times have you washed your hands today? We approach our prayer of confession and absolution, mindful of the ritual significance of hand washing in the Bible.

Hand washing in Scripture is closely associated with innocence and cleansing from sin. (See Exodus 30:17- 21, Psalm 26:6, Job 9:30, Matthew 27:24, James 4:8 to mention a few.)

Let us imagine we are washing our hands as we pray together.

As we turn on the tap we turn our hearts towards you, O God.

**As we wet our hands renew our thoughts,
so we might be transformed.**

**As we lather soap between fingers
and over all our hands, purge from us**

all that brings us harm and might harm others.

Remove the invisible guilt and shame

that so often keeps us from you.

**As we rinse our hands, we trust in your overflowing grace,
making all things new.**

Amen.

Introduction to the reading:

This is an extract from the long farewell that Jesus gave over the last supper, shortly after he washed the feet of the disciples with his own hands. Even though we are now in the Fifth Sunday of Easter, These words have a poignancy and power for us to absorb and process this Christian Aid Week Sunday. Listen now to the Word of God.

Gospel reading John 14:1-14

Song

Jesus hands were kind hands

- 1 Jesus' hands were kind hands,
Doing good to all,
Healing pain and sickness,
Blessing children small,
Washing tired feet and
Saving those who fall.
Jesus' hands were kind hands,
Doing good to all.
- 2 Take my hands, Lord Jesus,
Let them work for you.
Make them strong and gentle,
Kind in all I do.
Let me watch you, Jesus,
Till I'm gentle too;
Till my hands are kind hands,
Quick to work for you.

Reflection

Look at your hands. Have a good look.

However your hands look to you, they are most certainly clean in these days of regular hand washing to prevent spreading the coronavirus.

Our hands really are the most remarkable and useful tools, involved in so much of what we do and how we do things, even in these days of social distancing.

The psalmist writes of committing his spirit into God's hands, and at times of being in God's hands. He also describes his desire to be delivered from the hands of his oppressors and from a hidden invisible net that threatens to entangle him.

Our hands have become even more significant in these days of physical distance. We might long to hold the hand of a person we can no longer touch. We pray for the hands of medics to bring healing and comfort. We are grateful for hands stacking shelves and delivering groceries and post. And we are extra wary of everything our hands touch that comes from outside our own home.

This Christian Aid Week we also think of how our hands can be far from idle. Though not handing out envelopes or hosting Big Brekkies or the many things we usually busy ourselves with this week, our hands can still reach out virtually to our neighbours around the world. Neighbours in refugee camps and cramped living conditions, neighbours without adequate hand-washing facilities, neighbours who face the devastating impact of coronavirus with even less of the medical resources we have struggled to access here.

We reach out by clasping our hands together in prayer for our neighbours, and holding our hands open before God as we declare our needs and concerns for their wellbeing and our own.

We also reach out by participating in this digital Christian Aid Week, through making our online donations and sharing the stories from Christian Aid partners, working on the ground to be the hands and feet of love in action. If you wish, you can make a donation online to help vulnerable communities at caweek.org/payin

Let us pray together using our open hands.

Prayer of lament and intercession

God our refuge, we come to you with open hands,
 some of us with hearts full of questions, some of us bruised by bereavement,
 some of us fearful of what the future holds, all of us stunned by the events of this
 year. Draw close to us now in each of our homes as we place our honest
 questions and hopes into your open, resurrected, yet scarred hands.

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

With the honesty of the psalmist, the wrestling questions of Job, and the lament of
 the prophets, we bring to you our questions or our silence.

*(Hold your index finger and, in silence, ask the question that most burdens your
 heart or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)*

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Hear the cry of our hearts, Lord, silent and aloud, for bereaved neighbours, near
 and far. Comfort those pained by being absent, and hold close those who are
 hurting alone.

*(Hold your ring finger and pray for comfort for those you know who are bereaved
 or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)*

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

In this season of Easter, renew us with resurrection hope that while weeping
 lingers in this night, joy will come with the morning.

*(Hold your middle finger and in the silence tell God what you are most looking
 forward to in the future or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence
 together.)*

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

On this Christian Aid Week Sunday, we pray for and with communities across the world who are most vulnerable to coronavirus.

We pray for people living in refugee camps and city slums, with limited sanitation facilities, who are unable to wash their hands regularly, and have little opportunity to isolate from others.

We pray for Christian Aid partners working to provide soap and buckets, communicating clear, accurate information, raising the voices of the most vulnerable and ensuring they are kept as safe as possible.

(Hold your thumb as you pray for the most vulnerable, those closest to God's heart, or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For those of us who are self-isolating, which can sometimes feel like we aren't doing anything, remind us that we are all doing our part, and saving lives by staying at home.

(Hold your little finger and ask God for what you need, or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for much wisdom and resources for those in local and national authority for all frontline and key workers here in Britain, Ireland and across the world.

(Put your hands together and pray for the many frontline workers and volunteers and for Christian Aid partners working to help others across the world, or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

As we have clapped to honour them, we clap our hands now in praise of your glorious creation, and with the hope that the first shoots of another possible world are coming into view.

(Clap your hands in praise of God's glorious creation and with the hope of new possibilities for the world.)

God in your mercy,
hear all our prayers. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Sing
 Your hand O God has guided

1. Your hand, O God, has guided
 your flock from age to age;
 the wondrous tale is written
 full clear on every page;
 your people knew your goodness,
 and we their deeds record,
 and both of this bear witness,
 'One church, one faith, one Lord.'

2. Through many a day of darkness,
 through many a scene of strife,
 the faithful few fought bravely
 to guard the nation's life.
 Their gospel of redemption
 sin pardoned, life restores
 was all in this enfolded
 'One church, one faith, one Lord.'

3. Your mercy will not fail us,
 nor leave your work undone;
 with your right hand to help us,
 your victory shall be won,
 by mortals and by angels
 your name shall be adored,
 and this shall be their anthem,
 'One church, one faith, one Lord.'

Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821-1891)

Closing blessing

Before we go and wash our hands again, we say our blessing together:

**May the presence of the Creator refresh us,
 may the comfort of the Son renew us
 may the inspiration of the Spirit restore us to be love in action,
 even from a distance,
 in our neighbourhoods, near and far,
 this day and for evermore. Amen.**

Closing offering

If you wish to make a donation to Christian Aid, you can do so online at caweek.org/payin or send a cheque made payable to Christian Aid to Emlyn Evans who will send it on.

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