

Introduction to this year's theme

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2021 has been prepared by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland. The theme that was chosen, "Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit", is based on John 15:1-17 and expresses Grandchamp Community's vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity in the Church and the human family.

The Grandchamp Community has its origins in Europe in the 1930s, when a group of women of the Reformed tradition sought to rediscover the importance of silence and listening to the Word of God. Today the community has fifty sisters, all women from different generations, Church traditions, countries and continents. In their diversity the sisters are a living parable of communion. They remain faithful to a life of prayer, life in community and the welcoming of guests. The sisters share the grace of their monastic life with visitors and volunteers who go to Grandchamp for a time of retreat, silence, healing or in search of meaning.

In producing the material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity for 2021, the sisters are inviting churches across the world to enter into their tradition of prayer and silence that is rooted in the ancient traditions of the Church catholic.

Jesus said to the disciples, "abide in my love" (Jn 15:9). He abides in the love of the Father (Jn 15:10) and desires nothing other than to share this love with us: "I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father" (Jn 15:15b). Grafted into the vine, which is Jesus himself, the Father becomes our vinedresser who prunes us to make us grow. This describes what happens in prayer. The Father is the centre of our lives, who centres our lives. He prunes us and makes us whole, and whole human beings give glory to the Father.

Abiding in Christ is an inner attitude that takes root in us over time. It demands space to grow. It can be overtaken by the struggle for the necessities of life and it is threatened by the distractions, noise, activity and the challenges of life.

We live in a time that is both troubling and magnificent, an often dangerous time where we are challenged by pandemics, wars, violence, poverty, racism and climate change. Yet as Christians seeking reconciliation, justice and peace, we also know the full value of a spiritual life, have an immense responsibility and must realize it, unite and help each other create forces of calmness, refuges of peace, vital centres where the silence of people calls on the creative word of God. It is a question of life and death.

Though we, as Christians, abide in the love of Christ, we also live in a creation that groans as it waits to be set free (cf. Romans 8). In the world we witness the evils of suffering and conflict. Through solidarity with those who suffer we allow the love of Christ to flow through us. The paschal mystery bears fruit in us when we offer love to our brothers and sisters and nurture hope in the world.

Spirituality and solidarity are inseparably linked. Abiding in Christ, we receive the strength and wisdom to act against structures of injustice and oppression, to fully recognize ourselves as brothers and sisters in humanity, and to be creators of a new way of living, with respect for and communion with all of creation.

The summary of the rule of life that the sisters of Grandchamp recite together each morning begins with the words "pray and work that God may reign". Prayer and everyday life are not two separate realities but are meant to be united. All that we experience is meant to become an encounter with God.

Churches Together in Barnes
Service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Sunday 24th January 4pm

You may like to have a candle ready to light when indicated during the service. The host will mute all so that our responses are said but not distorted. Readers will need to unmute themselves. Music is played as we gather and a candle is lit on the host screen.

Opening Prayer (Revd James Hutchings)

Lord, you invite us to abide in you who are the vinedresser who cares for us with love.
You call on us to see the beauty of each branch united to the vine,
the beauty of each person.
And yet, too often the differences in others make us afraid.
We withdraw into ourselves. Our trust in you and one another is lost.
Come and direct our hearts toward you once again.
That as one family we may praise your name.
Amen.

Litany of praise (Reader 1 Ian Haddow, Barnes Methodist; Reader 2 Jeremy Goodall, St Osmund's)

All **You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**
Reader 1 We sing your praise in the midst of the world and among all peoples,
Reader 2 We sing your praise in the midst of creation and among all creatures.
All **You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**
Reader 1 We sing your praise among suffering and tears,
Reader 2 We sing your praise among promises and achievements.
All **You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**
Reader 1 We sing your praise in the places of conflict and misunderstanding;
Reader 2 We sing your praise in the places of encounter and reconciliation.
All **You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**
Reader 1 We sing your praise in the midst of rifts and divisions,
Reader 2 We sing your praise in the midst of life and death, the birth of a new heaven and a new earth.
All **You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**

First Vigil – Abiding in Christ: the unity of the whole person

Reading (Ian Haddow): Jn 15:1-17
A short time of silence

Intercessions (Jeremy Goodall)

Reader God of love, through Christ you said to us: "You did not choose me but I chose you." You invite us to receive your friendship. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation, and to grow and grow in a life that is ever more complete.
All **The joy of our heart is in God.**
Reader God of life, you call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to accept one another. May your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, inspire us to celebrate each other just as we are.
All **The joy of our heart is in God.**

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Reader God you who gather, you knit us together as one vine in Jesus. May your loving Spirit abide in us at church and in our community that together we may celebrate you with joy.

All The joy of our heart is in God.

Reader God of the one vineyard, you call us to live in your love in all we do and say. Touched by your goodness, grant us to be a reflection of that love in our homes, schools and workplaces.

All The joy of our heart is in God.

Action: *A time of silence where we reflect on God's love.*

Second Vigil – The visible unity of Christians

Reading: 1 Cor 1:10-13a (Jane Thomas, Barnes Baptist Church)

A short time of silence

Intercessions (Charles Law, St Michael's)

Reader Holy Spirit, you create and re-create the Church in all places. Come and whisper in our hearts the prayer which Jesus addressed to his Father on the eve of his passion: "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe".

All Thank you. Amen.

Reader Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, light the fire of your love in us so that suspicions and misunderstanding cease in the Church. May the walls that separate us fall.

All Thank you. Amen.

Reader Holy Spirit, Consoler of all, open our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation and bring us back to you when we lose our way.

All Thank you. Amen.

Reader Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, give us poverty of spirit so that we may be open to your grace.

All Thank you. Amen.

Reader Holy Spirit, you never abandon the men, women and children who are persecuted for their faithfulness to the gospel. Give them strength and courage, and support those who help them.

All Thank you. Amen.

Action: *We are all invited to light a candle in our homes.*

Third Vigil – The unity of all peoples with all creation

Reading: Rev. 7: 9-12 (Peter Allen, St Mary's)

A short time of silence

Intercessions (Mia Gibbons, St Osmund's, and CTiB Secretary)

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Reader God of life, you have created everyone in your image and likeness. We sing your praise for the gift of our many cultures and traditions. Grant us the courage to stand against injustice and prejudice

All God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Reader Merciful God, you have shown us in Christ that we are one in you. Teach us to use this gift in the world so that believers of all faiths in every country may be able to listen to each other and live in peace

All God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Reader O Jesus, you came into the world and shared fully in our humanity. You know the hardships of life for people who suffer in so many different ways. May the Spirit of compassion move us to share our time, gifts and resources with all those in need.

All God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Reader Holy Spirit, you hear the fury of your wounded creation and the cries of those already suffering from climate change. Guide us toward new ways of living that are in harmony with all creation.

All God of peace, God of love, in you is our hope!

Action: *We extend hands towards each other on screen.*

Reader At the centre of the world is God, in whom all our desires and longings find their meeting place.
As we move closer to God, so we draw closer to one another. And the closer we come to one another . . .

All The closer we come to God.

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, and forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

after which we use words the Grandchamp nuns pray each day

Leader Will you Pray and work that God may reign?

All With God's help, we will.

Leader Throughout your day will you let the Word of God breathe life into your work and play and rest?

All With God's help, we will.

Leader Will you maintain inner silence in all things so as to dwell in Christ?

All With God's help, we will.

Amen.

Blessing

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Leader Be one, so that the world may believe! Abide in God's love, go into the world and bear the fruits of this love.

**All May the God of all creation, fill us with all joy and all peace in faith, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

This simplified version of the Ecumenical Celebration was prepared by Lynne Chitty, on behalf of ROOTS for Churches Ltd, and adapted again by James Hutchings.

ROOTS publishes weekly worship and learning resources at www.rootsontheweb.com