

## Written prayers

### for the church and its witness...

*These prayers were written with the desire of expressing some reflection of the Sanctuary's heart – and the hearts of many across the global church – for Christians to grow and flourish in authentic and wholehearted love of God, each other and the world... and to demonstrate this in their witness to him individually and collectively.*

*They are written in love with a desire to serve and bless, but are charged with longing as they address a number of key areas of our mutual discipleship and mission which we all hunger to see pursued and representing Jesus more fully.*

*But they are also written as much for ourselves as for the rest of the church... because we need the transformation they seek too.*

*(You'll find another collection of written prayers specifically about church unity at <http://thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/written-prayers-for-unity-in-the-UK-church+updated+jan+15.pdf>)*

#### 1. A prayer for more listening lives

Forgive us Lord  
for the times when  
we've done all the talking  
and all the planning  
and then asked you to bless  
our work as if it was yours.

Come again and rule in our hearts,  
help us to truly recognise and follow you  
as the only head of your body  
and the only King of your kingdom.

We surrender our plans, our programmes,  
our ideas, our traditions and our dreams.  
We lay down our judgements, our analyses,  
our strategies, our concerns and our attempts to control.

Give to us Lord,  
daily prayerful and listening hearts  
that long to hear you speak  
and watch you shape all your plans for us  
so we can bless you and your world  
by joining in with your work.

## **2. A prayer for wild obedience**

Speak Lord, please share your heart with us,  
and may you find your church is listening.

Here your church is, Lord – send us –  
and may you find us ready to go.

Show us Father what you're doing  
and enable us to do it with you.  
Say to us Father what you're saying  
and echo your voice through ours.

Help us see where we have lost our love  
for the beautiful adventure  
of wild obedience  
that leaves all its boats behind  
and lays down all its fortune at your feet  
to follow you anywhere and everywhere  
you would lead us.

Fill us with a new hunger  
to run this race  
with a deeper love for you  
that propels us – each and together –  
forward in delighted pursuit of  
your best will for your church and your world.

## **3. A prayer for greater authenticity**

Holy Spirit of complete and perfect truth,  
come and fill your church still more,  
for we know we have not given you  
full access and rule in our lives  
and daily fall so very far short  
of your perfect standard of integrity.

Help our actions match our words  
– yes – please help us.

But more than this even, please,  
help our hearts to reflect all we speak and do  
and to prize character over status or influence.

And please Spirit, please  
give us more humility  
so we can own and proclaim to the world  
our shared limitations and sinfulness.  
And always point others to our Saviour, Jesus Christ,  
as the only full embodiment of Truth on earth.

Holy Spirit of complete and perfect truth,  
come and fill your church still more,  
for we long to give you  
fuller access and rule in our lives  
and daily see them grow  
in deeper reflection of your authenticity.

#### **4. A prayer for greater generosity**

Lord we love to tell and re-tell the stories  
of the widow who gave with all her mite,  
an early church that had everything in common...  
and modern heroes of the faith  
who seem to still stake their all on your words  
by living as if they too were in the pages of your book.

Lord help us to love still more re-living and re-writing these stories  
in our own lives; till we truly give with all our might,  
look again more like those who have all things in common through you...  
and become more like heroes of the faith ourselves –  
ancient and modern – staking our all on your words  
and living our best reflection of your ongoing story.

So challenge our cultural assumptions and expectations  
of how we should live, or how much we should hold on to for ourselves.  
And challenge us too where we have grown so familiar with your words  
that it is all too easy to qualify them, or disqualify ourselves from such radical living.  
Fill us with fresh awareness and deep gratitude that all we have is at your gift,  
and catch us up in your irrepressible heart to give and give and give to excess.

#### **5. A prayer for a bigger worldview**

Father of creation,  
we know we all only still see you  
through a dark glass dimly,  
and our perspectives on the world  
are similarly discoloured  
by all that gets in the way of your truth.

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Father of creation,  
shine your light through  
every ideology, cultural norm  
or worldview held by your people  
and help us all to see  
anything that seeks to constrict your love.

Father of creation,  
reveal to us all  
anywhere where we are  
viewing people  
as less than your image-bearers  
or ourselves as being more important.

And Father of creation,  
show us too  
everywhere we are  
dismissing creation itself  
as a sub-plot to the human story  
rather than integral and precious to you.

Father of creation,  
expand our worldviews  
till they look more like yours –  
characterised by a love  
so wide and so deep  
that nothing and no one is forgotten.

## **6. A prayer for a posture of learning**

Source of all wisdom, perfect teacher and Lord,  
could we your church ever learn to live  
more on our knees than on our soap boxes?  
We long to. Please help us.

We confess we don't have all the answers.  
We admit none of us has the perfect revelation  
on how every part of your word should be  
interpreted and applied.  
We own up we have blind spots.  
We recognise others know, and move in, things we do not.

Could we just sit at your feet and listen?  
Could we sit at each others' feet and listen?

Could we respect your image in each person enough  
to sit and listen at the feet of those outside your church too?

Keep us asking this Lord, keep us longing and learning;  
keep us open to receive your counsel through whoever,  
and from wherever, it may come next.

## **7. A prayer for unity and reconciliation (inspired by Romans 12:18)**

Father of compassion,  
who forgives recklessly  
with scandalous mercy and grace,  
help us as your people  
– who long to mirror you –  
to love and forgive always;  
and to proactively reconcile  
and be at peace with everyone  
wherever it is possible,  
as far as it lies with us.

## **8. A prayer for growing in love and honour for the global church**

Father of every nation, tribe and tongue  
open our eyes to the scale and diversity  
of our global brothers and sisters...  
to remember even now  
how every day  
we share your presence  
with a whole host of prayers and praises  
as your name is lifted high  
on every continent;  
voiced in a litany of languages,  
musical modes and instruments  
and celebrated with colours,  
scents, symbols, rituals and dances  
both shared and distinct.

Father of every nation, tribe and tongue  
fill our hearts with love for the scale and diversity  
of your global church...  
and to look forward  
to the day  
when we will be in your presence  
alongside this whole host of prayers and praises  
lifting your name together

as the languages, musical modes  
and visual offerings of worship  
from every generation  
are all brought together  
to celebrate your glory  
in perfect harmony.

Father of every nation, tribe and tongue  
help us – having seen and loved –  
to honour what we have seen  
and serve those we love  
with a new level of appreciation  
for all each part of your wider church has to teach us;  
and how much we all need  
each others' prayers, generosity and example.  
Help us to be ready to mourn with those that mourn;  
rejoice with those who rejoice;  
mutually support those facing poverty or persecution;  
and be eager to learn from those  
who worship, witness and work differently to us,  
for the sake of you, the first love of us all.

## 9. A prayer for balancing freshness and heritage

Lord Jesus Christ,  
our only Way and the only walker  
to perfectly tread the narrow path,  
thank you that in this, as in all things  
you are our perfect model,  
inspiration and strength.  
You came to fulfil the law  
but had no time for legalism;  
You quoted the ancient scriptures  
but also spoke entirely new revelation.  
You went into sacred places  
but prayed and preached on hillsides.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
teach us the practices and programmes to prize,  
and the ones that have served their time;  
the new winds to catch,  
and whether they are for this season or for life.  
Help us to look back  
with reverence for the historic church,  
ready to learn from its collected wisdom.

And help us to look around  
with openness to every part of the church today,  
eager to receive their unique insights  
to fortify our own areas of deficiency.

But above all, Lord Jesus Christ  
help us to look to you  
for your best plan to embody you  
among the people, places and contexts  
you have placed each one of us in,  
for your glory and for the sake  
of all who are yet to come to know you.

## 10. A prayer for more care-full words

Living Word, we confess we sometimes feel  
we should have all learned by now  
just how powerful our words are  
to build up... or to tear down.  
Your word makes it so clear;  
our scars make it so obvious; and yet...  
still, we so often speak, write –  
and even preach! –  
without really thinking...  
or with much too much feeling...  
careless to the effect we are having  
and leaving behind a trail of destruction.

Living Word, help everyone in your church  
to grow in discernment,  
empathy, wisdom and, simply, *love*,  
till we recognise much more quickly  
when we do not have the heart required  
to speak the phrase on our lips,  
or when our silence is wounding  
and others need to hear our voice.  
Help us choose our content, language and tone,  
care-full to build up all who are listening  
and to remember there are people behind  
every online identity we engage with too.

## 11. A prayer for greater valuing of character

Lord we know we your people  
are sometimes better at building

sub-culture than counter-culture;  
we say we are citizens of a different kingdom –  
your kingdom! –  
but sometimes make ourselves more at home in the world.

Lord we confess that we your people  
are often just as swept away by  
power and personality,  
status and achievement,  
fame, wealth and buildings,  
as anyone else is – and we've celebrated them all too much in our churches.

Lord, forgive us and change us please;  
set in us a holy passion  
that prizes lives lived for you;  
full of the Spirit's fruit  
and characterised by  
a pure and distinctive devotion to you and the way of your cross.

## 12. A prayer for a more eternal perspective

Eternal God, who Was and Is and Is to come,  
who had no beginning, and who will rule with no end,  
forgive us for the times we have reduced your infinite kingdom  
and cheated ourselves out of your life-orientating long view  
by living more for now than always,  
and prizing our own present comfort  
over others' flourishing and future,  
or still more above your promised return.

Eternal God, who Was and Is and Is to come,  
who had no beginning, and who will rule with no end,  
your word says you set eternity in our hearts  
and we know we desperately need its perspective in our lives,  
so fix our eyes more fully on You and your always  
till we prize the kingdom coming so fully  
that it captivates and consumes our present longings  
and causes us to live like those who truly have *certain* hope.

## 13. A prayer for a greater love of holiness

Father God, we thank you for revealing  
to many parts of your church in recent decades



just how great your love is for each and every  
person you have made.

Help us now to hold on to this revelation  
and keep sharing it with the wider church  
and those who don't know you yet  
in delighted celebration, open-hearted compassion  
and a fuller mercy that reflects who you are.

But please help us too, to recapture  
what we fear many of us may have lost.

For it is true that you are not distant,  
and as the very essence and origin of love  
you can never be reduced to definitions  
that are characterised by anger or judgementalism.

But oh God, forgive us, for you absolutely are  
breathtakingly pure, and all consumingly holy  
and you do not make light of sin or injustice or oppression  
for these must and do offend perfect love.

May we please – who proclaim to know you as Love –  
flee from cheapening your grace,  
compromising your perfection,  
or in any sense being found as those inadvertently worshipping  
something made more in our own image,  
or the image of our culture's time and trends,  
rather than you – our real, true, radiant God.

Help us see that holiness is beauty and wholeness,  
the technicolour shalom of life flourishing as designed,  
and help us to fall in love with the pursuit of it again  
for the sake of you – the Holy one we say we love  
and a world so confused and lost as to how to live.

## **14. A prayer for more faithful following**

Faithful friend and saviour,  
we know we can never be as constant as you,  
but help your church please  
to pursue you and your presence every day.  
Not just on some days, Sundays and Holy-days;  
not just at festivals and conferences and special days;  
but every day; each and every normal day.

You are the same yesterday, today and forever,  
so help us to all seek you consistently and directly.  
Help us to each see where we might be inadvertently  
trying to outsource our relationships with you  
to those we consider to be closer, more experienced,  
more gifted, more anointed or more mature.  
And wake us up from any passivity that may have crept in  
and set us instead to active, adventurous, faithful following.

## 15. A prayer for braver witness

Greater are you Lord Jesus –  
you who are in us –  
than he who is in the world.  
We speak this statement  
over the whole church today  
because we know we all need  
to truly hear it  
and more fully welcome your love

into our hearts and lives  
to cast out all our remaining fear.

Send us each and all  
out into the world today  
in every place you have put us  
ready to obey all you have called us to  
in making you known  
and extending your kingdom  
of justice and peace;  
confident that you are with us  
wherever we go  
and whatever may come.

## 16. A prayer for free-er witness

Where the Spirit of the Lord is,  
there is freedom,  
so please come and set us free  
from all the things that hold us back  
from being ourselves made new in you  
in every relationship and sphere of influence  
you have opened up for each one of us.

We confess we've sometimes tied ourselves in knots  
with programmes and processes and systems  
that have stilled the beating heart of love  
that fuels all true evangelism.  
Our approaches have often led to awkwardness and fear  
as many of us have tried to be or do something  
that is not authentic to who we are.

Come, Holy Spirit of the Lord,  
and give us a new freedom,  
and a new hunger  
to share our faith much more openly;  
but teach us to do this out of the overflow  
of who you have made us to be – in your strength  
and with the gifts you have freely given to each one of us.

## **17. A prayer for rest**

Creator God who never grows tired  
but still chose to take time to rest and call creation good,  
you urged us to do the same to help us remember  
the responsibility is not all on our shoulders.  
But we – who are so often deeply weary –  
seem to constantly forget our limitations.  
Help us to remember to stop and rest,  
and lay down our endless striving for control.

Into the midst of our hectic 24-7 culture,  
with its incessant barrage of content and noise,  
whisper your redeeming rhythms of grace  
to restore your best balance of work and rest, play and prayer.  
And into the midst of all our busy church activities,  
with so many demands on our hearts and time,  
breathe your restoring, beautiful order  
of responding simply to what you say is for today.