

Westminster Abbey



A SERVICE OF RECONCILIATION,
HEALING OF MEMORIES,
AND MUTUAL COMMITMENT
FOR THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND
THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



Tuesday 7th February 2012
6.15 pm

The significance of this service for both our churches is rooted in history – in the turbulent events of the mid-seventeenth century. Historians still argue over the relative importance of constitutional, religious, and social elements in the English Civil War. What is clear is that the Parliament summoned in 1640 to provide finance for King Charles I's policy in Scotland was originally united in rejecting what they regarded as the King's unconstitutional actions in the eleven years since Parliament had last met. However, when those who thought that the Reformation of 1559 had not gone far enough tried to press their views, that original unity disappeared. With Scottish assistance, the Puritans within the Church of England pressed their demands and a civil war followed.

The Westminster Assembly of Divines (1643–49), appointed by Parliament, produced a new Confession of Faith (never adopted by Parliament) and a Directory of Worship to replace the Prayer Book. The Christian Year disappeared with its feasts and fasts. Episcopacy was abolished and the bishops went abroad or lay low. Cathedral foundations were dissolved. The archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, and later the king, Charles I, fell to the executioner's axe. Large numbers of traditional Anglican clergy suffered deprivation and hardship, and ministers of Presbyterian and Independent views took their places in the parish churches, cathedrals, and universities. Many ordinary people were bewildered by what was happening.

Charles II's promise of liberty to tender consciences in the Declaration of Breda encouraged Parliament to invite him to return, and the monarchy was restored in 1660. But the new Parliament elected in that year was less willing to compromise; and after the failure of churchmen to agree at the Savoy Conference, the Act of Uniformity was approved in 1662. The Prayer Book, and with it episcopal ordination and jurisdiction, was re-imposed in its definitive form. Charles I was commemorated liturgically as a martyr.

Those ministers who, on theological grounds, could not accept the requirements of the Act of Uniformity were forced to leave and many hundreds did so. Many suffered hardship in what became known as The Great Ejection. The Church of England suffered too, by the loss of approximately one fifth of its clergy, many of them ministers of the highest calibre, while the ejected ministers (some of whom later conformed) increasingly threw their lot in with those Baptists and Congregationalists who had not accepted livings during the Cromwellian period.

After a lengthy period of doctrinal flux and social disadvantage, in the early decades of the nineteenth century the Baptists and Congregationalists became organized as denominations of the kind with which we are familiar. In 1839 the Church of Scotland permitted the establishment of a Synod of English Presbyterians who, in 1849, constituted the ‘Presbyterian Church in England’, comprising Scots and the remnant of English trinitarian Presbyterians of Old Dissent. In 1863 the English Synod of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland was formed. These two bodies united in 1876 as the ‘Presbyterian Church of England’. This Church and the Congregational Church in England and Wales came together to form the United Reformed Church in 1972.

Thanks to the gradual removal of those civil disabilities to which Dissenters had been subject, and to the work of the ecumenical movement during the past century, feelings have changed. We are now able to acknowledge those events with sadness, without seeking to apportion blame. However, feelings of hurt and bitterness remain lodged in the folk memory of both our churches. There is still a need for reconciliation and the healing of memories so that we can move ahead together in closer visible unity in obedience to our Lord’s will and prayer. We rejoice that in the present climate we are better placed than ever before to address and, with God’s help, to resolve the theological impediments that continue to divide us.

This year brings the 350th anniversary of the Great Ejection, but it also sees the 40th anniversary of the inauguration of the United Reformed Church, which took place in Westminster Abbey, when Archbishop Michael Ramsey was among the guests of honour.

This service contains some echoes of the liturgy of forty years ago. Above all else, we will join together in the worship of God. At the beginning of the service some words from Richard Baxter, a moderate and reconciling scholar of this period, whom both our traditions honour, will be spoken. In special litanies we will express penitence for our part in perpetuating Christian disunity and offer prayers for the healing of memories and for grace to work more closely together, in study, prayer, and mission, in the future.

Members of the congregation are kindly requested to refrain from using private cameras, video, or sound recording equipment. Please ensure that mobile phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are switched off.

The Abbey is served by a hearing loop. Users should turn their hearing aid to the setting marked T.

The service is conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The service is sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey, conducted by James O'Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers.

The organ is played by Robert Quinney, Sub-Organist.

Music before the service:

Andrej Kouznetsov, Organ Scholar, plays:

Prelude and Fugue in G Op 37 no 2 *Felix Mendelssohn (1809–47)*

Psalm Prelude Set II no 2 *Herbert Howells*
'Yea, the darkness is no darkness with thee.' *(1892–1983)*

Chorale Prelude on the Old 104th *Hubert Parry (1848–1918)*

Chorale Prelude on Melcombe *Hubert Parry*

Chorale Prelude on St Ann's *Hubert Parry*

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ORDER OF SERVICE

All stand. The Choir sings

THE INTROIT

Delight thou in the Lord: and he shall give thee thy heart's desire.

Humphrey Clucas (b 1941)

Psalm 37: 4

Geoffrey Streatfeild reads

from THE REFORMED PASTOR

WE must also be very studious of union and communion among ourselves, and of the unity and peace of the churches that we oversee. We must be sensible how needful this is to the prosperity of the whole, the strengthening of our common cause, the good of particular members of our flock, and the further enlargement of the kingdom of Christ. And, therefore, ministers must smart when the Church is wounded, and be so far from being the leaders in divisions, that they should take it as a principal part of their work to prevent and heal them. Day and night should they bend their studies to find out the means to heal such breaches. They must not only hearken to motions for unity, but propound and prosecute them; not only entertain an offered peace, but even follow it when it flieth from them. They must, therefore, keep close to the ancient simplicity of the Christian faith, and the foundation and centre of Catholic unity.

Richard Baxter (1615–91)

All remain standing to sing

THE HYMN

*during which the Collegiate Procession
moves to places in the Quire and Sacrarium*

*The Bible is borne through the Abbey
and received at the High Altar*



YE holy angels bright,
who wait at God's right hand,
or through the realms of light
fly at your Lord's command,
assist our song,
for else the theme
too high doth seem
for mortal tongue.

Ye blessèd souls at rest,
who ran this earthly race,
and now, from sin released,
behold the Saviour's face,
God's praises sound,
as in his sight
with sweet delight
ye do abound.

Ye saints, who toil below,
adore your heavenly King,
and onward as ye go
some joyful anthem sing;
take what he gives
and praise him still,
through good and ill,
who ever lives!

My soul, bear thou thy part,
triumph in God above:
and with a well-tuned heart
sing thou the songs of love!
let all thy days
till life shall end,
whate'er he send,
be filled with praise.

*Darwall's 148th 475 NEH
John Darwall (1731–89)*

Richard Baxter

All remain standing. The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, says

THE BIDDING

WE come apart, for a brief moment, recognising our presence with almighty God, to offer our worship, thanksgivings, and prayers to the glory of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. We come to Westminster Abbey, a place of deep shared resonance for both our traditions, where all are welcome.

We bring into this moment what has preoccupied us today, in our Christian discipleship and our work, and in our engagement with God's world. We also bring memories of the past. We bring glad memories of the service here forty years ago that brought Presbyterian and Congregational Churches into unity as the United Reformed Church. We bring sad memories of the deep pain and tragic division of our Nation in the seventeenth century, and especially of the events of the Great Ejection 350 years ago.

We bring our hopes for the future, as together we seek the unity which comes from God alone. We come to lay it all at the feet of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ and to ask for the healing and transforming power of him who is mighty to save and who prayed 'that they may all be one that the world may believe.'

Mrs Val Morrison, Moderator, General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, says:

IN this holy place, where Christians of different convictions have been formed by the love of Christ, we turn to the wisdom of the Lord in the scriptures:

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

'Be strong, do not fear! Here is our God. He will come and save us.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water;

a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; it shall be for God's people;

they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

from Isaiah 35

Let us proclaim together the faith of the Church:

WE believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens the Church with power from on high. We believe in one God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Dean says:

Since this is the faith on which our unity rests, let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom.

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, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

All sit. The Reverend Dr Michael Jagessar, Moderator-Elect, General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, 2012–2014, reads

from A FAREWELL SERMON

*by John Oldfield (c 1626–82), Presbyterian,
ejected from his living in Carsington, Derbyshire*

The Choir sings:

DROP, drop, slow tears,
and bathe those beauteous feet,
which brought from heaven
the news and Prince of peace.

Cease not, wet eyes,
his mercies to entreat;
to cry for vengeance
sin doth never cease.

In your deep floods
drown all my faults and fears;
nor let his eye
see sin, but through my tears.

Song 46
Orlando Gibbons (1583–1625)
Organist of Westminster Abbey 1623–25

Phineas Fletcher (1582–1650)

The Venerable George Howe, Chaplain and Chief of Staff to the Bishop of Carlisle, and Diocesan Director of Ordinands, reads

AN HISTORICAL TESTIMONY

*in the words of The Right Reverend Brian Duppa (1588–1662)
Bishop of Salisbury 1641–60 and Bishop of Winchester 1660–62*

All stand. The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, Primate of England and Metropolitan, and The Reverend Dr Kirsty Thorpe, Moderator, General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, lead

THE ACT OF PENITENCE

LIFT your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up, and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.

Hebrews 12: 12

Heavenly Father, we confess our failure to live as disciples of Christ.

For our past failure to acknowledge the Holy Spirit at work in each other, for our inattention to your call, for our failure to listen for your voice; Lord, forgive us.

The Choir sing, and all repeat



FOR our suspicion of one another, resting in the false comforts of caricature and mutual distrust, for our uncharitable thoughts and actions, for the pride which hardens us; Lord forgive us.

Kyrie eleison.

For the poverty of our imagination, and the dimness of our hope, for the times when we have encouraged shallow cooperation rather than watch in hope for the deep richness of Christ’s kingdom; Lord, forgive us.

Kyrie eleison.

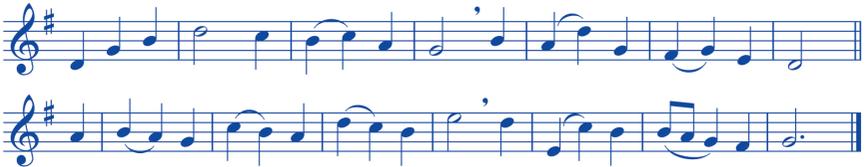
Heavenly Father, as we recall with penitence our own sins, and the sins of our forebears in the faith, grant us your own reconciling love, that pursuing peace and holiness, through grace, we may together experience the fullness of your New Creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hear these words from the Gospel of Jesus Christ: the one who comes to me, I will never turn away. If you forgive others the wrongs they have done, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Peace is my parting gift to you, my own peace.

after St John 6: 37; 14: 27, St Matthew 6: 14

All sing

THE HYMN



GIVE me the wings of faith to rise
within the veil, and see
the saints above, how great their joys,
how bright their glories be.

Once they were mourning here below,
and wet their couch with tears;
they wrestled hard, as we do now,
with sins and doubts and fears.

I ask them whence their victory came:
they, with united breath,
ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
their triumph to his death.

They marked the footsteps that he trod,
his zeal inspired their breast,
and, following their incarnate God,
they reached the promised rest.

Our glorious Leader claims our praise
for his own pattern given;
while the great cloud of witnesses
show the same path to heaven.

Richmond 346 NEH
adapted from Thomas Haweis (1734–1820)

225 NEH
Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

All sit. Mrs Margaret Swinson, Vice-Chair, Church of England Council for Christian Unity reads

EPHESIANS 4: 1–16

I 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. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

THE ADDRESS

by

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr Rowan Williams
Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitan

All remain seated. The Choir sings

THE ANTHEM

O BE joyful in the Lord, all ye lands: serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song.

Be ye sure that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

O go your way into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and speak good of his Name.

For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting: and his truth endureth from generation to generation.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end.
Amen.

William Walton (1902–83)

Psalm 100

TESTIMONIES

by

The Reverend Keith Hitchman
Pioneer Minister for River in the City, Diocese of Liverpool

with

The Reverend Timothy Meadows
Liverpool City Centre United Reformed Church

and

The Reverend Ruth Whitehead
*Minister, Whittlesford and Pampisford Local Ecumenical Partnership
and Duxford United Reformed Church*

All stand to sing

THUMA MINA



Send me, Je-sus, send me, Je - sus, send me, Je-sus, send me, Lord.
Lead me, Je-sus, lead me, Je - sus, lead me, Je-sus, lead me, Lord.
Fill me, Je-sus, fill me, Je - sus, fill me, Je-sus, fill me, Lord.

South African traditional

All remain standing for

THE ACT OF RECOMMITMENT

The Right Reverend James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle, says

GOD of all love, mercy, and grace, we give you thanks and praise for our baptism, through which we are one in Christ. We thank you that, on this day and in this place, we are united in praise. We rejoice in ecumenical agreements found, in dialogue pursued and sustained with patience and for the hope and promise of what will yet be.

God, always constant, always new, bless us with hope.

The Reverend Elizabeth Welch, Co-Chair, United Reformed Church/Church of England Study Group, says

WE rejoice in the gifts of all your people and the service offered in and through our churches for the transformation and tending of your world. We pray for priests and ministers, for bishops and councils; for elders and preachers, lay readers and churchwardens, that all may be encouraged in service. We pray for wisdom to sustain good and holy forms of ministry and for imagination and faithfulness in renewing the church.

God, whose service is freedom, inspire our serving.

The Venerable Dr Joy Tetley, Co-Chair, United Reformed Church/Church of England Study Group, says

WE thank you for the traditions of prayer and learning, of worship, ministry and daily life, that we inhabit and which you bless. Give us grace to learn of you from one another and the generosity to share and receive our distinctive gifts, that we may know both your constancy and your originality and discern together the shape of faithful discipleship.

God, who travels with us, help us to journey together.

The Reverend Roberta Rominger, General Secretary, the United Reformed Church, says

WE pray for your guidance and grace as we engage together in discussion and dialogue. Help us to be both bold and vulnerable, always ready for the testing work of true reconciliation. Be with us as we talk of church and nation, of how we may discern your will, and of what it means to be the Church. Help us to honour our traditions, to be faithful to the needs of today and to be open to a future shaped by your Holy Spirit.

Eternal God and Father, you create and redeem us by the power of your love: guide and strengthen us by your Spirit, that we may give ourselves in love and service to one another and to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Reverend Dr Kirsty Thorpe and the Archbishop of York lead

THE PEACE

CHRISt came and proclaimed peace to those who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through Christ both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you;
and also with you.

Let us share with one another a sign of Christ's peace.

All sing

THE HYMN



FOR the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom,
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race, or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow life's brief span.

You, Creator God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

Rhuddlan 490 NEH

427 CP
Fred Kaan (1929–2009)

All remain standing. The Reverend Dr David Cornick, General Secretary, Churches Together in England, reads

ST JOHN 17: 20–23

I ASK not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The Dean pronounces

THE BLESSING

MAY God the Father, of whom every family in heaven and upon earth is named, bless the work of unity which has been deepened this day.
Amen.

May God the Son, the undivided Christ, who died that he might gather into one the children of God, enrich the unity which has been sought this day.
Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit, who on the day of Pentecost made the friends of Jesus to be of one heart and soul, bestow upon us the manifold gifts of the ascended Lord, and make our differences to minister only to the increase of truth and charity. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

*after Eric Symes Abbott KCVO, Dean of Westminster 1959–74
Blessing given at the Service of Thanksgiving for
the Inauguration of the United Reformed Church
5th October 1972*

Music after the service:

Fantasia in G (Pièce d'orgue à 5) BWV 572 *Johann Sebastian Bach*
(1685–1750)

All remain standing as the Procession moves to the west end of the church.

**Members of the Congregation are requested to remain in their places
until invited to move by the Stewards.**

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