

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026

“One Body, One Spirit”

18–25 January 2026

Welcome

Our Scriptural theme for 2026 (Ephesians 4:4) reminds us that the call to unity is a call to work for peace for all people everywhere. It is a call that goes to the heart of the mission and ministry of the Armenian Church, throughout its history and today, and it is a vital part of the experience that Armenian Christians bring to the global work of Christian unity. In the major international ecumenical gatherings of recent years, the Armenian Church has brought a heartfelt appeal for a stronger collective voice of the Church as an advocate for just peace in the world, not only for Armenians, but for all those suffering as a result of violence, displacement and persecution.

With the Armenian diaspora numbering many times the population of the country itself, the Armenian Church brings together a truly global community that is present in Russia and in Ukraine, and throughout the Middle East. The Armenian community is impacted by these conflicts that have captured the attention of the world, while also experiencing the pain of the comparative neglect of the situation of the Armenian people attacked and displaced by Azerbaijan. The ethnic cleansing and associated human rights abuses perpetrated against the Armenian people, especially in the ancient Armenian homeland of Artsakh, have been well documented by international human rights observers, yet the international community fails to act as lives are lost, families are displaced, people are unjustly imprisoned and cultural heritage is destroyed.

For Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) and the National Ecumenical Instruments on these islands, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of the United Kingdom and Ireland has provided a powerful witness to the call to be peacemakers – through prayer, through advocacy and humanitarian aid, through peace education, and through hospitality and encounter. This goes hand in hand with a deeply rooted commitment to Christian unity as integral to how we live out Christ’s commandment to love our neighbour, and as a source of hope in troubled times.

This Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, let us unite in prayer and advocacy for the people of Armenia and Artsakh, calling for an end to violence and the restoration of peace. Together, we can shine a light on these injustices and, in doing so, help build a future where the rights of all are upheld and respected.

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Introduction to the theme for 2026

*"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling."
(Ephesians 4:4)*

For this year, the prayers and reflections for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by the faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Church, along with their brothers and sisters of the Armenian Catholic and Evangelical Churches. These resources draw upon centuries-old traditions of prayer and petitions used by the Armenian people, along with hymns that originated in the ancient monasteries and churches of Armenia, some of which date as far back as the fourth century. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2026 extends an invitation to draw upon this shared Christian heritage and to delve more deeply into our fellowship in Christ, which unites Christians worldwide.

Unity is a divine mandate at the core of our Christian identity. It represents the essence of the Church's calling – a call to reflect the harmonious oneness of our life in Christ amidst our diversity. This divine unity is central to our mission and is sustained by the profound love of Jesus Christ, who has set before us a unified purpose.

Throughout the Holy Scriptures, God's call to unity resonates from the earliest times. Starting with the Old Testament, Abram's plea to Lot highlights the divine desire for peace and harmony among the faithful: 'Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred' (Genesis 13:8). Abram's call for harmony and mutual respect, despite their eventual parting of ways, emphasises the importance of living peacefully.

The Psalms celebrate the beauty of unity among God's people, declaring, 'How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!' (Psalm 133:1).

In the New Testament, Jesus' prayer in John 17:21 calls for believers to be one, as He and the Father are one, demonstrating that our unity is grounded in our relationship with Christ and our collective mission of sharing the good news. The foundational command of Jesus to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34-35) reinforces that this love is the essence of our unity.

Paul's epistles stress the importance of unity within the Church, urging us to live lives worthy of our calling with humility, gentleness, patience and love (Ephesians 4:1-3). Ephesians 4:4 summarises the teachings of Paul about unity, emphasising here, too, that the followers of Christ represent 'one body and one Spirit', united in a single hope. This metaphor signifies the Church as a unified entity transcending barriers of geography, nationality, ethnicity and tradition. Paul uses the metaphor of the Church being the Body of Christ to describe its unity within the diversity of its members.

Emphasising the importance of Christian unity, Paul adds 'one Spirit', referring to the Holy Spirit who sustains this fellowship and empowers the Church to fulfil its mission. The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual life and guidance among believers, ensuring that the diverse members of the Church are together in faith and purpose. The Spirit fosters a deep, spiritual connection between believers, transcending differences and creating a bond that reflects the unity of the Holy Trinity. This shared spiritual bond is a basis for reconciliation, guiding believers globally and equipping them for effective witness and ministry.

In a world with diverse and often divided traditions and expressions of Christian faith, Ephesians 4:4 reminds us that all believers are part of the 'one body' of Christ. This unity is not about uniformity but a common commitment to the core truths of the Christian faith. It

serves as a powerful witness to the transformative power of the Holy Spirit when Christians of varied backgrounds come together with a shared goal and vision.

Through its practices and teachings, the Armenian Apostolic Church offers us a profound reflection on the essence of unity within the universal Body of Christ. In affirming the Creed, the faithful declare their belief in 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church', thereby professing the centrality of this unity to their spiritual life. This commitment to unity finds its fullest expression in the Church's Eucharistic gatherings. Every Sunday, in the Liturgy, the faithful embrace one another and sing, 'The Church has become one', a tangible manifestation of their collective faith and shared purpose. The rich, martyrdom-filled history of the Armenian Church and her leaders speaks of their unwavering efforts and resilience to maintain the Christian faith in the land of Armenia and the surrounding region. Unity within the Church should transcend doctrinal affirmation; it is a lived experience that deepens their spiritual identity and strengthens their collective witness. In embracing and living out this unity, the Armenian Apostolic Church not only honours its sacred traditions but also contributes meaningfully to the broader unity of Christ's universal Church. This reflection invites us to recognise and cherish the transformative power of unity, both within our own faith communities and in the wider Church.

Let us embrace this divine calling to unity, not as an abstract ideal but as a vital expression of our faith. In a world where the Body of Christ is wounded by divisions within and between traditions and confessions, the Apostle's call to unity is addressed to each of us, not only as separated church communities, but also as individuals within our communities. By living in unity, we not only witness to the love and power of our Lord Jesus Christ but also embody the essence of His teachings. As we support one another and celebrate our diverse gifts and talents, let us reflect the heart of Christ and further His work on earth.

Day 1

Our call to unity

Verse for the Day

'I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called' (Ephesians 4:1).

Additional Scripture Passages

- Micah 6:6-8
- Psalm 133
- John 15:15-17

Commentary

How often do we consider our own call to unity?

Ephesians 4:1 emphasises the significance of living 'a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called'. The work of Christian unity can be regarded as optional, an 'add-on', but the letter to the Ephesians reminds us that the call to unity is critical to God's mission on earth. Christian unity is a gift from God that enriches the lives of individuals, churches and the wider community. As we work and worship with those of other Christian traditions, we learn more of God and are better equipped to serve others and to challenge injustice. In an increasingly divided world, God calls us all to overcome barriers and become instruments of reconciliation, inviting us to be Christ's hands and feet.

Recognising and humbly embracing this call to unity enables the Church to reflect Christ to the world, as we seek to nurture harmonious and supportive fellowship with others and seek to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

Reflection

Calling me out,
releasing my heart.

Ears to hear,
a will to embrace.

Open, and humble.

New perspectives revealed,
a facet of grace unseen.

Growing in love.

Together, becoming worthy of God's call.

Prayer

Loving God,

You have called us to unity.

May our response to Your call lead us to actively seek justice and reconciliation and share Your light with the world. Amen.

Questions

- **Personal:** How does reflecting on 'the calling to which you have been called' inspire you to greater Christian unity?
- **Local:** How is the call to unity currently expressed within your local context?
- **Global:** What difference can increased Christian unity make to wider society?

Go and Do

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- **Personal:** Reflect upon what your Christian tradition means to you and write a short diary entry about it.
- **Local:** Visit the worship service of another Christian church in your local community and write a short diary entry on what you experience.
- **Global:** Try bringing together a small discussion group to reflect upon what the Nicaea 1700 anniversary means for you.

Day 2

Bearing with one another in love

Verse for the Day

'... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love' (Ephesians 4:2).

Additional Scripture Passages

- Zechariah 7:8-10
- Psalm 25:6-10
- Luke 10:30-36

Commentary

The author of Ephesians urges us to live in a manner worthy of our Christian calling by providing this profound social guidance: Ephesians calls believers 'with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love' (Ephesians 4:2). This divine calling is not merely a personal journey but is vividly expressed in our interactions with others. The four virtues highlighted – humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance – are all crucial for nurturing loving relationships. To embody these virtues means approaching others with a spirit of genuine humility, extending gentleness even towards those who test our patience, and showing forbearance with those who challenge us. Most profoundly, it involves 'bearing with one another' through our differences, reflecting a love that transcends all earthly divides and embodies the grace of God's boundless compassion. Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* offers a definition that expresses this grace: 'Not-leaving: an act of trust and love, often deciphered by children.' 'Bearing with' requires a grace that hangs on when the temptation to give up is great.

Reflection

'Not-leaving: an act of trust and love, often deciphered by children.'

Not-leaving-love: you narrow the road between us, making it impossible to walk by.

Not-leaving-love: you break our hearts with your need, and we find ourselves kneeling beside you.

Not-leaving-love: you carry the world to our door and, if we answer, we see that you're not popping by. You're moving in.

Not-leaving-love: innkeeping can be a thankless, interminable task. May we be part of the body prepared to do the work that never leaves.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

show us how to be patient with one another in humility and gentleness.

May the light You shine on our path lead us towards unity

and help us heal the wounds of division and indifference

that often break communities apart.

Amen.

Questions

- **Personal:** What are the personal relationships or issues that exhaust your empathy?
- **Local:** How can the virtues of humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance, as mentioned in the letter to the Ephesians, help us as believers navigate and overcome divisions within our local communities?
- **Global:** The innkeeper in Luke 10 was called to care, with only the word of a stranger that he would be repaid whatever more he spent. Discuss different interpretations and questions this verse evokes. What might those interpretations lead you to do in your relationships with your global neighbours?

Go and Do

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- **Personal:** Complete a task you have been avoiding.
- **Local:** Consider initiatives in your community that require perseverance and consistency and explore ways to become usefully supportive.
- **Global:** There are issues in our world today that cause 'overload apathy' – the feeling that it is too big to do anything about so we shield ourselves. An orthodox rabbi was asked once how he observed the 613 commandments in the Torah. His answer: 'Pick one and start.' Go and do the same.

Day 3

The bond of peace

Verse for the Day

... making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3).

Additional Scripture Passages

- Isaiah 11:6-9
- Psalm 86:8-13
- John 14:27-31

Commentary

Peace is a crucial factor in maintaining unity within the Church. In Ephesians 4:3, the 'bond of peace' signifies a vital and dynamic principle that not only connects us as Christians but also sustains the unity of the Christian community. Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), preached and lived peace and reconciliation. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), both a gift and a result of the Spirit at work. The 'bond of peace' is an active force that maintains church cohesion, holding diverse members together despite differences in backgrounds or opinions. Peace fosters meaningful relationships, allowing believers to interact harmoniously and to forgive one another more readily. Peace is both an external power which disempowers the forces of conflict and an inner strength which upholds and challenges us when division threatens. Paul highlights the fact that true unity requires ongoing commitment to peace. It calls for active cultivation and promotion of peace among Christians.

Reflection

We learn the get-out,
just to let things be.

And yeah,
that's what I so often want.

An undemanding peace.

A peace where I'm left alone,
when someone else can take care of the world's troubles.

But that's the peace that the world gives,
the peace which surrenders,
the peace which divides,
the peace of the prince of this world.

Un-peace me of that now,
that I may own

the peace which the world can't give
and which dares to speak its name
where strife and division thrive.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

You are the Prince of Peace.

Strengthen the bond of peace among us and in our troubled world.

Disturb the hearts of all who would make war; touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by war.

We pray especially for the people of Armenia and Artsakh,
and their kindred throughout the world.

Let the light of Your love shine in all the dark places of our world,
and hasten the day when all peoples may dwell in peace with justice.

Amen.

Questions

- **Personal:** When you feel you are at peace with yourself, how important is it that you are at peace with others as well?
- **Local:** How does the Apostle Paul's teaching that peace is a fruit of the Spirit impact our daily interactions and relationships within our communities, especially where there is a need for reconciliation or forgiveness?
- **Global:** 'Peace is a great concept but is not a practicable possibility in the world today.' How would you challenge that assertion?

Go and Do

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- **Personal:** Create an image (for example, a picture, photo or work of art) which symbolises peace for you, and share it in whatever way you feel is appropriate.
- **Local:** Identify an area of tension within your local church community, or the community at large, and consider how practically to bring true peace to that situation.
- **Global:** The world today faces growing tensions, conflict and actual warfare. What one thing could your church or group of churches commit to doing to challenge that reality?

Day 4

Called to one hope

Verse for the Day

'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling' (Ephesians 4:4).

Additional Scripture Passages

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9
- Psalm 24:1-6
- John 17:20-26

Commentary

In our world, 'fracture', 'separation', 'isolation' and 'looking after myself' are some key words that describe our culture. Not so the Apostle Paul who, in Ephesians 4:4, looks at the world with different glasses. His worldview is difficult and demanding, requiring determination, work and the grace, empowerment and nurture of the Spirit of God. Why? Because God longs for us to discover the multi-faceted, bejewelled brilliance of the distinctive unity in the Church made possible by Jesus. This is a unity that seeks to transcend all national and cultural boundaries. As together we place our lives, our very salvation, in the outstretched hands of the risen Christ, we look forward. What do we see? The breathtaking, shared hope of the second coming of our Lord, culminating in a new heaven and a new earth within which we will each have a place prepared. Unity is a jewel beyond price, a lived reality while incomplete, as it is the compelling herald in our world of our future hope.

Reflection

True Hope

Hope is not a butterfly,
careless,
compulsively fluttering,
anxiously mating,
time spare.

Hope is more than optimism
that yoyos like the
weather mercury.

Hope is not relentless positivity,
requiring endless,
exhausting,
bolstering.

Hope is bejewelled
with wonder,
cascading with light,
and reigns in Personhood
within,
without,
unboundaried.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
You bring us together in all our diversity,
as family and church.
In the face of so many situations on earth,
where hope has given way to despair
and hearts are wounded and emptied by disappointment,
renew our strength and unify us.
Help us to share Your hope wherever we find ourselves.
You are the true Light,
who casts out the darkness of sin,
despair and brokenness,
who shines into our hearts, releasing the joy
and the true hope of Your eternal love for all.
Amen.

Questions

- **Personal:** What must you lay down in order to embrace the unity of all God's people?
- **Local:** What are the most challenging issues facing your locality that threaten to undermine the unity and well-being of all?
- **Global:** Does your church unity transcend all national and cultural boundaries?

Go and Do

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- **Personal:** Go and share your experience of God with one person.
- **Local:** Go out with a group from your church and share the good news of God in your community.
- **Global:** Choose one of the campaigns by Christian Aid or CAFOD and promote them in your church, parish or local ecumenical group.

Day 5

One faith, one baptism

Verse for the Day

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism' (Ephesians 4:5).

Additional Scripture Passages

- Zechariah 14:6-9
- Psalm 100
- Matthew 28:16-20

Commentary

In Ephesians 4:5, the Apostle Paul emphasises the act of baptism as marking the entrance of individuals into the Church's fellowship, affirming their shared commitment to the same Lord. In baptism, the collective identity of the Church is celebrated, since we are one in the Body of the Lord. While members may come from varied backgrounds, their unity in faith as declared in baptism transcends all divisions. By focusing on these unifying elements, the Church can celebrate its diversity while remaining steadfastly united. This challenges us to prioritise our shared identity in Christ over our differences, reinforcing the bond that unites all Christians.

Reflection

Pilgrims,

whether we know ourselves as that or not,
we've reached the well.

And as we test its waters
we all will, know it or not, engift its healing,
whatever our ailment.

Somehow,

whenever,

wherever,

the living water unites.

Prayer

Spirit of God, and true God,
who descended on the River Jordan and entered into the upper room;
who enlightened us by the baptism of the water of life,
we have sinned against heaven and before You.
Purify us again with Your divine fire,
as You did the Apostles with fiery tongues.
Have mercy on us and all Your creatures.
Amen.

St Nersess the Gracious (adapted)

Questions

- **Personal:** What does reflecting on your own baptism or Christian initiation mean for you today?
- **Local:** How does your church community celebrate the unity of all creation within a local context?
- **Global:** Given the diverse understanding of baptism among Christians, how can this sacrament still be an expression of unity?

Go and Do

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- **Personal:** Keep a journal for a week (or for seven days spread out over a period of time), reflecting each day on the meaning of your baptism or Christian initiation
- **Local:** Discuss what collaborative initiatives the churches in your community could undertake to celebrate your shared faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Global:** Organise an event celebrating the global unity of the churches
- with creation.

Day 6

One God over all

Verse for the Day

'One God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all' (Ephesians 4:6)

Additional Scripture Passages

- 1 Kings 8:56-60
- Psalm 148:7-13
- Matthew 5:44-48

Commentary

Paul emphasises the profound oneness of God, declaring that God is 'above all and through all and in all'. The same God who made the world crafted human beings and loves and knows each of us by name. This is the God who entered into a covenant relationship with His people, calling them to worship Him in spirit and in truth. This is the God who gives us a future beyond death, promising eternal life and the hope of a new heaven and a new earth. This unique story begins and ends with love, servanthood and devotion. Unity expresses God's nature and makes visible the invisible to all people, redefining true power through humility, love and suffering. May we seek after and allow the living God to take hold of us for God's purposes in this world.

Reflection

Walking into the gallery, on the far wall you see a stunning picture of a herd of elephants in the African tundra. The group of animals are gathered on the edge of a large water hole. Shading them is a spreading tree, behind which the blue, blue unending sky. You step closer into the gallery. You notice the baby elephant wallowing in the red, watery mud, a mother's tender trunk resting on its flank. A little closer and you spy the two monkeys in the tree. A little closer still and you realise the picture is not one, but many – it is a mosaic. Closer still and each of the smaller pieces is revealed as an individual portrait of a person. You realise that this huge, wonderful, expansive wildlife extravaganza is actually composed of tiny pictures. Unity, diversity, visionary, extraordinary, breathtakingly beautiful. The power of the Artist's vision!

The unified Church is God's chosen mosaic.

Prayer

Loving God, we worship You as our Creator,
for Your presence in the heavens beyond words
and Your presence on earth beyond understanding.
Through Your Son Jesus Christ we yield to Your tender care
as the beginning and fulfilment of everything.
Help us to fulfil Your will in our lives.
Glory for ever to You,
God our Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Questions

- **Personal:** How do we understand God as a loving presence in our lives?
- **Local:** Who can we honour in our community with kindness and love?
- **Global:** How do we recognise God's loving presence in the world?

Go and Do

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- **Personal:** Explore ways to express the love of God to a neighbour.
- **Local:** Explore ways to honour the Body of Christ of which we are a part.
- **Global:** Take a world map and find time to pray with others over the entire world for seven days.

Day 7

Christ's gift

Verse for the Day

'But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift' (Ephesians 4:7).

Additional Scripture Passages

- Jeremiah 1:4-9
- Psalm 131
- Luke 4:17-19

Commentary

The Church and all its local expressions and communities are unique in their God-given diversity. This gift is granted by one God, for one purpose, with one hope. As the Church united, we can realise Christ's gift of grace which empowers us to work as co-creators with God as we imagine and manifest God's dream for all people: God's Kingdom here on earth. It begins with us recognising our Maker's richness and power in the midst of our diversity. It moves us to come together, centred in Christ and emboldened by the Holy Spirit, in unity and purpose glorifying God. As the Church, resolutely united and wonderfully diverse, we make the invisible God visible to the world as we share the gift of Christ unselfishly for all whom He calls kin.

Reflection

But I am just a little child,
how else would you expect me to act?
What else did you think I was going to do,
other than play and delight in who I was made to be,
to dance between the pillars of wisdom and hope,
to make up rhymes and sing at the top of my lungs?!

That God as my witness,
with words so profound anointed not just my lips,
but tenderly set alight in my very soul:

Oh Church,
hope in the Lord for ever
from this time on and ever more...

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
You have bestowed wonderful graces and multiple gifts upon us
for the sake of building up Your Body, the Church.
Help us to embrace and recognise our individuality,
so that we may be caught up in the childlike wonder of Your diverse making and creating.
Breathe in us with Your creative Spirit,
that we may respond and spread Your word, Your dream, Your grace and Your beauty,
to every place that we can reach,
as we play and pray in Your name.
Amen.

Questions

- **Personal:** What are Christ's gifts to you?
- **Local:** Where do you recognise the richness of God's Dream/Kingdom expressed in diverse ways in your local context?
- **Global:** How can we as the Church live out the ideals of diversity, inclusion and equality – in ways that uphold them in this time?

Go and Do

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- **Personal:** Speak to some people you trust about what gifts they recognise in you and explore how you might invest in them and use them for God.
- **Local:** Seek out projects in your area that are good examples of diverse groups coming together, and volunteer.
- **Global:** Where do you notice examples of exclusion and weaponising of difference in society? Explore Christian Aid or CAFOD stories from around the world and try some of their suggestions about engagement.

Day 8

Growing into Christ

Verse for the Day

'The gifts he gave were ... for building up the body of Christ, 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' (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Additional Scripture Passages

- Proverbs 9:10
- Psalm 119:97-103
- Mark 12:28–34a

Commentary

In Ephesians 4:13 we are shown a vision of the wholeness of the unified Body of Christ – through unity in faith and maturity into the fullness of Christ's stature. We are invited into a reality that is more than knowing; it is embodied. Knowing that you do not know everything is the beginning of wisdom. As we humbly explore in awe (a different definition of fear), we can discover paths to maturity that are life changing and renewing not just for us personally, but also for the Church and, through the Church, for the world. It means becoming more like Jesus in every way: loving as Jesus loves, serving as Jesus serves and reflecting His character. We are called to share our spiritual journey, seeking unity with each other, growing in our lived experience of the Son of God and striving for the full stature of Christ.

Reflection

Your word lingers in me like the taste of sweet honey,
rich and full bodied.

I savour Your aroma,
drink in the delights of Your ways
deepening the flavour of my soul.

As Your presence enriches my very being,
Your Spirit
poured over and permeating
my innermost thoughts and feelings.

You woo me
towards a better path,
paved with Your riches,
populated with Your children –
all of us

journeying
delighting
following
becoming.

Prayer

May I rise with You, Light of the World,
called to bring grace and mercy.

May I journey in the wake of Your Spirit,
called towards righteousness and peace.

May I rest with the hope of good things
in the places of Your creation that You, O God, call me to bring healing.

May we all, with courage and joy,
work faithfully for the coming of Your kingdom.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Now and always and unto the ages of ages.

Amen.

Questions

- **Personal:** Where have you experienced 'stretching' as you strive for the full stature of Christ? Reflect on what you learned.
- **Local:** Who do we need to stretch us a bit more in our loving and serving in our local context?
- **Global:** Who do we need to journey with to stretch us in our loving and serving in a national and global context?

Go and Do

(see www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo)

- **Personal:** Reflect on where you are afraid to go. Have a conversation with someone you trust about discipleship opportunities that feel challenging.
- **Local:** Find a group or local activity that stretches your faith and service, and learn a bit more by engaging with them.
- **Global:** Find something culturally distant and uncomfortable for you and engage and learn from it.

Ecumenical Worship Service

© Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Version A

This order of service comes from the Armenian Apostolic Church and is an invitation to worship within the Orthodox tradition. An alternative approach can be found in Version B.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader Blessed is our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Assembly Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Leader For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

Assembly Amen.

Invocation

Reader 1 May the name of the Lord be blessed forever, for His name is before the sun.

Reader 2 All the nations of the earth will be blessed through Him and all generations will extol Him.

Reader 1 Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, the only worker of wondrous deeds. The holy name of His glory is forever blessed. The whole world will be filled with His glory.

Assembly **Amen! Amen!**

Reader 2 Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Reader 1 Now and always and unto the ages of ages.

Assembly Amen.

Reader 2 Again in peace let us beseech the Lord. Heed our prayers, raise us to life and have mercy on us.

Leader Blessing and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
Now and always and unto the ages of ages.

Assembly Amen.

Psalm 72:15-18 (adapted)

Hymn of Light

As the hymn is being sung, a large candle is lit in the front of the church.

From the East and to the West

Zion's blessed heirs

Always praise unceasingly

Him who dawns the Light

Churches of the righteous ones,

All who honour Him,

Glorify the One who gave

Meaning to the light.

St Nerses the Gracious

Litany

Reader From sunrise in the east to sunset in the west, and throughout the entire Christian world, wherever people call on the name of the Lord in holiness – by their prayers and intercession may the Lord have mercy on us. Let us beseech God to deliver us from sin and from the temptations of the world. May the Lord accept the vows and supplications of our hearts and count us worthy of His faith and His commandments together with all of his saints.
Almighty Lord our God, raise us to life and have mercy on us.

Assembly **Raise us to life, O Lord.**

Reader *(If celebrated in the morning)*

That the Lord may usher forth this sunlit morning and guide the day ahead in peace; with faith, let us beseech the Lord.

or

(If celebrated in the evening)

That the Lord may usher forth this coming evening and the night ahead in peace; with faith, let us beseech the Lord.

Assembly **Grant it, O Lord.**

Reader For an angel of peace to be our guardian, let us ask the Lord.

Assembly Grant it, O Lord.

Reader For the pardon and forgiveness of our transgressions, let us ask the Lord.

Assembly Grant it, O Lord.

Reader For the great and mighty power of the holy cross to help us, let us ask the Lord.

Assembly Grant it, O Lord.

Reader Once again, for our true and holy faith, all together, let us beseech the Lord.

Assembly Lord, have mercy.

Reader Let us commit ourselves and one another to the almighty Lord our God.

Assembly We commit ourselves to You, O Lord.

Reader Have mercy on us, Lord our God, in Your great mercy. Let us all say together as one:

Assembly Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Prayer and Sharing the Peace

The Leader may face east for the following prayer, which is prayed with arms outstretched:

Leader From sunrise in the east to sunset in the west, blessed are You, O Lord, because You are King, and Your name is revered throughout the universe. Let our psalmody resound sweetly in Your hearing. Let justice dawn from Your righteousness and rise over our frailty, and may Your most holy name be glorified. And let us become worthy to abide by Your commandments and to sing praise and glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

The Leader faces the people and may make the sign of the cross, while saying:

Leader Peace to all.

Assembly And with your spirit.

The people may exchange a suitable greeting of peace.

Reader Let us bow down to God.

The people bow down to God in worship, saying:

Assembly Before You, O Lord.

The Leader may turn to the east and prays again, saying:

Leader Everlasting God, Eternal God, You dawned as light in this world and You illumined us from the darkness of our sin. Infinite God, You came into our

finite existence, abundantly pouring out the gifts of the Holy Spirit on Your creatures. Now and for all eternity You are extolled, most great God, with the Father and the most Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

Assembly **Amen.**

Scripture Readings

Reader 1 This reading is from the Prophet Isaiah (58:6-11).

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

Reader 2 This reading is from the Letter of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians (4:1-13).

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said,

'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'

(When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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.

Choir or Cantor / Assembly **Alleluia. Alleluia.**
For with You is the fountain of life;
in Your light we see light.

Reader Alleluia. Rise to your feet.

The Leader faces the people and may make the sign of the cross, while saying:

Leader Peace to all.

Assembly **And with your spirit.**

Reader Listen attentively to the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to John (12:31-36).

Choir or Cantor **Glory to You, Lord our God.**

Reader Attention! God is speaking.

[Jesus said to the crowd:] 'Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, 'We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?' Jesus said to them, 'The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While

you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.'

Choir or Cantor **Glory to You, our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Sermon/Homily

Prayer

Reader Gracious Lord, God of all,
Guide for the lost, Light for those in darkness.
Our eyes turn to You; hear our prayers.
May the sun of Your glory shine forth, giving life and light to all, from the east to the west, and from the north to the south. Let the morning rays of Your eternal spring awaken us who await Your coming.
O Jesus Christ, Light from the Light, dwell within us, who have come together to worship Your holy and precious name. Let Your life-giving radiance kindle within us a deeper love for one another. May Your brilliant light stir us to ever more flourishing unity. Like diverse flowers in the garden of Your Kingdom, may Your divine brilliance cause us to bloom in harmony. And so, all as one, may we always joyfully praise and glorify You, and the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Adapted from St Gregory of Narek

Responsorial Psalm

The two sides of the assembly recite or chant verses of the psalm alternately, with all joining together on the response. As the psalm is being recited/chanted, candles are distributed to the people.

Reader Our eyes turn to You, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.

Assembly **Our eyes turn to You, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

Side 1 The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!

Side 2 Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Assembly **Our eyes turn to You, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

Side 1 Fire goes before him,
and consumes his adversaries on every side.

Side 2 His lightnings light up the world;

the earth sees and trembles.

Assembly **Our eyes turn to You, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

Side 1 The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the Lord of all the earth.

Side 2 The heavens proclaim his righteousness;
and all the peoples behold his glory.

Assembly **Our eyes turn to You, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

Side 1 All worshippers of images are put to shame,
those who make their boast in worthless idols;
all gods bow down before him.

Side 2 Zion hears and is glad, and the towns of Judah rejoice,
because of your judgments, O God.

Assembly **Our eyes turn to You, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

Side 1 For you, O LORD, are most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.

Side 2 The LORD loves those who hate evil;
he guards the lives of his faithful;
he rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

Assembly **Our eyes turn to You, O God of all. Have mercy on us and hear our prayers.**

Side 1 Light dawns for the righteous
and joy for the upright in heart.

Side 2 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!

Assembly **Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
Now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.**

Psalm 97

Hymn

While the hymn is being sung, two young people holding unlit candles or tapers light them from the central candle and the light is passed to all in the church.

Ageless, uncreated God,
Father, Lord of all;
Heed our prayers, the earnest pleas
Of those serving You.

From the Father, wondrous Dawn,
Just and righteous Sun;
Rise, shine forth upon us all
Kind and tender Light.

Spirit pouring from the Fath'r,
Wellspring of the good;
Fill us with Your radiant Light
In this new day's morn.

Persons three, in nature one,
One Divinity;
We confess You at all times –
Holy Trinity.

St Nerses the Gracious

Creed

Leader Bathed in the light of the Wisdom of Christ,
together, let us confess our common faith.

Assembly **We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us all, and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried.**

On the third day he rose from the dead in accordance with the scriptures.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead

and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father.

Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified,

who has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,

and to life in the age to come. Amen.

Closing Prayers

Leader Again, in peace, let us beseech the Lord.
Let us glorify Almighty God, who has shone His light upon His creatures.
Now, may He once more shine His abundant mercy upon those who glorify His name in song. Almighty Lord our God, raise us to life and have mercy on us.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

Leader Gracious and Almighty Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, You are the true Light, who cast out the darkness of sin and shone into our hearts the joy and hope of Your eternal Kingdom.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader Loving Lord, accept the prayers of all Your faithful children throughout the world, who call out to You with one mind, one voice and one heart. Through Your beloved disciple John, You promised that if we walk in Your light, then we will have communion with one another, and Your precious blood will cleanse us of all sin. Bring us that blessed communion, O Saviour!

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader Grant us peace, O Loving Lord, and remove the scourge of civil unrest and violence from the face of the earth. Change the hearts of all who make war and touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by war. Comfort all prisoners of war and speedily bring them home. Let the light of Your love shine in all the dark places of our world and hasten the day when all peoples may dwell in peace with justice.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader O Refuge and Shelter, Lord Jesus Christ, look with compassion on refugees throughout the world, who suffer the agony of displacement and the loss of their homes. Move us to manifest our communion with You, with them and with each other through gestures of hospitality and loving help.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader O Christ, our Saviour, we pray for the people of Armenia and Artsakh, and their kindred throughout the world, who long ago turned to Your light through the preaching of the Apostle Thaddeus and the miraculous witness of St Gregory the Illuminator.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader Shine the light of Your righteousness and wisdom on all Your creatures. Make us children of light and children of the day, so that we may always live our lives reverently, and become for all the world worthy lampstands for Your life-giving light.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader For You are our Saviour, and to You be glory, dominion and honour, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

Assembly **Amen**

Hymn

Choir or Cantor / Assembly **Christ, the good and gracious Way,
And the living Truth.
Leader of our spirits from
Earth to heav'n above.**

**Jesus, Door to Life, True God,
Through You we shall come;
Now admit us to Your Fath'r,
By Your Holy Spir't.**

St Nerses the Gracious

The Lord's Prayer

Leader Blessed is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Assembly **Amen**

Assembly **Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.
Amen.**

Leader The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Assembly Amen

Ecumenical Worship Service

© Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Version B

The original version of this service (A) is an Armenian Orthodox Service. This version (B) is a revised version for those who would prefer a worship service that can be freely adapted according to local use.

Call to Worship

May the name of the Lord be blessed forever, whose name is before the sun.

All the nations of the earth will be blessed and all generations will extol the Lord.

Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, the only worker of wondrous deeds, the holy name of His glory is forever blessed. The whole world will be filled with His glory.

Assembly **Amen! Amen!**

Hymn (on the theme of light)

While the hymn is being sung, a candle is lit at the front.

Opening Prayer

From sunrise in the east to sunset in the west,
by all people and in every place,
may the holiness of the Lord be proclaimed.

May that holiness come as light in our midst,
guiding our way along pathways of grace.

Walking with the angels of peace,
may we be led away from temptation and sin.

Hearing words of mercy,
may we know ourselves forgiven, loved and free.

Knowing the power of the resurrection
may we find ourselves raised into that same light.

Gathered into the community of God's faithful people,
may we come together in peace.

Peace be with you

And with your spirit.

A sign of peace may be shared.

Scripture Readings

Reader 1 This reading is from the Prophet Isaiah (58:6-11).

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

A hymn/song may be sung

Reader 2 This reading is from the Letter of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians (4:1-13).

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with

patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said,

'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'

(When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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.

Reader Peace to all.

Assembly **And with your spirit.**

Reader Let us be attentive to the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to John (12:31-36).

Choir or Cantor **Glory to You, Lord our God.**

[Jesus said to the crowd:] 'Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, 'We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains for ever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?' Jesus said to them, 'The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.'

Choir or Cantor / Assembly **Glory to You, Lord our God.**

Sermon/Homily

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 97 adapted)

As the psalm is being recited/chanted, candles are distributed to the people.

The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice;
let the many coastlands be glad!

Clouds and thick darkness are all around him;
righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

Our eyes turn to You, O God.

In Your mercy, hear our prayers.

His lightnings light up the world;
the earth sees and trembles.

The heavens proclaim his righteousness,
and all the peoples behold his glory.

Our eyes turn to You, O God.

In Your mercy, hear our prayers.

Zion hears and is glad,
and the towns of Judah rejoice,
because of your judgements, O God.

For you, LORD, are most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.

Our eyes turn to You, O God.

In Your mercy, hear our prayers.

Light dawns for the righteous
and joy for the upright in heart.

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous,
and give thanks to his holy name!

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.**

Hymn

While the hymn is being sung, candles are lit from the central candle and the candles are lit from person to person.

The Creed

Leader Bathed in the light of the Wisdom of Christ,
together, let us confess our common faith.

Assembly **We believe in one God,**
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us all, and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried.
On the third day he rose from the dead in accordance with the
scriptures.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father.
Who, with the Father and the Son, is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
and to life in the age to come. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

We come now to offer our prayers for our world, especially commending the Armenian people and the displaced Armenian people of the Artsakh region under Azerbaijan control.

Leader In peace, let us beseech the Lord.

Gracious and almighty Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, You are the true Light, who has cast out the darkness of sin and shone into our hearts the joy and hope of Your eternal Kingdom.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader Loving Lord, accept the prayers of all Your faithful people throughout the world, who call out to You with one mind, one voice and one heart. Through Your beloved disciple John, You promised that if we walk in Your light, then we will have communion with one another, and Your precious blood will cleanse us of all sin. Bring us that blessed communion, O Saviour!

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader Grant us peace, O Loving Lord, and remove the scourge of violence from the face of the earth. Change the hearts of all who make war. Touch the wounds of all who are afflicted by conflict. Comfort all prisoners of war and speedily bring them home. Let the light of Your love shine in all the dark places of our world, and hasten the day when all peoples may dwell in peace with justice.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

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Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader Shine the light of Your righteousness and wisdom on all Your creatures. Make us children of light and children of the day, so that we may always live our lives reverently, and become for all the world worthy lampstands for Your life-giving light.

Assembly **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader For You are our Saviour, and to You be glory, dominion and honour, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

Assembly **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Leader Blessed is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Assembly Amen.

Assembly **Our Father...** (*according to local practice and preference*)

Hymn

Final Prayer

Reader Gracious Lord, God of all,
Guide for the lost, Light for those in darkness.
Our eyes turn to You; hear our prayers.
May the sun of Your glory shine forth, giving life and light to all, from the east
to the west, and from the north to the south. Let the morning rays of Your
eternal spring awaken us who await Your coming.

O Jesus Christ, Light from the Light, dwell within us, who have come together
to worship Your holy and precious name. Let Your life-giving radiance kindle
within us a deeper love for one another. May Your brilliant light stir us to ever
more flourishing unity. Like diverse flowers in the garden of Your Kingdom,
may Your divine brilliance cause us to bloom in harmony. And so, all as one,
may we joyfully praise and glorify You, and the Father and the Holy Spirit,
now and always and unto the ages of ages.

Adapted from St Gregory of Narek

Assembly Amen! Amen! Amen!

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