



**A Service of Light
for the
Reconciliation
of
Local Communities**

GUIDELINES

This service can be used over an extended number of days for a possible 'Week of Reconciliation' in a local area.

On day 1 the first section, *A Service of Preparation* should be used in a number of locations in the area by groups/societies/churches to set the theme and gather participants.

On day 2 part of the second section up to Penitence is used in a neutral agreed location. This could include a special speaker/preacher, time for sharing stories/hurts etc.

On Day 3 further sharing of stories and recognition of past local prejudices etc should lead into the penitence and the rest of the service. A permanent symbol of the week of reconciliation might remain in the neutral location.

Alternatively, the second section, *Joining Together in the Light*, may be used as a stand-alone service, with each church or community group preparing for it in their own way.

A Service of Light for the Reconciliation of Local Communities

1. THE SERVICE OF PREPARATION

The Gathering of God's People

GREETING

Your word is a lamp to our feet
and a light to our path. *Psalm 119: 105*

The light and peace of Jesus Christ be with us all
and with all who walk in his way.

As our prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down on us
to cleanse our hearts and set us free
to sing your praise now and for ever.
Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Dear friends in Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ has called us to be his body, the church, in this place. We come together to bring the life of our *community/town/city* before God, in thanksgiving, in penitence and in commitment to the future.

We will prepare ourselves in scripture, song and prayer, to join with our fellow disciples in Christ, bringing before God our common history, our sad divisions and a sincere commitment to moving forward together in faith and the service of our Lord.

Here, we will seek the Father's forgiveness for past hurts.

Here, we will carry a light before us

as a sign of Christ moving among us his people.

Here, we will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for our future witness.

So let us pray that we may be fervent in prayer, honest in confessing and sincere in the promises we make to each other.

May Christ, who by his Incarnation, gathers into one all things earthly and heavenly, fill us with his love and peace.

May we walk in his way, seek his light, and shine as witnesses to his way.

THE COLLECT

Lord God our Father,

in Christ you have given us the light of your incarnate Word,
and shown us the fullness of your love:

Help us to walk united in that light and serving together in his love,
that the fullness of his presence may be seen in us.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PROCLAIMING AND RECEIVING THE WORD

The following readings are used:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. *Isaiah 58: 6-9*

Jesus said, 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.' *Matthew 5: 14-16*

For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. *2 Corinthians 4: 5-6*

At the end of each reading:

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

KINDLING THE LIGHT

A hymn may be sung

PRAYERS OF PREPARATION

Let us pray that Christ may be seen in the life of the Church in this place.

We pray for our churches and for your people.

Grant us unity, peace and true accord.

Where there are divisions, hatred and prejudice
let us seek unity in the holy bonds of faith and love.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, you have called us into the family of those
who are the children of God.

May our love for our brothers and sisters be strengthened by your grace.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

You, O Lord, are the creator and sustainer of the earth
and you have appointed us as stewards of her resources.

We pray that we will not squander your gifts,
but conserve them for future generations
and use them wisely to the glory of your name.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for our country
and ask you to inspire the people of this land
with the spirit of justice and truth,
so that in all our dealings with one another
we may show that together we are one in you.
Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world,
so that those in darkness come to you.
As we come to kindle the light together
we pray that our lives may shine as a common and shared witness
to the saving grace you have given for all.
Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

A hymn may be sung

THE LIGHTING OF THE TORCH

The torch is lit as these words are said;

Christ yesterday and today,
the beginning and the end,

Alpha and Omega,
all time belongs to him,
and all ages;
**to him be glory and power,
through every age and for ever. Amen.**

Almighty and most merciful God,
kindle within us the fire of love,
that by its cleansing flame
we may be purged of all our sins
and made worthy to worship you in spirit and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*All then leave their churches to meet together for the second part of the service
overleaf.*

2. JOINING TOGETHER IN THE LIGHT

The Gathering of God's People

When all have assembled a hymn is sung

GREETING

Those presiding greet the people saying together:

The Lord be with you.

The Lord bless you.

The service is introduced by one of those presiding with these or other suitable words:

Brothers and sisters in Christ; we have come together from our places of worship having all prepared for this service in a common act of scripture, song and prayer, and by the lighting of these torches.

Now we gather as one, as members of the body of Christ, to set aside divisions of the past, to celebrate our shared present and to re-commit ourselves to working for a future of common understanding and renewed hope for us in this *community/town/city* and for all peoples everywhere.

We begin by lighting this fire from our torches as a sign of our gathering and our shared desire for unity, peace and love.

UNITING IN THE LIGHT

The central fire is lit by all torches brought from the Services of Preparation as a sign of the community's shared faith as Christians and the shared commitment to working towards greater unity in the future.

As the central fire is lit, the following words are said:

God our Creator,
your Son our Saviour came as a powerful light
shining in the darkness and brokenness of our world.
Your Spirit calls us to walk in the light of your forgiveness and healing.
May this fire be a symbol of our unending commitment
to be agents of your light in our *community/town/city*
and to shine as lights of hope and peace in the world.
We ask this in your holy name,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

*The torches brought from the Services of Preparation remain lit as a sign of diversity
in the midst of unity.*

PROCLAIMING AND RECEIVING THE WORD

One or both of the following are used.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. *2 Corinthians 5: 16-20*

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' Then the

scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that “he is one, and besides him there is no other”; and “to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength”, and “to love one’s neighbour as oneself”,—this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.’ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ After that no one dared to ask him any question. *Mark 12: 28-34*

At the end of each reading:

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A SERMON OR REFLECTION may take place at this point in the service.

PENITENCE

Christ calls us out of the darkness
of past divisions and wounded history
into the light of his hope and peace.
Let us confess our sins against God and against one another.

**Lord, we confess to you and to each other,
that your churches in this place
have wounded each other and our communities in the past.**

**We are sorry and ashamed
and ask for your forgiveness,
so that together we may move forward in faith,
grow together in love,
and faithfully serve you in this *community/town/city*
as one in your Name.**

We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation.

Through Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

ACT OF COMMITMENT

A lay person leads the Act of Commitment.

Let us commit ourselves to responsible living and faithful service.

Will we strive for all that makes for peace
in our *community/town/city*, on this island and beyond?

With the help of God, we will.

Will we seek to heal the wounds of the past,
and work for a hopeful and peaceful future?

With the help of God, we will.

Will we work for a just future for our country and for all humanity?

With the help of God, we will.

Merciful God, we offer to you the fears in us
that have not yet been cast out by love:

May we accept the hope you have placed in the hearts of all people,
And live lives of justice, light and mercy;
through Jesus Christ our risen Redeemer. **Amen**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

We have chosen to walk in the light of Christ's forgiveness and healing.
As children of the light we pray together in the words that he taught us:

Our Father.....

THE PEACE

Christ is our peace.

He has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross.

We meet in his name and share his peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

All present exchange a sign of peace

A hymn is sung

Going Out as God's People

ACT OF THANKSGIVING

Let us give thanks to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

For all your blessings of love, peace and joy in this world,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For the work of peacemakers, negotiators and arbitrators,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For all agencies of reconciliation and those who heal divided communities and nations,
We give your thanks, O Lord.

For opportunities in our own lives to bring to an end hatred and division,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For all peace accords, treaties and peaceful ends to conflict,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For all that opens our hearts towards our neighbour and enables us to work together for the common good,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For all that brings release to those with memories of hurt and injury, for the healing of memories and the restoration to wholeness of life,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For the commandment to love one another as you love us and for your call to the world to live in peace and harmony,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For the justice, freedom and peace we enjoy today
and for opportunities to share them with others,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For our ability to give refuge to the displaced, to bind up the broken-hearted
and to share with those in need,
We give you thanks, O Lord.

For the all the blessings of this life,
for the gift of peace,
the joy of harmony,
and the healing of memories,
we give you thanks, O Lord.
Amen.

A hymn may be sung

THE DISMISSAL

We go into the world
to walk in God's light,
to rejoice in God's love
and to reflect God's glory.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God

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