

Worship at Home – 18 January 2026

A short act of worship during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, for use in people's homes,
prepared by Mary Armstrong.

Introduction

We are currently in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which this year has the theme **One Body, One Spirit**, and this service reflects that theme. Our church takes part in this week of prayer as a member of Churches Together in Thatcham. The prayers and reflections are provided by different Christian communities across the world and this year come from a group of churches in Armenia. The aim of the Week of Prayer this year is to look more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide.

The Diocese of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom and Ireland continues to provide a powerful witness to the call to be peacemakers – through prayer, through advocacy and humanitarian aid, through peace education, and through hospitality and encounter. This goes hand in hand with a deeply rooted commitment to Christian unity as integral to how we live out Christ's commandment to love our neighbour, and as a source of hope in troubled times.

Opening prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
You bring us together in all our diversity,
as family and church.
In the face of so many situations on earth,
where hope has given way to despair
and hearts are wounded and emptied by disappointment,
renew our strength and unify us.
Help us to share Your hope wherever we find ourselves.
You are the true Light,
who casts out the darkness of sin,
despair and brokenness,
who shines into our hearts, releasing the joy
and the true hope of Your eternal love for all.
Amen.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 693¹ *Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair...*

1	Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair, Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer. Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace, sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase!	2	Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills, work for all people, trade for their skills; land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak, voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.
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<p>God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray: melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain; come, change our love from a spark to a flame.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams plundered and poisoned — our future, our dreams. Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed; make us content with the things that we need.</p>
<p>3 Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear, cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share. Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green, Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame until your justice burns brightly again; until the nations learn of your ways, seek your salvation and bring you their praise</p>

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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Prayer of confession and assurance of forgiveness

We come to pray for the unity that is Christ's gift to the Church. We come in hope that the world might believe and be reconciled to God.

We recognise that we are part of churches and communities that are often divided by prejudice and misunderstanding about each other, not accepting that there are different ways of worshipping and perhaps failing to recognise what God is asking of us, which is summarised in this short verse from Micah.

"And what does the Lord require of us but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with our God?" (Micah 6:8)

And so, we come in faith to ask forgiveness for what we have done or have failed to do.
We'll now have a short time of quiet for own thoughts.

Forgive us Lord, when we come to worship without walking humbly before you,
and for our sins of prejudice and misunderstanding.

We have been called to unity. Forgive us anew and reconcile us to one another.
May God's mercy free us from our sins, to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

God of all,
because of your great love
our sins have been washed away
and we are part of the beloved community.
We come before you, a holy family,
a rainbow people,
united in the beautiful diversity of your creation.
We celebrate the rich tapestry of the human family.
We commit ourselves to overcome prejudice and disunity wherever we find it
and to walk humbly in your presence.
You made us, God
in your own image,
and then became one of us,
proud of those you have made.
Make us proud of being part of that worldwide family,
and eager to discover and celebrate your image
in every person, every culture, every nation
that we are privileged to encounter.

Hymn Singing the Faith 696² *For the healing of the nations...*

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| 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. | 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. |
| 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. | 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)

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Bible reading: Ephesians 4:1-6

Unitary and Maturity in the Body of Christ

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you

were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Reflection on the reading

How often do we consider our own call to unity?

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul emphasises the significance of living 'a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called'. The work of Christian unity can be regarded as optional, an 'add-on', but the letter to the Ephesians reminds us that the call to unity is critical to God's mission on earth. Christian unity is a gift from God that enriches the lives of individuals, churches and the wider community. As we work and worship with those of other Christian traditions, we learn more of God and are better equipped to serve others and to challenge injustice. In an increasingly divided world, God calls us all to overcome barriers and to become instruments of reconciliation, inviting us to be Christ's hands and feet on earth.

Recognising and humbly embracing this call to unity enables the Church to reflect Christ to the world, as we work together to seek to nurture harmonious and supportive fellowship with others and seek to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.

Prayers for ourselves and for the world.

Lord Jesus Christ,

You are the Prince of Peace.

Strengthen the bond of peace among us and in our troubled world.

Disturb the hearts of all who would make war; touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by war.

We pray especially for the people of Armenia, Ukraine and Gaza and the many other places in the world currently embroiled in war and conflict of all kinds.

Let the light of Your love shine in all the dark places of our world,
and hasten the day when all peoples may dwell in peace with justice.

Father God, we bring to mind all those who find themselves in a hard place, within our own communities and throughout the world. We especially pray for those who suffer physically with illness or mentally with depression or anxiety. Lord, come breathe on these people by your Holy Spirit and bring love, hope, and joy through us your church. Help us to minister to others in the strength of your Spirit and to work in unity together. May we shine your glorious light into the darkness and remain steadfast and true to you.

Lord, it disturbs us when we see world leaders embracing division instead of unity, pursuing wealth instead of justice and concealing lies instead of speaking out the truth. We lift all those in significant leadership to you, and ask that you guide their thoughts, affect their actions, renew their minds, and sweep away corruption. Father, it is disturbing to see the difference between rich and poor widening. We lift all those in poverty to you. We pray for an end to poverty, and for healing and restoration. Speak into our lives so that we might play our part in changing the world. We ask all this in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen

Let us say **The Lord's Prayer** together.

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your Name
Your kingdom comes
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

Hymn: Singing the Faith 706³— *Longing for light, we wait in darkness...*

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light !

Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light !

Shine in your Church gathered today.

2 Longing for peace, our world is
troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.

3 Longing for food, many are hungry.
Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.

4 Longing for shelter, many are
homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.

5 Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.

Bernadette Farrell (b. 1957)

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Closing prayer – When the work of Christmas begins⁴

When the carols have been stilled,
When the star-topped tree is taken down,
When family and friends are gone home,
When we are back to our schedules
The work of Christmas begins:
To welcome the refugee,
To heal a broken planet,
To feed the hungry,
To build bridges of trust, not walls of fear,

To share our gifts,
To seek justice and peace for all people,
To bring Christ's light to the world. Amen

God of healing and light,
we lift to you the places and people who need hope today.
Shine your light where it feels darkest.
Help us to be part of your answer.

And may the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and those we love, today
and always.

Amen

1. Graham Kendrick © 1993 Make Way Music Limited
2. Fred Kaan (1929-2009) © 1968 Stainer & Bell Limited
3. Bernadette Farrell (b.1957) © 1993
4. By Michael Dougherty, a variation on Howard Thurman's 'When the Song of the Angels is Stilled'.
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