



Western Fells Methodist Circuit

**17 January 2021**

**by  
David Hasson**

The week of prayer for Christian Unity is 18-This year the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, chosen by the sisters of the Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland, is: "Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit". Much of this service uses resources from their service.

Hymn - Holy Spirit we welcome you

Video [here](#)

Holy Spirit, we welcome you,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!  
Move among us with holy fire  
as we lay aside all earthly desire,  
hands reach out and our hearts  
aspire.

Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!

Holy Spirit, we welcome you,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!  
Let the breeze of your presence  
blow  
that your children here might truly  
know  
how to move in the Spirit's flow.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!

Holy Spirit, we welcome you,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!  
Please accomplish in us today  
some new work of loving grace, we pray —  
unreservedly — have your way.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome you!

Christopher Alan Bowater (*b.* 1947)

Words and Music: © 1986 Sovereign Lifestyle Music Ltd

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you always!

It is the great desire of God, expressed by Jesus, that we might come to him and abide in him. He waits for us tirelessly, hoping that, united to him in love, we will bear fruit that will bring life to all. Faced with our differences, we risk withdrawing into ourselves and seeing only that which separates us. But let us listen to how Christ calls us to abide in his love, and so bear much fruit. For the path of unity begins in our intimate relationship with God. Abiding in God's love strengthens the desire to seek unity and reconciliation with others. God opens us up to those who are different from us. This is an important fruit, a gift of healing for the divisions within us, between us, and in the world.

In peace let us pray to the Lord:

Lord, you 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 is forsaken.  
Enmity develops between us.  
Come and direct our hearts toward you once again.  
Grant us to live from your forgiveness  
so that we may be together and praise your name.

### **Litany of praise**

**You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**

We sing your praise in the midst of the world and among all peoples,  
We sing your praise in the midst of creation and among all creatures.

**You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**

We sing your praise among suffering and tears,  
We sing your praise among promises and achievements.

**You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**

We sing your praise in the places of conflict and misunderstanding;  
We sing your praise in the places of encounter and reconciliation.

**You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**

We sing your praise in the midst of rifts and divisions,  
We sing your praise in the midst of life and death, the birth of a new heaven  
and a new earth.

**You who call us to be praise in the midst of the earth: glory to you!**

**Reading:** John 15:1-17

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: love each other.

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 1:10-13a

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: one of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.'

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptised in the name of Paul?

### **Hymn Ubi Caritas**

**Video [here](#)**

Ubi caritas et amor,  
(Where charity and love are,) ubi caritas, Deus ibi est.  
(Where charity is, there is God)

### **Thought**

Well who would have thought, when we went into lockdown last March, that we would start 2021 in lockdown, but here we are. Told to stay at home except for limited exercise, essential shopping and essential work and a few other reasons. The year can only get better.

How are you feeling? Perhaps you are revelling in the inactivity, perhaps you are overworked, maybe even working on the frontline, or have relatives who are, with all the worry that entails. On top of all this we don't have the comfort of going to church each Sunday to charge our spiritual batteries amongst like minded people. Stay at home is the message and for many that can be a lonely existence. Then there is the worry about what the future holds. Most of us are waiting to receive the vaccine at some time in the future. We don't know when the lockdown will end or what more restrictions we face. All of this can lead to a sense of despair or doom and gloom. It can also lead to frustration and anger which can sometimes flare up at the wrong time.

Amidst all this it is easy to feel isolated and all alone, that you are on your own especially when we can't meet for worship. These weekly written services and the service on the internet each week are our circuits way of seeking to help you feel that you are loved and cared for and not forgotten. You are united with Christians everywhere through being a part of God's family which is something we celebrate each year around this time with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. That week starts on Monday and some of the churches will have provided you with copies of the prayers which WPCU provides for use throughout the week.

The readings are from the WPCU Sunday service so it is only natural that they will reflect something of unity. John's Gospel is that well known passage of the vine and the branches where Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. When separated from the vine the branches wither and die and so do we as spiritual beings if we forget about God because of all our worries and end up ignoring Him. That's why these services are so important, be they written or online, they serve as a reminder that we are His and keep us in touch with Him.

Jesus goes on to talk about loving us as the father loved him. How great is that. In the midst of all the doubt, uncertainty and frustration here is a gospel message – Jesus loves us and then comes the command 'Love one another as I have loved you'. We each have a role to play in this. It shouldn't be just left up to those who are producing these materials or who are sitting at home making phone calls. As you use these materials you can expand the prayers to cover the people you know and those around you. As you receive a phone call from someone looking out for you remember, in love, you have a responsibility for their well being and how you respond can make their day or make it harder. Respond in love.

The Corinthians reading goes on to reinforce the importance of following Christ. Don't let other things and worries distract you from that. Try and leave them with God so that he can deal with them and leave you free to concentrate on living in love.

### **Intercessions**

God of love, through Christ you said to us: "You did not choose me but I chose you." You seek us, you invite us to receive your friendship and abide in it. Teach us to respond more deeply to this invitation and grow in a life that is ever more complete.

God of life, you call us to be praise in the midst of the world and to welcome one another as a gift of your grace. May your loving gaze, which rests upon each person, open us to receive each other just as we are.

God you who gather, you knit us together as one vine in your Son Jesus. May your loving Spirit abide in us at local church and community meetings and ecumenical gatherings. Grant that together we celebrate you with joy.

God of the one vineyard, you call us to abide 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 and workplaces. May we bridge rivalries and overcome tensions.

God we pray about the situation we find ourselves in  
the restrictions .....  
the frontline workers ....  
the government ....  
For common sense for all .....

Very often we think of prayer as something we do, an activity of our own. In this short time we are invited to an interior silence, and to turn aside from all the noise and concerns of our lives and thoughts. In this silence the action belongs to God. We are simply called to abide and rest in God's love.

### **Short silence**

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".

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

Holy Spirit, Consoler of all, open our hearts to forgiveness and reconciliation and bring us back from our wanderings.

Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, give us poverty of spirit so that we may welcome the unexpectedness of your grace.

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

Hymn – Love divine

Video [here](#)

Love divine, all loves  
excelling,  
joy of heaven to earth come  
down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all  
compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou  
art;  
visit us with thy salvation,  
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,  
let us all thy life receive;  
suddenly return, and never,  
never more thy temples  
leave.  
Thee we would be always  
blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts  
above,  
pray, and praise thee,  
without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,  
pure and spotless let us be;  
let us see thy great salvation,  
perfectly restored in thee:  
changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

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

**May the God of hope 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.**