

22nd January 2023 – Morning Service

Week of prayer for Christian Unity 2023

Jill Martin

Call to Worship – Psalm 133

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

StF 409 – Let us build a house

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| 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 divisions: | 3) Let us build a house where love is found
In water, wine and wheat:
A banquet hall on holy ground
Where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
Is revealed in time and space;
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us: |
| Ch) <i>All are welcome,
All are welcome,
All are welcome in this place.</i> | 4) Let us build a house where hands will reach
Beyond the wood and stone
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
And live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
Bear the image of God's face;
Let us bring an end to fear and danger: |
| 2) Let us build a house where prophets speak,
And words are strong and true,
Where all 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: | 5) Let us build a house where 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 to rafter: |

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Prayer of Adoration

Lord God, before whom every knee shall bow and whom every tongue shall praise, we come to worship you. There is no light in our lives or in the light of the world that does not come from you. In your presence the morning stars first sang together. You are the King and the judge, but also our Saviour and friend. We bring our adoration and praise, imperfect though it is and ask that you will accept our service of worship; through Jesus Christ our Lord **Amen**

Prayer of Confession

Lord God, every good thing in our lives comes from you, and yet we confess with shame that we have not lived together as your children and shared the gifts you have given us; so often our lives have not reflected your glory but our own selfishness. Forgive us Lord, if we have loved only those who have loved us, if we have sought our own pleasure and disregarded the needs of our fellows. Forgive us if we have been unkind in our judgements, quick to condemn and slow to forgive.

Forgive if we have given in to our worst and so made it difficult for others to live up to their best. Lord if we have come into your presence bitter and cynical, send us out rejoicing and full of gratitude. Make us men and women with pure and great hearts so that we may see our God, for Jesus sake **Amen**

StF 615 – Let love be real

- 1) Let love be real, in giving and receiving,
Without the need to manage and to own;
A haven free from posing and pretending,
Where every weakness may be safely known.
Give me your hand, along the desert pathway,
Give me your love wherever we may go.
 - 2) Let love be real, not grasping or confining,
That strange embrace that holds yet
sets us free;
That helps us face the risk of truly living,
And makes us brave to be what we might be.
Give me your strength when all my
words are weakness;
Give me your love in spite of all you know.
 - 3) Let love be real, with no manipulation,
No secret wish to harness or control;
Let us accept each other's incompleteness,
And share the joy of learning to be whole.
Give me your hope through dreams and
disappointments;
Give me your trust when all my failings show.
- Ch) As God loves us, so let us love each other:
With no demands, just open hands and
space to grow.*

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Reading: Micah 6:6-9

With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Listen! The Lord is calling to the city—and to fear your name is wisdom— “Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.”

Week of prayer for Christian Unity 2023

We begin a week when we join with churches around the world in praying with all Christians. This year the focus is on race and colour remembering George Floyd who was murdered by a police officer. This event encouraged people to take to the streets of Minneapolis in May 2020, even during a pandemic, to protest against institutional racism.

We live in a world of inequality and injustice. There is always someone with more which by definition means there will always be someone with less. How many times have you been cold or hungry? How many times have you been frightened because of where you find yourself? Do you have another person who will look out for you be your friend, go out of the way to help you, who won't try to take advantage, someone who you can trust and depend on? On a cold day are you warm enough? Have you got clean, dry clothes to wear? Can you feed yourself? Can you close your door as dark falls and feel safe?

Do we really understand how some people live - in the cold, in the dark, hungry, thirsty, frightened, lonely? More to the point, do we really want to? Are we more comfortable when we push the guilt feelings far below the surface out of sight.

Let us take time to think, to spend time reflecting on our calling. If we are honest we have an idea what we need to do. During this week of Christian Unity let us actively seek to understand those we do not know.

God calls us to see others in their true colour.

To truly hear their pain, their fear, their loneliness....

To shout out for justice for all colours....

For the clean and the dirty.....

Those who smell.....

Those whose stomachs hurt with hunger....

Those whose feet are cold and dirty....

Those without shoe laces, those without shoes....

For those who steal to feed a child.....

Who share their shelter with rats and mice.....

Who have just one set of clothes.....

For those who hunt amongst the rubbish for food....

For those who are belittled because they are different.....

For those struggling to survive and keep one another safe.....

For those who are abandoned and found wanting.....

Those led in the wrong direction - breaking the law and harming others.....

Jesus you gave your life that I might live, lead me from my comfort zone towards life for you, trusting you to guide me in the true way, speaking out to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with my God.

StF 629 – God of my faith

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| 1) God of my faith, I offer you my doubt,
For life at times seems far too dark for me,
And my belief becomes more insecure,
When worldly cares produce uncertainty. | 4) God of my love, I offer you my pain,
When I'm alone and feel nobody cares,
In aching age or in rejected youth,
You bear my cross and dry my human tears. |
| 2) God of my hope, I offer you my fear,
When I am scared by my anxiety,
When all I hear is suffering and woe,
In all my shadows you will walk with me. | 5) God of my life, I offer you my dreams,
Light in the darkness where I hide from view,
Light in my faith, my hope, my joy and love,
Light in my life and all my life in you. |
| 3) God of my joy, I offer you my grief,
When I sink down in sadness or despair,
When in depression I cannot be touched,
I pray in all my depths to find you there. | |

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Prayers of Intercession

Listen, God is calling, as he called his chosen people to be a light to the nations, as he called the disciples to follow Christ the chosen one. Listen God is calling

Listen to God's voice, calling to us from the world in the weak voice of the powerless, the desperate voice of the poor....[Silence]

L: Saving God, open our ears to your call **R: Help us to follow you**

Listen to God's voice calling to us in the church in the joyous voice of worship, the challenging voice of God's word....[Silence]

L: Saving God, open our ears to your call **R: Help us to follow you**

Listen to God's voice calling to us from within our community in the hesitating voice of the stranger, the trembling voice of the fearful....[Silence]

L: Saving God, open our ears to your call **R: Help us to follow you**

Listen to God's voice calling to us through those we love in the struggling voice of the sick, the sad voice of the bereaved....[Silence]

L: Saving God, open our ears to your call **R: Help us to follow you**

Listen to God's voice calling to us from within ourselves in the still, small voice of the Spirit, the wordless voice of love....[Silence]

L: Saving God, open our ears to your call **R: Help us to follow you**

Generous God, we pray for the grace to be your faithful followers and committed servants, in the name of Jesus Christ, who came to serve, to seek and to save. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 545 – Be thou my vision

- 1) Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
Be all else but naught to me, save that thou art;
Be thou my best thought in the day and the night,
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.
- 2) Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
Be thou ever with me, and I with thee, Lord;
Be thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
Be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
- 3) Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower:
O raise thou me heavenward, great Power of my power.
- 4) Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
Be thou mine inheritance now and always, -
Be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O Sovereign of heaven, my treasure thou art.
- 5) High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Trad Irish translated by Mary Elizabeth Byrne, versified by Eleanor Henrietta Hull

Blessing - StF 773 – Praise the Lover of Creation

Praise the Lover of Creation, Praise the Spirit, Friend of Friends,
Praise the true Beloved, our Saviour, Praise the God who makes and mends,
Strong, surrendered, many-splendoured, Three whose Oneness never ends.

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And the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ be amongst us all evermore, **Amen**