

Order of Service: Christian Aid Week

This Order of Service is written in the light of the coronavirus pandemic, to use for a virtual service during Christian Aid Week (10-16 May).

Preparation

- Read our guidance on how to run a virtual Christian Aid Week service at caweek.org/virtualresources
- Email your congregation the link to the Order of Service (available at caweek.org/virtualresources) so it can be printed or downloaded ahead of the service.
- Do see this as a flexible Order of Service. Pick and mix what will work best for your community. The songs are suggestions only.
- The service has been shaped around three of the lectionary readings for Sunday 10 May, the Fifth Sunday of Easter: Psalm 31, 1 Peter 2:2-10 and John 14:1-14.

Introduction

Welcome to our worship.

Today is the beginning of Christian Aid Week. Like many church activities at the moment, Christian Aid Week is being done differently and digitally this year. During this time together we'll have space to read and listen, sing and pray, and remember and acknowledge that we are part of a global community. We are neighbours near and far who are going through this coronavirus pandemic together. May our shared experience unite us in praise and prayer as one human family, separate but together in the home that is God's world.

(Say the words in bold together.)

Gathering prayer

**God of all the Earth,
be present with us now,
in each of our homes,
as we connect together.
Build us into a spiritual house,
a holy priesthood,
offering spiritual sacrifices
acceptable to you
through Jesus Christ,
our risen redeemer and healer.
Amen.**

Opening song

Let us build a house where all can dwell

Introduction to the song

It may seem strange to sing the lyric: 'All are welcome in this place' at a time when no one is welcome into our homes (except those who live there) or to collective worship in our church building. However, at this time more than ever, we are learning that the church is not the building but it is us, the people. Peter calls us living stones in his epistle. Though separate, we can build up together into a spiritual house where love can dwell, and be lived out in our everyday actions.

Prayer of confession and absolution

Introduction: How many times have you washed your hands today? (Answers could be shared in comments/chat/discussion.) We approach our prayer of confession and absolution, mindful of the ritual significance of hand washing in the Bible.

Hand washing in Scripture is closely associated with innocence and cleansing from sin. (See Exodus 30:17-21, Psalm 26:6, Job 9:30, Matthew 27:24, James 4:8 to mention a few.)



A community learns about hand washing in Sierra Leone.

You may wish to take your device to your sink as we pray this together, or bring a bowl of water, some soap and a towel to a safe distance before your computer. Or simply join in this prayer as you watch the ritual of hand washing. (You can say it in 20 seconds but it may take 30.)

**As we turn on the tap
we turn our hearts
towards you, O God.**

**As we wet our hands
renew our thoughts,
so we might be transformed.**

**As we lather soap
between fingers
and over all our hands,**

**purge from us
all that brings us harm
and might harm others.**

**Remove the invisible
guilt and shame
that so often keeps us from you.**

**As we rinse our hands,
we trust in your
overflowing grace,
making all things new.**

Amen.

Introduction to the reading Psalm 31.
The Revised Common Lectionary for today selects seven verses from this psalm, but since the words of the psalmist express many of the emotions that we might be experiencing during this difficult time, we will take the time to read and listen to all 24 verses. (Depending on what platform is being used, nine different voices could read a stanza each, ie, verses 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-13, 14-18, 19-20, 21- 22, 23-24.)

Pause to reflect and pray (optional)
Were there any verses or phrases that jumped out from the passage? Any phrases that you find helpful in these difficult days? (You could add these words or phrases to the comments or chat on the online platform you are using or discuss if using Zoom/ Skype/WhatsApp or a similar online space. End the reflection with an extemporary prayer, weaving together the themes mentioned in the comments/ discussion.)

Gospel reading John 14:1-14
Introduction to the reading:
This is an extract from the long farewell that Jesus gave over the last supper, shortly after he washed the feet of the disciples with his own hands. Even though we are now in the Fifth Sunday of Easter, these words have a poignancy and power for us to absorb and process this Christian Aid Week Sunday. Listen now to the Word of God.

(Have someone read John 14:1-14 aloud)

Song
Be still for the presence of the Lord

(Silence)

Sermon
(Preparation tip - pointers for sermons on both of the readings are provided at **caweek.org/virtualresources**)

Response
Look at your hands. Have a good look.

However your hands look to you, they are most certainly clean in these days of regular hand washing to prevent spreading the coronavirus.

Our hands really are the most remarkable and useful tools, involved in so much of what we do and how we do things, even in these days of social distancing.

The psalmist writes of committing his spirit into God's hands, and at times of being in God's hands. He also describes his desire to be delivered from the hands of his oppressors and from a hidden invisible net that threatens to entangle him.

Our hands have become even more significant in these days of physical distance. We might long to hold the hand of a person we can no longer touch. We pray for the hands of medics to bring healing and comfort. We are grateful for hands stacking shelves and delivering groceries and post. And we are extra wary of everything our hands touch that comes from outside our own home.

This Christian Aid Week we also think of how our hands can be far from idle. Though not handing out envelopes or hosting Big Brekkies or the many things we usually busy ourselves with this week, our hands can still reach out virtually to our neighbours around the world. Neighbours in refugee camps

and cramped living conditions, neighbours without adequate hand-washing facilities, neighbours who face the devastating impact of coronavirus with even less of the medical resources we have struggled to access here.

We reach out by clasping our hands together in prayer for our neighbours, and holding our hands open before God as we declare our needs and concerns for their wellbeing and our own.

We also reach out by participating in this digital Christian Aid Week, through making our online donations and sharing the stories from Christian Aid partners, working on the ground to be the hands and feet of love in action. If you wish, you can make a donation online to help vulnerable communities at **caweek.org/payin**

Let us pray together using our open hands.

Prayer of lament and intercession

God our refuge,
we come to you with open hands,
some of us with hearts full of questions,
some of us bruised by bereavement,
some of us fearful of what the future holds,
all of us stunned by the events of this year.
Draw close to us now in each of our homes
as we place our honest questions and hopes
into your open, resurrected, yet scarred hands.
God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

With the honesty of the psalmist,
the wrestling questions of Job,
and the lament of the prophets,
we bring to you our questions or our silence.

(Hold your index finger and, in silence, ask the question that most burdens your heart or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Hear the cry of our hearts, Lord,
silent and aloud,
for bereaved neighbours, near and far.
Comfort those pained by being absent,

and hold close those who are hurting alone.
(Hold your ring finger and pray for comfort for those you know who are bereaved or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

In this season of Easter,
renew us with resurrection hope
that while weeping lingers in this night,
joy will come with the morning.

(Hold your middle finger and in the silence tell God what you are most looking forward to in the future or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

On this Christian Aid Week Sunday,
we pray for and with communities
across the world who are
most vulnerable to coronavirus.

We pray for people living in refugee camps
and city slums,
with limited sanitation facilities,
who are unable to wash their hands regularly,
and have little opportunity to isolate from others.

We pray for Christian Aid partners
working to provide soap and buckets,
communicating clear, accurate information,
raising the voices of the most vulnerable
and ensuring they are kept as safe as possible.

(Hold your thumb as you pray for the most vulnerable, those closest to God's heart, or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence together.)



Children gather in a crowded refugee camp in Bangladesh.

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

For those of us who are self-isolating,
which can sometimes feel like we aren't doing
anything,
remind us that we are all doing our part,
and saving lives by staying at home.

*(Hold your little finger and ask God for what you need,
or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence
together.)*

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for much wisdom and resources
for those in local and national authority
for all frontline and key workers
here in Britain, Ireland and across the world.

*(Put your hands together and pray for the many
frontline workers and volunteers and for Christian
Aid partners working to help others across the world,
or simply sit in silence before God. Hold the silence
together.)*

God in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

As we have clapped to honour them,
we clap our hands now in praise
of your glorious creation,
and with the hope that the first shoots
of another possible world are coming into view.

*(Clap your hands in praise of God's glorious creation
and with the hope of new possibilities for the world.)*

God in your mercy,
hear all our prayers.
Amen.

Song

My times are in your hands or Be thou my vision

The Lord's Prayer

(in your preferred form)

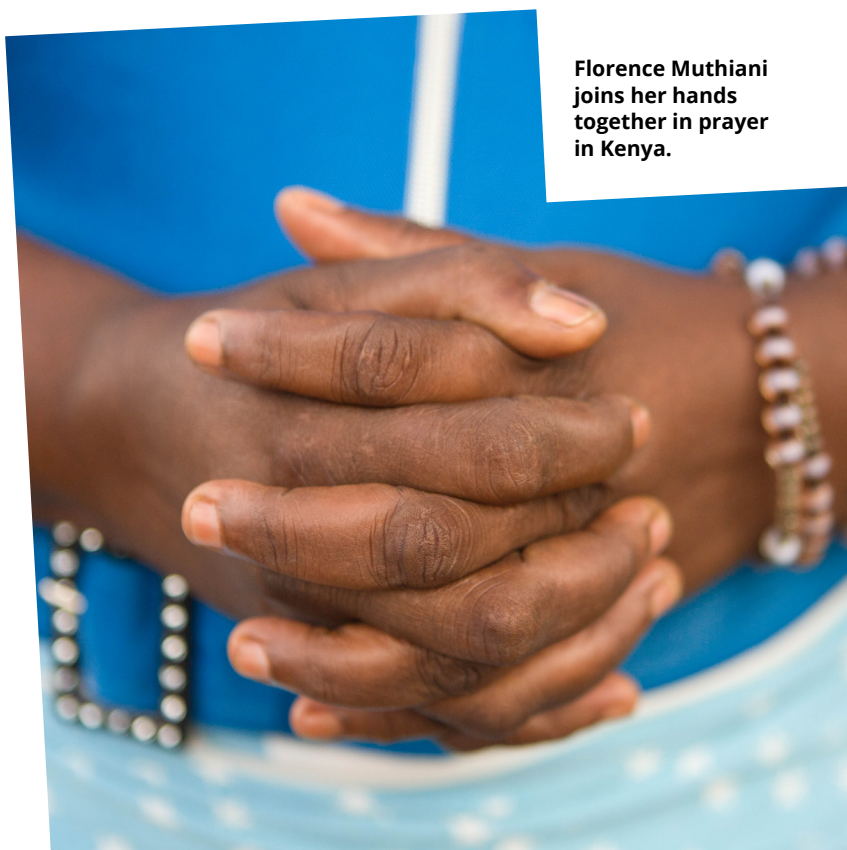
Closing blessing

As we go offline and wash our hands again, we say
our blessing together:

**May the presence of the Creator refresh you,
may the comfort of the Son renew you,
may the inspiration of the Spirit restore you
to be love in action, even from a distance,
in our neighbourhoods, near and far,
this day and for evermore.**
Amen.

Closing offering

If you wish to make a donation to Christian
Aid, you can do so online at caweek.org/payin



**Florence Muthiani
joins her hands
together in prayer
in Kenya.**

