

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, 2021

Each year from 18th – 25th January, Christians are invited to pray for the unity of God's Church. (25th January is the date when many Christians give thanks for the conversion of St Paul.)

In 2021 we sadly cannot meet at one another's churches as we usually do in Southwell, to affirm the many things we share in common and to pray for the mission and ministry of each church.

Our national ecumenical body – Churches Together in Britain and Ireland - has prepared some prayer material which can be used in church or at home. It comes from an inter-church community of sisters in Switzerland, the *Communauté de Grandchamp*. Fifty women from Catholic and Protestant churches in various European countries (pictured right) live a common life which is based on the Rule of Taizé in France.

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. Other translations of 'abiding' are 'indwelling' and 'making a home with' [someone]. We all share the wonderful truth that Christ wishes to make his home in us, and longs for us to make our home in him.



We have copied and pasted the introduction and concluding prayers from the national leaflet, slightly adapted to fit the fact that we will pray individually at home, as individuals or households, not as a group. These written texts are given as a possible framework for a) reflecting on the suggested text for each day, and b) praying for the Christian mission in this town which God carries out through the different churches.

Introductory prayer

Music is played as people gather, and a candle is lit.

Opening Prayer

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

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.
 Reader 1 We sing your praise among suffering and tears,
 Reader 2 We sing your praise among promises and achievements.
 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.
 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, 18 January – Abiding in Christ: the unity of the whole person

Reading: John 15:1-17

- printed below for easy reference; the New Revised Standard Version

A short time of silence

Intercessions – for the work of each church in Southwell.

Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Riverside, Holy Trinity, Living Waters, the Minster

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.** *(all may touch their heart and smile)*

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.** *(all may touch their heart and smile)*

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.** *(all may touch their heart and smile)*

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.** *(all may touch their heart and smile)*

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

John 15 Jesus the True Vine



15 I am the true vine, and

my Father is the vine-grower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes* to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed* by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for

whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become* my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹²This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants* any longer, because the servant* does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.