

# UNITING IN PRAYER 2024

19 May - 22 June

## Additional Resources

Additional Resources for running a Uniting in Prayer service,  
including creative and innovative suggestions



**UNITING CHURCH  
IN AUSTRALIA**



## Additional Resources

The following are some suggestions for elements of how we might gather as a community.

### **Sticking Together - A Ritual for Community** - *Contributed by Jon Humphries*

Each person is given a stick (like from gum trees - depending on the size of the group they may need several or a handful if the group is small). On a table or the floor a circle is drawn or marked (you can use a hula hoop or something) - large enough so that when all the sticks of each person are placed around its rim, a wreath shape will be created. Even using a smaller circle as the middle marking point can be a starting point.

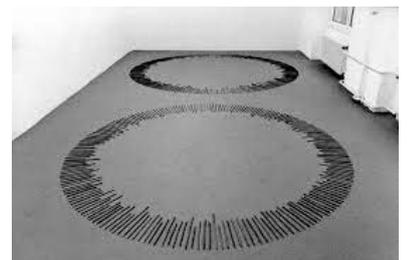
Leader: We are a community, united together with God. One of the symbols of community is a circle. This simple ritual is called Sticking Together. As we gather to unite together in prayer, this is a way to symbolise that we are all a part of our community. We are each different. Yet, we are each important for shaping our community. You are invited to come and place the stick you have been offered around the rim of the circle before us. As you come and place your stick/s down, joining with all the others, you might like to reflect on your place in our community and what you bring in terms of gifts, skills, passions and talents. As others place their sticks down, think about the strengths, gifts, talents that they bring and how they enrich our community.

*People present come forward and place their stick/s around the ring of the circle, forming a kind of a wreath shape like in the image below.*

Leader: the circle is a symbol of community. When we stick together and share of our gifts, skills, strengths, passions and talents, offering them and joining them with those of each other - all for the common good, then something special begins to take shape. We are a community. We each are unique and different. We have our lumps and bumps and we may not always fit together perfectly, but when we share a common purpose and shape our efforts together, then it works and good comes from it. We are Uniting in Prayer in this space, but throughout the Uniting Church we are united with congregations and groups who are also uniting in prayer. Together, across this country, we are the Uniting Church in Australia. And so, we gather in prayer to pray for our Church and to pray about where God might be leading us. We pray for our Church in this local setting, our congregation (or faith community etc.). We pray

RICHARD LONG: CIRCLE OF TIME STICKS AND CIRCLE OF MEMORY STICKS

KONRAD FISCHER GALERIE DÜSSELDORF 1995  
Image from



<http://www.richardlong.org/Exhibitions/2011exhibitions/stickcirc.html>

## **Building Our Best** - *Contributed by Jon Humphries*

Get people in groups to find a bunch of stuff. Don't tell them what they're going to make, but they are going to make something and need to find and gather a bunch of stuff to make a model of something. Allow them 5-8 minutes to collect the things.

Once they have their pile of found objects then give them the task of making a build of what they think our community is like when we are at our best. I deliberately didn't use the term Church to keep it broad and to draw out more than just religious thinking. Give them 15-20 minutes.

It is good to scaffold the activity by making the following clear through the instructions for the activity

- Work together and share ideas
- Try to bounce or weave different ideas into the creation
- Don't worry about the aesthetic quality of the creation because the ideas are important
- Use the opportunity to get to know people in your group better
- Don't just think literally. Things can be symbolic or represent things even if they don't look like what they are actual representing
- Have fun.
- Make sure everyone is involved in different ways. Use people's gifts. Encourage people with ideas to take some leadership, but also ask some of the quieter members of the group what they're thinking.

### ***Questions for Reflection***

What strengths or gifts did we discover that people in the group had?

What worked well?

How was this activity a good symbolism of us being the Church together?

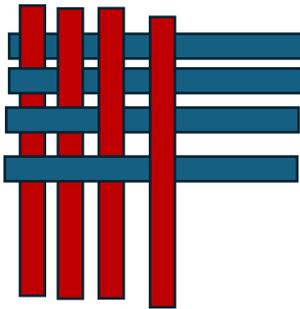
# Prayers of Praise and Thanksgiving

## Weaving Praise and Thanksgiving

Each person gets a ribbon and a pen as they enter. Ideally ribbons should be about 20-30cm in length (or long enough to be woven together). On the ribbon in this time for prayerful praise and thanksgiving people write what they praise God for or are thankful for.

You could have a loom set up or weave them together in the following way.

Each person brings their ribbon forward in turn. Placing them as follows



- First person places their ribbon horizontally
- Second person places theirs on top of the first ribbon, but vertically
- Third person places theirs horizontally, but under the first ribbon
- Fourth person places their ribbon vertically, but next to the second ribbon
- Process then repeats

Alternatively, the ribbons can be offered into a bowl or placed on a cross, and then woven together in some way after the service and then left on display until the anniversary of the Uniting Church which is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June.

## Prayers of Confession

Here are some suggestions for activities for a time of confessional prayer or some suggestions for prayers which might be read. Of course, as with all the sections, a great alternative is to invite someone in your congregation, group or community to write a prayer which they can read themselves or which someone else can read.

### Sticky Confessions

If you have a large wooden cross (somewhat life sized) or create one by laying two wooden fence palings, lie it on the floor or a large table at the front or towards the centre if you have arranged seats in a circle or semi-circle. Have enough sticky notes for each person present and a collection of pens/pencils/markers.

Each person is invited to write a prayer on the sticky note. Given that this is a time of Uniting in Prayer

# Creative Ideas for Presenting the Bible Readings Acting Out

## Readers Theatre

Turning the Bible passage into a reader's theatre script where people read the parts of the narrative. This works well with Gospel passages which have multiple voices in dialogue.

Here is a to help you if you are unfamiliar with the technique

<https://fivefromfive.com.au/fluency/evidence-based-fluency-instruction/readers-theatre/>

## Read and Mime

Someone reads the passage and other people mime out what is happening. It is good to separate reading and mime, that is read a section and then have people mime what happened in that section after it is read. This helps people to listen first to the text and not be distracted by the actors.

## Dramatic Monologue

If you have talented actors in the congregation. Someone might have the confidence to present the text as a dramatic monologue – that is present it dramatically by heart. This works well for the epistles.

## Writers Window

Have someone sitting at a table or desk and act as if they were the writer of the passage of the Bible being presented. They pretend to write the text and read it aloud as they write.

## Freeze Frame

As the text from the Bible is read, people come in and take up a pose to present a frozen diorama of the scene. If there are different parts or sections to the narrative, the people can shift to reflect the different scene and then freeze in place for that part. This can be done in costume, but doesn't necessarily have to be.

# Ideas for Reflection or Sermon Starters or Springboards for Reflecting on How God Calls Us to Unite in Prayer

## Using Picture Books

Picture books can be helpful tools to get people thinking. They can be like the parables that Jesus told and hold layers of meaning which people have to unwrap. Picture books are not just for young people, but can be helpful for people of all ages. However, you might have to

Here are two picture books that you might read to your congregation or group and then encourage them to think about how these stories might relate to us being Church. People can discuss this in groups, or in pairs which are then shared with the larger group, or the whole larger group can discuss things together. Doing it as a large group is less ideal for big groups.

### A Bus Called Heaven by Bob Graham

One morning in front of Stella's house, an abandoned bus appears, looking sad as a whale on a beach. On its front, held up with packing tape, is a hand-painted sign that says Heaven. The community then get creative to turn it into a community space.

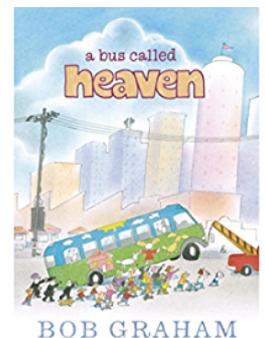
#### *Guiding Questions*

How do each of the people contribute to making this a place of welcome and community?

How might this story be seen to relate to Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven?

How does this story help us think about what it means to be a church?

How might this story lead us into prayer about the Church and where God might be leading us into the future?



### This is Our House by Michael Rosen

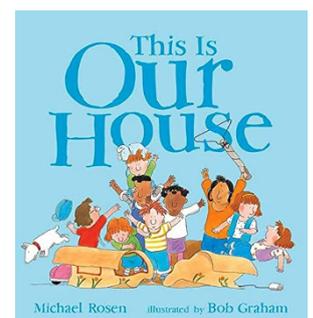
George has a house made from a big cardboard box and he says that no one else in the playground can come in. However, George learns something from everyone about what it means to be a community.

#### *Guiding Questions*

How might this story be a parable of what the Church can be like (or not like)?

What makes the house special in the story, and how does that help us to understand what makes us as the Church special?

How might this story lead us into prayer about the Church and where God might be leading us into the future?



## Using a Prayer as a Sermon

If you want to get a bit creative and get people thinking about uniting in prayer, why not use prayer to do this? Here is a prayer that could be used as a sermon. The way that it could work is to have the preacher or someone else act as if they were writing the prayer with a pen and paper or on a laptop. They could sit at a table at the front and read the prayer, but as if they were writing it, and if you have a screen, the words could be projected onto the screen as they read it.

How is this a sermon? If you read the prayer below, you will hopefully notice that it is framed in questions. The questions relate to what Jesus taught and form part of the exegesis along with attention to different parts of the passage

Of course you don't have to use this prayer, but the preacher/leader could develop their own prayer in a similar style based on the Bible reading that was chosen.

### Praying Matthew 18:15-35

God,

As Christ you taught us challenging things,

Things which aren't easy to understand,

Things which even preachers don't seem to be able to fully explain.

So, when you say, "*If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you,*"

Are you meaning that we are not actually judging them,

Or whacking them with the log in our own eye as we try to remove the splinter in theirs?

Is this all about reconciliation and restoring right relationship, more than moral correction?

Is this more about using our "I-language" and seeking to be reconciled,

And letting them know that when they did that to us, then this was how we felt?

When you say, "*If they listen to you, you have won them over,*" is there more to it than just pointing out their sin?

What do you mean by 'sin' anyway, because it is a word we seem to have taken down

certain paths of meaning, which may not always fully align with your understanding?

Is this actually about money, or was money in the parable a metaphor?

And, by them being in debt to us, is that a metaphor for a lack of love, or is this simply

actually about when people in the Church borrow money from each other?

Also, what do you mean by, "*If they listen*"?

Do you mean that literally, or is it about them not only listening, but acknowledging their sin against us?

Again, when you say, "*If your brother or sister sins,*" you do mean against us, and not just in general fails in some moral way?

And, it is OK to add in sister, isn't it?

And, you do mean by brother [or sister], someone in the Church, because when you say,

"*tell it to the Church,*" the context seems to indicate the Church?

Also, there is a text note in the NIV that says, "the Greek word for brother or sister (ἀδελφός/adelphos) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verses 21 and 35 [of Matthew 18," which seems to back this idea up.

But, if we are getting it wrong, then do you mean our literal brother [or sister], or do you mean someone who is another human, like what you seem to mean when you teach about loving our neighbour?

After all, some Bible dictionaries say that ἀδελφός/adelphos can mean:

- a brother, whether born of the same two parents or only of the same father or mother
- having the same national ancestor, belonging to the same people, or countryman
- any fellow or man
- a fellow believer, united to another by the bond of affection
- an associate in employment or office
- brethren in Christ

Who is it that you mean?

Is it all of the different understandings, including sister, which would seem to make sense?

When you say, "But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'" which seems to be a reference to Deuteronomy 19:15, which says, "*One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*"

So, is this all about crime, when you refer to "sin,"

Or is it actually more about how we fall short in our love for each other?

And, getting back to what you said, when you say, "*take one or two others along,*" who do you mean?

Is it anyone, people from our family, or from our friends?

Or, is it one or two fellow members of the Church?

Who should we take?

When you say, "*If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church, and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*"

Is that literally to the whole Church, or just to the elders or presbyter/pastor?

And, if so, how do we do that?

And, what should the Church do about it?

Should the Church treat them like a pagan or tax collector - that is of course one of those kinds of people as it was understood in your time?

By the way, is this something that we really have to do?

Is it actual instructions for us, or was it just meant for your disciples of that time?

And, do we have to follow the process as you have set out, or can we skip the bits that we don't feel comfortable with - which is, to be honest for most of us, the whole uncomfortable speaking up and confronting people with the truth about what we think that others have done to us?

Aren't we just supposed to turn the other cheek and let it slide - like not making a fuss, but then harbouring resentment and dislike?

Or can't we just tell one or two others and gossip about how someone has sinned against us and how bad we feel about them because of what they have done to us?

But, that is probably divisive, and Paul called that a sin of the flesh in Galatians 5: 20, Which would then turn the tables and the other person would be right in saying that we had sinned against them.

That would seem to bring us back to this process again.

So, God, as Spirit, help us to love you with all our strength, with all our soul and with all our mind, to better understand this teaching, and put it into practice, by loving our neighbour as ourselves, especially those neighbours who are part of our family, the Church.

This we seek to learn.

Amen.

# Prayers of the People

The following are some ideas about how you might shape a time of prayer for the group or congregation. There are some ideas about how you might get creative, as well as some prayers that you might simply use. Because this is a Uniting in Prayer service/event, especially in this part of the service, it might be good to get as many people involved.

## Write A Prayer

### **Write a Prayer Yourself**

We are people of many talents. Even those of us who don't think that we might be people to write prayers for other people, we can often surprise ourselves when we give it a go. There are some hopefully useful things in this resource, but you know your people and your context, and so the prayers that you write might be the best for them.. Please open yourself in prayer to God as Spirit and you may find that inspiration might come for a prayer that you can write down. Or, you might do like some of those who have prepared this resource have done. Just start writing and see what comes.

### **Write a Prayer Together**

The word liturgy comes from the Greek word λειτουργία/leitourgia - which is often seen to mean 'the work of the people.' So, why not as part of your Uniting in Prayer service or event, set some time for people to unite in prayer and write a prayer together. Once the prayers have been written, they can be shared by reading them together, or stuck on a wall or some place for people to read. Given, this is part of Uniting Together in Prayer, you might like to share with other congregations, or the presbytery might like to gather a collection together.

### ***Line By Line***

People as individuals or in pairs write a sentence or two. This can be done on pieces of paper or people can just remember what they have chosen to say. Give people 5-8 minutes to choose what they would like to contribute. Invite the group to select one person in the group to be the one who shares what the group develops.

Once the time is up, the simplest way to then turn this activity into prayer of the people is for the leader to say something like, "This God we pray as we unite together..." The leader then just points to each group and

Another each group's contribution is to go around each group and have them share what they developed and record this somehow

- Write the words on butcher paper or a whiteboard

- Have someone type the words and put it on a screen

Once all the groups have had their contributions recorded, then the whole prayer (being that collection of contributions) can be read. It might be nice to get someone from each group to read their group's lines. This would bring a range of different voices in prayer which is a nice symbolism for a Uniting in Prayer service/event. Alternatively someone can pray for the whole group by reading all the contributions.

### ***As a Group***

Write a prayer together as a group. Have a white board, some butcher paper, or just a person acting as a scribe, and get the group to suggest words, lines or ideas. Then work together to edit the words or ideas into a form that the group is happy with.

### **Invite Someone or Some People to Write a Prayer for the Service**

As this is a Uniting in Prayer event and it is great to include a range of voices, for the prayers of the people, why not ask some people to write prayers for the service/event? They can read them themselves, or if they are not comfortable doing this, then get a range of other people to read the prayers that have been written. It is good to acknowledge the person in your congregation or community who wrote the prayer if they are not reading what they wrote themselves.

### **Suggestions for Prayers that you Might Like to Use**

The following are suggestions for prayers that you might consider using.

## Hymn/Song Suggestions

The following are some hymn and song suggestions. You may know many others. Choose the ones that are most appropriate for your context and community. It is recommended that in a service that there be only one (or two at the most) songs or hymns that are very unfamiliar. It may be helpful to choose some well-known hymns or songs that the congregation knows and which are hymns of general praise or petition, and then just add in one or two hymns or songs with a specific theme of unity or uniting.

- **Jesus Calls us Here to Meet Him** by John Bell and Graham Maule. Together in Song 477. Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yulQuvsFD00>
- **I am the Church, You Are the Church, We are the Church Together** - by Richard Avery and Donald Marsh. Together in Song 467. Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXcfezt93jg>
- **Peace with the Father, Peace with Christ the Son** by James Quinn Together in Song 466
- **We Are Your People** by Brian Wren. Together in Song 468. YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDCYY1KFFeU>
- **We Are Your People** by Darlene Zschech. YouTube Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1\\_eDFX61Nwc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_eDFX61Nwc)
- **We Are God's People** by Bryan Jeffery Leech. YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QPymRVOCyU>
- **Oh How Good It Is** by Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, Russ Holmes & Stuart Townend. © 2012 Getty Music Publishing (BMI) Parakeet Boots Music & Townend Songs (Adm. by Song Solutions Copycare info@songsolutions.org.) Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZILsLR3PH3Y>
- **A United and Uniting Church** (UCCP Hymn) Words and Music: Rosie C. Dela Cruz, 1998. Hymnal of a Faith Journey (UCCP Hymnal). YouTube Link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3kvYl6tv9A>
- **Christian Unity** (UCCP Hymn) Words: Luna I. Dingayan. Music: Based on a song popularised in the Mountain Province; Transc. Perla P. Dingayan. Hymnal of a Faith Journey (UCCP Hymnal) YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3kvYl6tv9A>
- **We are One in the Spirit (They'll Know We Are Christians)** by Peter Scholtes. YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1f53jun15A>
- **Make Us One (Unity Hymn)** by Erik Dewar YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdC9NTKFT9s>
- **Unity Hymn** by Mike Donehey & Kanene Pipkin YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLRTHgGOShQ>

- **Gracious Father, Son and Spirit (Unity Hymn)** by Ben Slee, music by Robert Lowry (1886) YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zERuEZoc0hc>
- **For Everyone Born, a Place at the Table** by Shirley Erena Murray YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gmle0svKuQc>
- **Come, Come, Come** by David MacGregor YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSid1bYo7EE>  
Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/804817004>
- **Community of Christ** (who make the cross your own) By Shirley Erena Murray. Together in Song 473 YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1I4i3IOPBU>
- **Gather Us In** by Marty Haugen. Together in Song 474 YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nh-7hApC4iQ>

## Other Song Suggestions

It might be helpful or appropriate to have some songs for reflection. Maybe you have chosen to do an activity or simply want to provide some time for people to be still and reflect on what has been presented. Alternatively, instead of a hymn or song, you might choose to invite people to sing a more secular song about unity. This might be a way to encourage a missional view of being Church which sees ourselves as part of the wider community, helping all to use wisdom that might be well-known as pathways to connecting with God.

The following are some secular songs that might be appropriate.

- One by U2
- We Are Family by Sister Sledge

*[you could alter the line 'I got all my sister with me' to 'I got brothers and sisters with me']*

## Other Resources

The following are some further resources that might assist you in preparing for your Uniting in Prayer service or event.

### **Uniting in Prayer Daily Prayers**

Along with this resource, there are the daily prayers for the 26 days, weekly theological reflections and intergenerational resources for use in worship and at home which you might incorporate into your Uniting in Prayer Service or event.

**The ACT2 Prayer collection** <https://www.act2uca.com/churchprayers>

**Uniting in Worship 2** - the liturgical guide for the Uniting Church in Australia. Along with suggestions for liturgies, UIW2 has a collection of prayers.

### **People in Your Congregation**

One of our greatest resources is each other. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12, we are the Body of Christ and individually members of it. We each have different gifts and parts to play. The Basis of Union, Paragraph 13, reminds us that we each have gifts from God as Spirit and there is no gift without its corresponding service. Use people's gifts. It is often better to specifically invite people in person rather than just putting out a call-out for volunteers or helpers. That can be useful, but there is something especially affirming about being asked to use our gifts to serve the community. We are more truly the Church when we share in the mission of God together and gather to encourage each other towards love and good works (Hebrews 10: 23-26)

As this is a Uniting in Prayer activity it is good to get a group of people involved in the planning, preparation and leadership of the service or event. This reinforces the whole aim of bring the community together in prayer.

**The Internet** - simply do some searching for prayer ideas or suggestions for prayerful activities

**Books with Collections of Prayers** - There are many books which contain collections of prayers. You might find some prayers which are helpful.

## Appendix

The following are some extra resources such as lyrics and sheet music for one of the suggested songs.

### **Come, Come, Come**

*(a song for a Destiny Together)*

Come, come, come

Come together

Holy Spirit make us one

God, come weave your grace among us

Life is ours in Christ, God's Son

Sharing, God, your life together

Lead us on to places new

Fill us all with love for Jesus

Sent in mission, sent by you

Come, come, come ...

Call from us deep love for neighbour

Gift us open minds and hearts

In your name we'll serve together

Each one playing their special part

Come, come, come ...

Unity - your call, your longing

Each one blessed to bless anew

Take our giftings, take our passions

Your holy people formed in You

Come, come, come ...

David MacGregor

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