

Bangor & Holyhead Methodist Circuit
Sunday Worship Sheet- 22 January 2023 The week of prayer for Christian Unity

Our worship for this week has been prepared by John Hay. You may wish to have your Bible to hand. Please note the hymns are now at the back of the sheet for ease of printing. CCLI licence 556292

Call to Worship

May this quiet space be a touching place to encounter God. May we be gathered from the edges and woven into a tapestry of Christ's making.

May we be joined in the Spirit, one to another and celebrate the blessedness of unity in God.

Hymn STF 685 In Christ there is no east and west

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of Heaven and earth, we kneel in adoration before the mystery made manifest in your son, Jesus, who stood with us, as one of us. So, we seek to stand with one another in adoring you by living the way of love and life he showed us, setting us free to serve in the fullness of your grace.

And yet loving God, we so often fall short of this ideal. Far from standing together with our brothers and sisters in unity, we have remained seated, eyes fixed firmly on our feet in the face of injustice. Forgive us our silence, our failure to confront the evil of racism and prejudice around us and within the structures we are part of. May you disturb us in our contentment, distract us from our comforts, deter us from our conflicts until your kingdom comes and your will is done. **Amen.** The Lord's Prayer.

Readings: Isaiah 1 v 12-18, John 17 v 13-26

Reflection

My mother-in-law has a passion for jigsaws. This Christmas she received a gift of a 1000 piece jigsaw, which she intends to spend an hour a day putting together until it is completed. I visited her when she had just started. It looked a daunting task seeing at all the pieces spread out. But she has a system. The edges were all in one place, then she had made groups of colours which all corresponded to different parts of the picture. She started with the edges, then was going to work her way through the colours trying to find the pieces that fitted together to fill the inner sections, one to another. On first sight many of the pieces look the same, but of course, they are not. They are all unique and though some come close, only one will properly fit the right space. That is how jigsaws work. Unique pieces connected to build a beautiful picture. Diversity and wholeness together.

This Sunday is the middle Sunday of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the set theme this year is "Belonging; Praying for unity amidst injustice." The materials have been prepared by the Churches of Minneapolis (the place where George Floyd was killed by a

Police Officer in May 2020, which sparked the Black Lives Matter movement). The materials are very challenging.

On Day 2, the readings I have chosen for today are used for a reflection and the commentary says this of them:

“Jesus prays that we will be completely one, praying for an authentic and selfless unity, with no half measures. Such unity is challenging, it requires self-reflection, humility, a release of power and control, and an openness to change. Is this the unity that you are praying for this week? Isaiah reminds us of the hypocrisy that can still exist in our churches, claiming a love for others, but only really extending a full welcome to those who are like us. Instead of offering empty worship Isaiah calls us to do good and seek justice (Isaiah 1 v 17). Learning to do good also requires an openness to change.”

Day 3 of the materials takes this further. “Oneness” is not equated to “sameness” but rather in true oneness there is a celebration of the “beauty of difference, all the while reaching toward the unity of God’s divine justice.”

My Mother-in-Law’s jigsaw resonates with this theme. Unity, beauty, completeness through diverse and different pieces coming together. It is a picture of what the Church needs to become. And we all have our part to play, because we are each of us a piece in the jigsaw of God’s Kingdom. We are each unique, have our own beauty and set of gifts to bring, but completeness of the jigsaw depends on interconnectedness with the other pieces.

“God has shown us what is good through our interconnectedness. We are blessed and we are to bless others. We are loved and we are to love others. We are to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God, together. We. Not Me. Our kinship and God’s teachings guide us into community together as we learn and act as We. Not Me.”

Let that be our prayer this week and always.

Prayer of commitment

God of community, three in one, we offer ourselves: as many threads in a woven fabric; as diverse stones in a mosaic; as various instruments in an orchestra; as myriad drops in a moving river; as different pieces in a massive jigsaw. We acknowledge our need of one another, our impoverishment when we act alone; let us find delight in our interdependence and discover your presence in one another.

Prayers for Unity and Transformation

United in Christ who gives us the victory, let us pray to God:

For the Church, the Body of Christ,
that we might truly live the unity we receive
through the Holy Spirit.

God our strength: **Change us by your grace.**

For the leaders of our churches
that they may be faithful to the unity
to which all Christians are called.
God our strength: **Change us by your grace.**

For the nations of the world,
that they may live in peace with one another
and promote justice for all.
God our strength: **Change us by your grace.**

For all people,
that we may be good stewards of the earth.
God our strength: **Change us by your grace.**

For the people of our society,
that we may be transformed to live
as caring neighbours to each other.
God our strength: **Change us by your grace.**

For the sick and suffering,
that they may be transformed
by your healing presence.
God our strength: **Change us by your grace.**

Lord, stand in our midst and grant us unity and peace.
Amen.

Hymn STF 696 For the healing of the nations

Blessing

May God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and kindness to all.

Hymn 685

- 1 In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.
 - 2 In him shall true hearts everywhere
their high communion find ;
his service is the golden cord
close-binding humankind.
 - 3 Join hands then all the human race,
whate'er your nation be ;
all children of the living God
are surely kin to me.
 - 4 In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north ;
all Christlike souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth.
- John Oxenham, pseud. (1852–1941)

Hymn 696

- 1 For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord ;
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.
 - 2 Lead us forward into freedom ;
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.
 - 3 All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned ;
pride of status, race, or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow life's brief span.
 - 4 You, Creator-God, have written
your great name on humankind ;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind ;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.
- Fred Kaan (1929–2009)