

Worship at Home for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 24 January 2021

A short act of worship for use in people's homes, provided by Marilyn and Jeff Britt

Call to worship from Psalm 96 ¹

Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.

HYMN: StF 385 ² [To join in click here](#)

Holy Spirit, we welcome You,

Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Move among us with holy fire

As we lay aside all earthly desire,

Hands reach out and our hearts aspire.

Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,

Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Let the breeze of Your presence blow

That Your children here might truly know

How to move in the Spirit's flow.

Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,

Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Please accomplish in me today

Some new work of loving grace, we pray -

Unreservedly - have Your way.

Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,

Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

This year the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, chosen by the sisters of the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland, 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.

In the three moments of prayer that follow, and which are marked by separate headings, 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.

Prayer of Approach

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

Prayer of Praise

You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!

We sing your praise in the midst of the world and among all peoples,

We sing your praise in the midst of creation and among all creatures.

We sing your praise among suffering and tears.

**We sing your praise among promises and achievements.
We sing your praise in the places of conflict and misunderstanding.
We sing your praise in the places of encounter and reconciliation.
We sing your praise in the midst of rifts and divisions.
We sing your praise in the midst of life and death,
the birth of a new heaven and a new earth.
You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you! Amen.**

Now consider the first moment of prayer.

1. Abiding in Christ: The unity of the whole person.

Reading - John 15:1-17 ¹ [To hear the reading click here and listen until 2.28](#)

¹ 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: love each other.

Response: Where there is charity and love God is there.

Prayer for ourselves

God of love, through Christ you said to us: "You did not choose me but I 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. The joy of our heart is in God. Amen

Action: A time of silence

Very often we think of prayer as something we do, an activity of our own. In this short time we are invited to an interior silence, and to turn aside from all the noise and concerns of our lives and thoughts. In this silence the action belongs to God. We are simply called to abide and rest in God's love. After a short silence join in with the verse of this hymn.

HYMN:- STF 710 ³ [To join in click here](#)

Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my friends.

Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

2. The visible unity of Christians. Reading -1 Corinthians 1: 10-13a. ¹

[To hear the reading click here and listen from 1.19 to 1.57](#)

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹ My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos" another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided?

Response There is One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism. Prayer for unity and for the Church

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 have mercy.

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. Lord have mercy.

Holy Spirit, Consoler of all, open our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation and bring us back from our wanderings. Lord have mercy.

Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, give us poverty of spirit so that we may welcome the unexpectedness of your grace. Lord have mercy.

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. Lord have mercy. Amen

Action: Sharing a Sign of Peace

The Lord calls us to be united among ourselves. He gives us his peace and invites us to share it. We are unable to do that today in the usual way. After a short silence join in with the verse of this hymn.

HYMN:- STF 710 ³ [To join in click here](#)

Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my friends.

Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

3. The unity of all peoples with all creation. Reading - Revelation 7: 9-12 ¹

[To hear the reading click here and listen from 1.34 to 2.32](#)

⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

Response O you who are beyond all things. Prayers for others

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!

Action: Moving to the Centre ...and out to the world – inspired by a text of Dorotheus of Gaza.

Jesus calls us to abide in him, as branches of the true vine. He calls us to bear the fruit of God's healing and reconciling love. He calls us to draw closer to God and one another as we offer this love to the world.

Imagine a circle drawn on the ground. Imagine that this circle is the world. At the centre of the world is God, in whom all our desires and longings find their meeting place. Imagine taking a step forward and as we move closer to God, and as we continue to move forward, so we draw closer to one another. And the closer we come to one anotherthe closer we come to God – our hope and joy. Let us silently reflect and then join in with two verses of this hymn.

HYMN:- STF 710 ³ [To join in click here](#)

Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my friends.
Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my friends.
Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord

With the words that Jesus taught us, now pray aloud:

The Lord's Prayer

Spirituality and solidarity are inseparably linked. Prayer and action belong together. When we abide in Christ, we receive the Spirit of courage and wisdom to act against all injustice and oppression. Join in with the words of this prayer recited daily by the sisters of the Grandchamps Community.

Pray and work that God may reign. Throughout your day let the Word of God breathe life into work and rest. Maintain inner silence in all things so as to dwell in Christ. Be filled with the spirit of the Beatitudes: joy, simplicity, mercy.

HYMN STF 258 ⁴ [To join in click here](#)

You are the Vine, we are the branches,
Keep us abiding in You.
You are the Vine, we are the branches,
Keep us abiding in You.
Then we'll grow in Your love,
Then we'll go in Your name,
That the world will surely know
That You have power to heal and to save.

Blessing

Be one, so that the world may believe! Abide in God's love, 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.

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