



**one light:one world**  
UNITY AND THE SCRIPTURES



Marking the Centenary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2008



## A letter from the four Presidents of Churches Together in England

### The unity of all God's people

We pray for the unity of the Church and for the unity of all God's people. We pray for unity because we believe that the one God and Father of us all creates us to be one with him. Our calling is to grow into unity and blessedness with him, enabled by the work of his Son Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We pray for unity because we believe that this is God's will and purpose. In praying for the unity of the Church our vision is that the Church itself may be an instrument in bringing about the healing of nations and peoples, and a foretaste of a world in which all men and women and children are reconciled to him and to one another.

The texts set out in these pages are an invitation to reflect upon what God wants of us and how we may fulfil in our own lives the prayer of Jesus that *we may be one*.

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### Suggestions for use

This booklet is offered to stimulate renewed engagement with the scriptural mandate for the Church's unity. Among the ways you may wish to use it are:

- For personal reflection and prayer.
- In a small group to read and discuss each of the main sections taking a session for each.
- To consider as a local Churches Together grouping or ministers' group what the implications of these texts might be for our relationships and activities.
- To read a selection of these texts in an ecumenical gathering.
- To encourage artistic or poetic responses to one or more texts or sections either to share among the churches or as an exhibition.

An electronic version of this booklet, along with some explanatory notes on the texts is on [www.churches-together.net](http://www.churches-together.net) under "Resources".

# **One Light : One World**

## **Unity and the Scriptures**

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# The Unity of God

## The Lord our God is one

*Deuteronomy 6.4–7*

<sup>4</sup>Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. <sup>5</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. <sup>6</sup>Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. <sup>7</sup>Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

## The only Lord

*Mark 12.28–31*

<sup>28</sup>One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, ‘The first is, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup>you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” <sup>31</sup>The second is this, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’

## God’s faithfulness surrounds you

*Psalms 89.5–8*

<sup>5</sup>Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.

<sup>6</sup>For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD.

Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD,

<sup>7</sup>a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome above all that are around him?

<sup>8</sup>O LORD God of hosts,  
who is as mighty as you, O LORD  
Your faithfulness surrounds you.

# The Unity of Creation and the human race

## It was very good

*Genesis 1.26–31*

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' <sup>27</sup>So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them ... <sup>31</sup>God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

## The Lord encompasses all

*Isaiah 40.21–26*

<sup>21</sup>Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

<sup>22</sup>It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, And makes the rulers of the earth as nothing

<sup>4</sup>Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them away like stubble.

<sup>25</sup>To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

<sup>26</sup>Lift up your eyes on high and see:

Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name;

because he is great in strength,

mighty in power,

not one is missing.

## **The world belongs to the Lord**

*Psalm 24. 1–2*

<sup>1</sup>The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it,  
the world, and those who live in it;

<sup>2</sup>for he has founded it on the seas,  
and established it on the rivers.

## **Good news for all nations**

*Matthew 24. 14*

<sup>14</sup>And this good news of the kingdom will be  
proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to  
all the nations; and then the end will come.

## **All of creation waits with eager longing**

*Romans 8. 19–23*

<sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager longing for the  
revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup>for the creation  
was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by  
the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that  
the creation itself will be set free from its bondage  
to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of  
the children of God. <sup>22</sup>We know that the whole  
creation has been groaning in labour pains until  
now; <sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves,  
who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly  
while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our  
bodies.

## **God loved the world so much**

*John 3. 16*

<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world that he gave his only  
Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not  
perish but may have eternal life.

## **To God be the glory**

*Romans 11. 33–36*

<sup>33</sup>O the depth of the riches and wisdom and  
knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his  
judgements and how inscrutable his ways!

<sup>34</sup>'For who has known the mind of the Lord?  
Or who has been his counsellor?'

<sup>35</sup>'Or who has given a gift to him,  
to receive a gift in return?'

<sup>36</sup>For from him and through him and to him are all  
things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen.

# The Unity of God's People

## **A great nation**

*Genesis 12.1–3*

<sup>1</sup>Now the Lord said to Abraham ...

<sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

## **The holy nation**

*1 Peter 2.9–10*

<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

<sup>10</sup>Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

## **Called to be God's holy people**

*1 Corinthians 1.2–3*

<sup>2</sup>To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **We are his people**

*Psalms 95.1–7*

<sup>1</sup>O come, let us sing to the LORD;  
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

<sup>6</sup>O come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! ...

<sup>7</sup>For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.  
O that today you would listen to his voice!

# Christ's work in bringing us into unity

## **Better that one man die for the people**

*John 11.49–52*

<sup>49</sup>But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all!

<sup>50</sup>You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.' <sup>51</sup>He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup>and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God.

## **One flock, one shepherd**

*John 10.14–16*

<sup>14</sup>I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup>just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup>I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

## **We are his children**

*Galatians 4.6–7*

<sup>6</sup>And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

## **God will be all in all**

*1 Corinthians 15.24–28*

<sup>24</sup>Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be destroyed is death ... <sup>28</sup>When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all.

## **To draw everyone to himself**

*John 12.32*

<sup>32</sup>And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.'

## **To gather up all things in him**

*Ephesians 1.7–12*

<sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup>that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup>he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup>In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, <sup>12</sup>so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.

## **That they all be one**

*John 17.20–23*

<sup>20</sup>I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup>that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup>The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup>I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.'

## **We will be saved by his life**

*Romans 5.10–11*

<sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. <sup>11</sup>But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

## **God was pleased to reconcile all things**

*Colossians 1.15–20*

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup>for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

## **He has broken down the dividing wall**

*Ephesians 2.13–22*

<sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us ... <sup>17</sup>So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; <sup>18</sup>for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup>built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. <sup>21</sup>In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; <sup>22</sup>in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

## **Let all the peoples praise him**

*Romans 15.10–11*

<sup>10</sup>and again he says,

‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people’;

<sup>11</sup>and again,

‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and let all the peoples praise him’;

# The Spirit's gifts of unity

## All together in one place

*Acts 2. 1–6*

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability... the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

## Not disorder, but peace

*1 Corinthians 14.31–33*

<sup>31</sup>For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. <sup>32</sup>And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, <sup>33</sup>for God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

## For building up the body of Christ

*Ephesians 4.7, 11–16*

<sup>7</sup>But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift ... <sup>11</sup>The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup>We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

## **One body in union with Christ**

*Romans 12.3–5*

<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

## **The gift each one has received**

*1 Peter 4.8–11*

<sup>8</sup>Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. <sup>10</sup>Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. <sup>11</sup>Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

## **God's gift of the Spirit**

*Ephesians 3.14–16*

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit,

# Recognising that we belong together

## Living in unity

### **You should wash one another's feet**

*John 13.3–15*

<sup>3</sup>Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God <sup>4</sup>got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.

<sup>5</sup>Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. <sup>6</sup>He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' <sup>7</sup>Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.'

<sup>8</sup>Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' <sup>9</sup>Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' ...

<sup>12</sup>After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you?

<sup>13</sup>You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

### **The greatest must be like the youngest**

*Luke 22.24–30*

<sup>24</sup>A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. <sup>25</sup>But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. <sup>26</sup>But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. <sup>27</sup>For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.'

## **Keep on loving with all your heart**

*1 Peter 1.22*

<sup>22</sup>Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart.

## **Let us love one another**

*1 John 4.7–11*

<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup>God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.

## **We love because he first loved us**

*1 John 4.19–21*

<sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup>The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

## **The greatest of these is love**

*1 Corinthians 12.31—13.1–13*

<sup>31</sup>But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. <sup>1</sup>If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. <sup>4</sup>Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup>It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>Love never ends ... <sup>13</sup>And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

## **Consider others better than yourselves**

*Philippians 2.5–11*

<sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup>he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name

that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup>and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

# Recognising that we belong together

## Mutual respect and harmony

### **First be reconciled to your brother or sister**

*Matthew 5.21–24*

<sup>21</sup>You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, “You shall not murder”; and “whoever murders shall be liable to judgement.”

<sup>22</sup>But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement; and if you insult you will be liable to the council; and if you say, “You fool”, you will be liable to the hell of fire. <sup>23</sup>So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

### **Be united in the same mind and same purpose**

*1 Corinthians 1.10–13*

<sup>10</sup>Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

<sup>11</sup>For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. <sup>12</sup>What I mean is that each of you says, ‘I belong to Paul’, or ‘I belong to Apollos’, or ‘I belong to Cephas’, or ‘I belong to Christ.’ <sup>13</sup>Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

### **Love one another**

*Romans 13.8*

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

## **Never put a hindrance in the way of another**

*Romans 14.13–18*

<sup>13</sup>Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling-block or hindrance in the way of another.

<sup>14</sup>I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. <sup>15</sup>If your brother or sister is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died.

## **Pursue peace with everyone**

*Hebrews 12.14–15*

<sup>14</sup>Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. <sup>15</sup>See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.

## **Welcome one another**

*Romans 15.7*

<sup>7</sup>Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

## **Righteousness and peace will embrace**

*Psalms 85.10–11*

<sup>10</sup>Love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will embrace.

<sup>11</sup>Human loyalty will reach up from the earth, and God's righteousness will look down from heaven.

# Recognising that we belong together

## Interdependence and partnership

### **They signalled to their partners to help**

*Luke 5.1–8*

<sup>1</sup>Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

### **Bear one another's burdens**

*Galatians 6.1–2*

<sup>1</sup>My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

### **Put up with the failings of the weak**

*Romans 15.1–2*

<sup>1</sup>We who are strong ought to put up with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup>Each of us must please our neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour.

## **No dissension within the body**

*1 Corinthians 12.12–31*

<sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

<sup>14</sup>Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many ... <sup>24</sup>But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

<sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup>And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup>Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup>But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

## **Delight in the Law of the Lord**

*Psalms 1.1–3*

<sup>1</sup>Happy are those (whose) ...  
delight is in the law of the Lord  
and on his law they meditate day and night

<sup>3</sup>They are like trees  
planted by streams of water,  
which yield their fruit in its season,  
and their leaves do not wither.  
In all that they do, they prosper.

# Recognising that we belong together

## Life in fellowship

### **Abide in me as I abide in you**

*John 15.1–16*

<sup>1</sup>I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. <sup>2</sup>He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide 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. <sup>5</sup>I 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 ...

<sup>12</sup>This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I 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.'

### **Everything in common**

*Acts 2.42–47*

<sup>42</sup>They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup>Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup>All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup>they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

<sup>46</sup>Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## **Agree with one another; live in peace**

*2 Corinthians 13.11–13*

<sup>11</sup>Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. <sup>12</sup>Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

<sup>13</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

## **In the light we have fellowship with one another**

*1 John 1.3–7*

<sup>3</sup>We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

<sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; <sup>7</sup>but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

## **In Christ Jesus you are all children of God**

*Galatians 3.26–29*

<sup>26</sup>For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. <sup>27</sup>As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

<sup>28</sup>There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

## **Maintain the unity of the Spirit**

*Ephesians 4.2–6*

<sup>2</sup>With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

## **Aim to do good to one another and to all people**

*1 Thessalonians 5.13–25*

<sup>13</sup>Esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. <sup>14</sup>And we urge you, beloved, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. <sup>15</sup>See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. <sup>16</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil. <sup>23</sup>May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. <sup>25</sup>Beloved, pray for us.

## **How wonderful it is for God's people to live together in harmony**

*Psalms 133.1–3*

<sup>1</sup>How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!  
<sup>2</sup>It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.  
<sup>3</sup>It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the LORD ordained his blessing, life for evermore.



## A letter from the Chief Executive of Bible Society

Bible Society is delighted to provide this booklet of significant texts from the Bible. These underline the vital concern we all share that God's people might be one so that the world will believe. We value deeply our partnerships with all the churches and offer this booklet believing that Holy Scripture will be a light to our path (Psalm 119.105).

Bible Society exists to serve and support the churches and denominations in England and Wales and around the world. We long for the day when the Bible's God-given revelation, inspiration and wisdom is shaping the lives and communities of people everywhere.

We hope that you will find the New Revised Standard Version text which is used here accessible, clear and helpful. We commend these passages and their contexts to you for your consideration and discussion but also your prayerful reflection and response.

**James Catford**

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Ultimately the reason we, as Christian Churches and Christians, are involved in the ecumenical journey, is because there is a divine mandate.

This selection shows the vision of the unity of the Church within the purposes of God. He wills that his whole creation is at unity with itself and with him, through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray without ceasing that the Church may be a sign, instrument and foretaste of the unity of all things in Christ.

This booklet is produced by Churches Together in England and Bible Society to mark the Centenary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2008, with the support of Congregational & General Insurance plc.



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