



St Thomas Home Group Study

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024¹

“Who is my neighbour?”

Q. Looking closely at the image, what strikes you immediately, and then as you begin to take in further details?

The prayers and reflections for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were chosen by Christian churches of Burkina Faso. The security crisis in the Sahel has left 22% of territory out of control of the state and Christians in these areas can no longer openly practice their faith.

The love of Christ that unites all Christians is stronger than their divisions and the Christians of Burkina Faso commit themselves to walking the path of love of God and love of neighbour.

Read Luke 10:25-29 first from *The Message* (below), and then your own preferred bible translation.

²⁵ Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”

²⁶ He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”

²⁷ He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and might and intelligence—and that you love your neighbour as well as you do yourself.”

²⁸ “Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live.”

²⁹ Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbour’?”

Additional Scripture Passages

Romans 13:8-10

Psalm 119:57-63

¹ This study is an abridged version of ‘Day 3’ of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 resources provided by Churches Together Britain and Ireland. The full octave of resources is available as a pdf from <https://ctbi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/WPCU-2024-English-pamphlet-Final.pdf>

Commentary

The teacher of the law wanted to justify himself, hoping that the neighbour he is called to love is one of his own faith and people. This is a natural human instinct.

When we invite people to our homes, they are quite often people who share our social status, our outlook on life and our values. There is a human instinct to prefer places of familiarity.

This is also true of our Church communities. But Jesus takes the lawyer, and his wider audience, deeper into their own tradition by reminding them of the obligation to welcome and to love all, regardless of religion, culture or social status.

The Gospel teaches that loving those who are like ourselves is nothing special. Jesus steers us towards a much more radical version of what it means to be human.

This is the challenge of the parable today:
To whom am I a neighbour?

Reflection:

*Down that road
on the other side
you'll find sacred dirt
holy ditches
where light is incarnate
embodied in our enemies
like a gift presented
blinded to what's inside
unwrapped, we find our neighbour.*

Discussion Questions:

Q. Share with one another something of the life of a Christian from another tradition who has been a good neighbour. What did they do and what did you learn from them?

Q. Who are the people who are excluded or unseen within your community and why?

Q. What could local faith communities be doing to build upon their pastoral experience to care for those who are vulnerable or overlooked?

Q. Think of a church near to St. Thomas, with which we have little contact. What are the possibilities of walking together?

Q. Who are the people who behave like the Good Samaritan, either locally, or more widely across the nation?

Q. Think of an example from the news that illustrates a society wounded by conflict. Discuss how Christian churches are responding. How can this be applied in our context?

Prayer:

*God of love,
who writes love in our hearts,
instil in us the courage to look
beyond ourselves
and see the neighbour in those
different from ourselves
and to be the unexpected neighbour,
that we may truly follow Jesus Christ
our brother and our friend,
who is Lord, for ever and ever.
Amen.*