

*Let us pray:*

Compassionate God, in your mercy, remove the scales from our eyes and lead us to repent and to worship you. In the midst of our sorrow and despite the depth of our sin, give us the capacity to love you with all our hearts. As we journey together with one heart and mind, may we glorify you in the Spirit's fellowship, and witness to those around us. Amen.

*For Reflection:*

Find and join a service (online?) from a church of a different tradition. What riches has God shown me through this different experience of worship together?



**Day 7 “Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Mt 2:11) *The search for unity***

We are called to make a gift of our work for justice. We know that God does not want our riches or burnt offerings. Let us then prepare the gift of a heart full of love.

Unity is the gift offered to us by Christ. We grow in communion as we share the graces our different traditions have received, acknowledging that the source of all our gifts is the Lord.

*Let us pray:*

God, through your prophets you have called us to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with you. In Christ, you have shown us what that looks like. Through your Holy Spirit you continually enable us to hear your words, to follow Christ's example, and to live as his disciples. So, as we gather at the manger, heal our wounds, reconcile our divisions and hold us together in your love. Amen.

*For Reflection:*

Climate justice is being recognised as an expression of social justice with which churches can act together on a global scale. How and where might I participate?



**Day 8 “They left for their own country by another road” (Mt 2:12) *Beyond the familiar routes of separation to God's new paths***

We do not know what the magi thought when they were warned to return by another road. Confused? They were called to change direction. We often find ourselves bound by our familiar ways of doing things. When these ways or 'roads' are closed, we wonder how to proceed and continue the journey. We have to trust. A fresh start is always possible when we are willing and open to the work of the Spirit. As churches, we look to the future in search of new ways so that we can continue to shine the light of the Gospel together.

*Let us pray:*

Gracious God, when we only know one way and we think we must return to it, when we think that all roads are blocked, and we fall into despair, we always find you there, creating a new unexpected path before us. If we search our maps and find no route, nonetheless we always find you, who lead us by a yet more excellent way, trusting that you will always lead us back to you and forward in unity together. Amen.

*For Reflection:*

What other ways of journeying together could I explore with others?

## UNITED WITH CHRISTIANS ACROSS THE WORLD

### Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

18<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022

*“We saw his star in the East”*



The story of the Magi (Matthew:2:1-12) visiting the Holy Family in Bethlehem is one very familiar to us. The Magi have sometimes been seen as a symbol of the world's diversity – different religions and cultures – that comes to pay homage to the Christ-child. The story might therefore represent the unity of all created that God desires.

This Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been prepared by the churches of the Middle East, the history of which was, and is, characterised by conflict and strife, tainted with blood, darkened by injustice and oppression. The Christians there offer these resources, conscious that the world shares many of the travails and much of the difficulties that it experiences, and yearns for a light to lead the way to the Saviour who is the light that overcomes darkness.

Serving the Gospel today requires a commitment to the human being, especially the poorest, the weakest and those marginalised. It requires from the churches transparency and accountability in dealing with the world, and with each other. This means churches need to cooperate to provide relief to the afflicted, to welcome the displaced, to relieve the burdened, and to build a just and honest society. This is a call for churches to work together so that young people can build a good future according to God's heart, a future in which all human beings can experience life, peace, justice, and love.

*This resource for daily prayer during this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been adapted from the material offered by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. The complete pamphlet with suggestions for daily reading, prayer, discussion and action is available on the website: [ctbi.org.uk](http://ctbi.org.uk)*

*As you begin your prayer each day, you might find it helpful to take time reread the story of the Magi (Matt.2:1-12) and to ponder the given Scripture phrase for the day. Remember that although praying alone at home, there are thousands of Christians across the world united in prayer with you, recalling particularly the people of the Middle East.*

**Day 1: “We observed his star in the East” (Mt 2:2)***Raise us up and draw us to your perfect light*

In this uncertain world, we look for light. It comes in human form: Christ, the light in the midst of our darkness. The star from the East penetrates the depths of the darkness that separates us. Through the lives of Christ’s followers, the world has come to know the hope the Holy Spirit inspires, overcoming the darkness which separates us.

*Let us pray:*

Creator of light, illumine our path by the light of Christ who moves before us and leads us. May he be a beacon for our pilgrimage. Enlighten us and dwell within us. Guide us to discover a manger in our hearts where a great light still shines. We thank you for the gift of that unfading Star, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Heal our divisions and draw us closer to the Light that we may find our unity in him. Amen.

*For Reflection:*

Where have I sought ‘the light’ in the midst of darkness? Take time to thank God.

**Day 2: Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?” (Mt 2:2)***Humble leadership breaks down walls and builds up with love*

Only in Christ have we seen the example of a leader truly after God’s heart. In him we encounter a loving, humble servant who comes to serve, rather than be served, and his followers are called to do the same. The more faithfully Christians emulate the servant leadership of Christ, the more division in both the world and the Church will be overcome.

*Let us pray:*

Just and righteous God, we confess before you that we often covet worldly models of leadership. Help us to seek our Lord Jesus Christ not in the palaces of the powerful but in the humble manger. May we emulate him in his meekness and become servants to each other in obedience to you. We pray in the name of Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns forever in glory. Amen.

*For Reflection:*

How can I best exercise your personal leadership this week to help the cause of unity?

**Day 3. “When king Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him”****(Mt 2:3)** *The presence of Christ, turning the world upside down*

Christ’s coming disturbs the ways of the world. He comes in humility, denouncing the evil of injustice and oppression that accompanies the ambition for power, wealth and status, calling for a change of heart and a transformation of life. This creates disturbance precisely because he rocks the boat of those who seek only their own interests and neglect the common good.

*Let us pray:*

Lord, you led us out of darkness to hope in Jesus. Unite us in our commitment to establish your reign of love, justice and peace, bringing light to those living in the darkness of despair and disillusionment. Shine your light upon us. Surround us with the warmth of your love. Lift us up to you, so that our lives may glorify you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

*For Reflection:*

Where today might I be called into bringing light?

**Day 4 “And you, Bethlehem... are by no means least” (Mt 2:6)***Though small and suffering, we lack nothing*

God chooses to act in and through seemingly insignificant places and people. The Gospel of Luke reassures the ‘little flock’ of Christ’s followers that they need have no fear. God has promised them the Kingdom. As ‘little flock’, unimportant perhaps in the world’s eyes, we are invited to take part in God’s transformation of inequality, violence and injustice, not to wait passively for these things to happen.

*Let us pray:*

Good Shepherd, the fragmentation of your ‘little flock’ grieves the Holy Spirit. Forgive our weak efforts and slowness in the pursuit of your will. Give us wise shepherds after your own heart who recognise the sin of division, and those who will lead the churches with righteousness and holiness, to unity in you. We ask you, Lord, to hear our prayer. Amen.

*For Reflection:*

Take time to recognise the life of God growing in people and places to which previously you might have paid little attention.

**Day 5 “Ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising” (Mt 2:9)***Guided by the one God*

God walks with us. The path to unity may not always be straight: sometimes we are led to retrace our steps, sometimes to return by a different route. But in all our journeying through life, we can be confident that God is with us, even in the greatest darkness.

*Let us pray:*

God our Guide, you sent the star to lead the Magi to your only begotten Son. Fill us with the confidence that you are walking with us. Open our eyes to your Spirit, and encourage us in our faith, so that we may confess that Jesus is Lord, and worship him as the Magi did in Bethlehem. Amen.

*For Reflection:*

When I have I felt or seen God’s guidance... With whom might I join so that we can support one another as we seek to respond to global challenges?

**Day 6 “They saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage” (Mt 2:11)** *Gathered in worship around the One Lord*

When the Magi saw the child, they worshipped him. Do we really see? How many times do we remain blind to God’s presence? Can we worship in truth if we do not really see first? Too often we see only our tangled disagreements, forgetting that we share in the one Spirit who draws us into unity.