Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2017

# Supplementary All Age Materials to Accompany the Order of Service for an Ecumenical Act of Worship

## Reconciliation – The love of Christ compels us

## (2 Corinthians 5:14 to 20)

### GATHERING

Alternative words could be substituted for the Leader’s introduction such as:

This service was devised by Christians in Germany and the images of crossing barriers have a particular significance to them. Firstly, because this year marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s public protest against some of the teachings and practices of the church which triggered what is now called the Reformation. This resulted in many new churches being formed all over Europe. However, Martin Luther did not seek so much to found a new church, but to reform its teaching and practices for the benefit of ordinary Christians. For Luther discovered for himself that Jesus had come to break down the barriers between us and God and one another. Therefore we in turn are called to break down barriers that divide us in Christ’s name. Secondly, many older Germans remember living in a time when Germany was divided and the symbol of that division was the building of a walled along the borders of East and West Germany, and Berlin which was also divided. Churches particularly played an important part in putting pressure upon the authorities to demolish the wall in 1989.

Suggestions for a musical background: Mendelssohn’s *Reformation Symphony*, or Luther’s hymn *Ein Feste Berg*

Visual images: *Luther (film 2003) Berlin Wall film clips (widely available)*

### CONFESSING

#### The wall of division

Prepare 12 boxes for the wall (cardboard or plastic boxes could be used). You may wish to cover them with wallpaper depicting stone or paint them. Some visual representation of the particular obstacles mentioned could be placed either on the boxes themselves, or projected as the boxes are, brought out.

The activity of wall building lends itself to the involvement of all ages. Ideally the boxes should be placed so as to form a physical barrier between different sections of the congregation. After the laying of every 3rd ‘stone’ a penitential response could be made. You could use a Kyrie, *Taizé* chant or phrase such as ‘Father forgive’.

You could substitute the word ‘block’ for ‘stone’ in the text. It would also be possible to simplify the text in places, e.g. Reader 3 substitutes ‘telling lies’ for ‘false accusation’. Alternatively, you could get a mixed aged group together before the service to work out mimes for the different ways we build walls between us.

### THE PEACE

The words from Ezekiel and the sharing the peace are also offered later in the service, after the readings and the sermon. Using them at this point has a greater dramatic impact. Invite people to dismantle the wall of boxes and reform it into a cross.

### HEARING

The Epistle lends itself to visual representation so it can be mimed or signed. In particular the image of a new creation can be enacted by someone in a shabby outer coat exchanging it for a new ‘robe’. The idea of reconciliation could be conveyed by two people who show by their body language that they are at odds being brought together by a Christ figure.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM

A chorus such as L*et there be love shared among us* could replace responsorial Psalm.

#### Gospel Reading Luke 15:11-32

Choose a version of the story you feel is most appropriate for the congregation. Beforehand, write out these words on pieces of paper: sad, happy, hungry, sorry, excited, confused, angry, relieved, despairing, lonely. Lay the words on the floor. Read the story and invite the congregation to choose a sequence of words that describe the story, from the 1) father, 2) younger son, 3) elder son’s points of view.

You could use the following limerick to introduce the story or summarise it at the end. Three people could mime as it is read, or read the lines related to their character.

There once was a father, who waited,

Till his son with high living was sated.

In a sty far away

That lad started to pray

Came home to Dad’s welcome, not slated.

His brother was far from elated

when he learnt how the wastrel was feted.

He refused to share space

with the family disgrace

for to him they were no longer related.

It could be mimed

#### Activity and Informal Talk – Better Together

This might take the place of a more formal sermon. **Begin with one of these two activities. If space is limited the second is the better option.**

#### ****Balloon Bop****

**You will need:** balloons and 8 -12 players of any age

Form a circle, holding hands. The leader taps a balloon into the circle. The goal is to see how many times they can tap the balloon into the air keeping it off the floor while still holding hands in a circle. Playerscan tap the balloon with their hands, arms, heads, shoulders, chests, or knees—but not their feet*),* In order for this to work effectively, players have to work cooperatively, each of them making sure they are not letting go of their neighbour’s hands. They will soon figure out that they must all move together as players. If someone taps the balloon with their feet, the count begins again. Depending on the group, you can add more balloons to make more challenging or set a target number, e.g. 20 taps.

#### Long Spoons

You will need: two spoons each attached to a metre length of cane and two bowls of yoghurt or jelly. Play the game in pairs. The objective is to eat the yoghurt/jelly. Sit both players at a table with the bowls in the centre and give them the spoons. They should soon work out that the only way to accomplish the task is to feed one another. Aprons might be useful!

#### Informal Talk

Ask for reactions to the game that has just taken place. Draw out the importance of working in cooperation and that some things are done better together. This is what the Bishop Derek Warlock and Bishop David Shepherd of the Catholic and the Anglican dioceses of Liverpool respectively, agreed when they worked alongside each other in the 1970s and 80s. In fact their cooperation, together with Free church leaders, became notorious because they tackled issues of social deprivation and offered mediation between conflicting parties, as well working in concert in dealing with major events such as the Toxteth riots and the Hillsborough disaster. Such was the benefit of this partnership that a trust was formed in Liverpool with the name Better Together Trust. Among other things, this joint approach broke down barriers of prejudice and misconceptions among churches in Liverpool. This way may well work in our own local context if it doesn’t already do so. Invite suggestions from the congregation, and explore with them the kind of initiatives that are needed and that could be put into effect locally. You could take notes and circulate them among the local churches.

Find further information at bettertogethertrust.org

### CREED

The Apostles’ Creed, or a simple baptismal creed or a sung version could be substituted.

### RESPONDING

After the words of response, invite people to dismantle the wall and form the boxes into a cross. A hymn or song could be sung as this is done: e.g.

*There’s a place of commanded blessing* (Mandate)

*When I survey the wondrous cross*

*Bind us together*

*Make me a channel of your peace*

### INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

A collage of local churches/congregations could be displayed or projected during the prayers. Alternatively images of walls being dismantled.

### SENDING

Once the candlelight has been spread through the congregation, everyone could gather around the cross of boxes, before the leader reads the sending words.

These materials have been written by the Revd Don Dowling, on behalf of ROOTS for Churches Ltd.