



Order of Service: Christian Aid Wee



This Order of Service is written in the light of the coronavirus pandemic, to use for a service at home during Christian Aid Week (10-16 May).

Preparation

You may wish to have a bowl of water, soap and a towel to hand for part of this service.

Introduction

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.

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 all can dwell

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.

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:

*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 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:
All are welcome, ...

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:
All are welcome, ...

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:
All are welcome, ...

Let us a 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:
All are welcome, ...

Marty Haugen (b. 1950)

Prayer of confession and Absolution

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.)

You may wish to say this prayer as you wash your hands. (You can say it in 20 seconds but it may take 30.)

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.



A community learns
about hand washing
in Sierra Leone.

The Readings

Psalm 31.

The Revised Common Lectionary for today selects seven verses from this psalm, but since the words of the psalmist express many of the emotions that we might be experiencing during this difficult time, we take the time to read and reflect on all 24 verses.

In you, LORD, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

² Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.

³ Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name lead and
guide me.

⁴ Keep me free from the trap that is set for
me,
for you are my refuge.

⁵ Into your hands I commit my spirit;
deliver me, LORD, my faithful God.

⁶ I hate those who cling to worthless idols;
as for me, I trust in the Lord.

⁷ I will be glad and rejoice in your love,
for you saw my affliction
and knew the anguish of my soul.

⁸ You have not given me into the hands of
the enemy
but have set my feet in a spacious place.

⁹ Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in
distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and body with grief.

¹⁰ My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.

¹¹ Because of all my enemies,
I am the utter contempt of my

neighbours
and an object of dread to my closest
friends—
those who see me on the street flee
from me.

¹² I am forgotten as though I were dead;
I have become like broken pottery.

¹³ For I hear many whispering,
“Terror on every side!”
They conspire against me
and plot to take my life.

¹⁴ But I trust in you, Lord;
I say, “You are my God.”

¹⁵ My times are in your hands;
deliver me from the hands of my
enemies,
from those who pursue me.

¹⁶ Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.

¹⁷ Let me not be put to shame, Lord,
for I have cried out to you;
but let the wicked be put to shame
and be silent in the realm of the dead.

¹⁸ Let their lying lips be silenced,
for with pride and contempt
they speak arrogantly against the
righteous.

¹⁹ How abundant are the good things
that you have stored up for those who
fear you,
that you bestow in the sight of all,
on those who take refuge in you.

²⁰ In the shelter of your presence you
hide them
from all human intrigues;
you keep them safe in your dwelling
from accusing tongues.

²¹ Praise be to the Lord,
for he showed me the wonders of his
love
when I was in a city under siege.

22 In my alarm I said,
“I am cut off from your sight!”

Yet you heard my cry for mercy
when I called to you for help.

23 Love the Lord, all his faithful people!
The Lord preserves those who are true
to him,
but the proud he pays back in full.

24 Be strong and take heart,
all you who hope in the Lord.

Pause to reflect and pray

Were there any verses or phrases that jumped out from the passage? Any phrases that you find helpful in these difficult days?

Gospel

John 14:1-14

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.

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.’

Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’

Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.’

Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.’

Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”?’

Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Song

Be still for the presence of the Lord

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found —
we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight —
our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him —
in faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

David J. Evans (b. 1957)

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

Prayer of lament and intercession

Let us pray together using our open hands.

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.)*

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.)*

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.)*

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.)*

God in your mercy, hear our prayer.



Children gather in a
crowded refugee camp
in Bangladesh.

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.)*

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.)*

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.

Song

Be thou my vision

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.

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.

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.

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.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright
Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Great Heart of my own heart, whatever
befall,
still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

*Irish, 8th century
trans Mary Elizabeth Byrne (1880–1931)
versified Eleanor Henrietta Hull (1860–1935)
(alt.)*

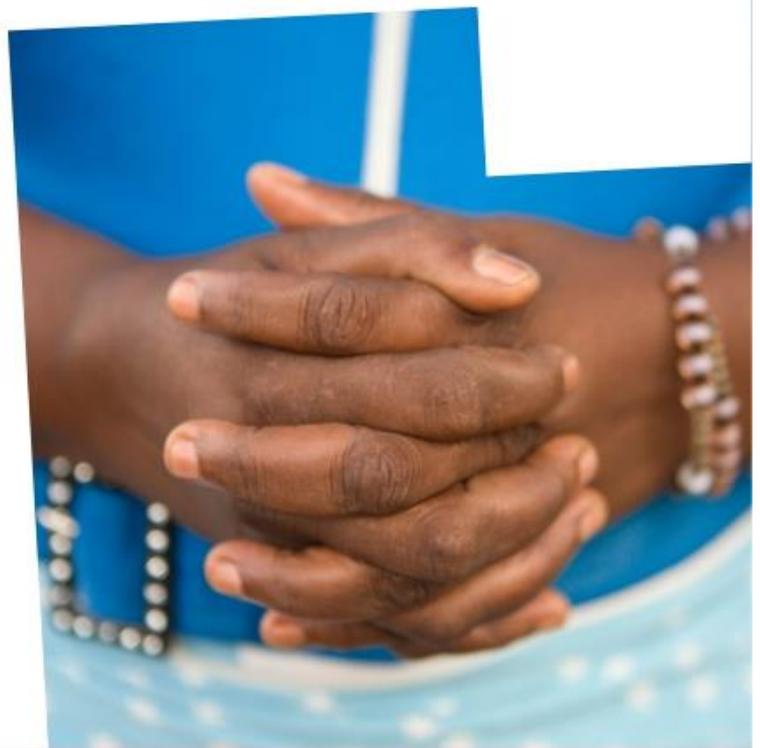
The Lord's Prayer

(in your preferred form)

Closing blessing

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

Florence Muthiani
joins her hands
together in prayer
in Kenya.



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