**Resources for reconciliation in times of division and disagreement.**

By Robin Richardson [robin@insted.co.uk](mailto:robin@insted.co.uk)

Contents

[READINGS ABOUT RECONCILIATION 2](#_Toc29391783)

[Aiming for reconciliation 2](#_Toc29391784)

[Humble and repentant hearts 2](#_Toc29391785)

[Complex and varied 3](#_Toc29391786)

[How we are going to live together 4](#_Toc29391787)

[‘WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY’ - RESOURCE PACK FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION 4](#_Toc29391788)

[A Difficult Problem to Solve – Insights from ‘Middle England’ novel by Jonathan Coe 4](#_Toc29391789)

[Questions & Enquiries Based on the Sample Fiction 5](#_Toc29391790)

[Guidance: Group Discussion – some Do’s and Dont’s 6](#_Toc29391791)

[Things People Say 6](#_Toc29391792)

[Resource Links 7](#_Toc29391793)

[PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS 9](#_Toc29391794)

[Prayer for the United Kingdom 9](#_Toc29391795)

[Prayer for Europe 9](#_Toc29391796)

[New Thresholds 10](#_Toc29391797)

[True citizenship 10](#_Toc29391798)

[These strange times 11](#_Toc29391799)

[Gathering, sheltering, strengthening 12](#_Toc29391800)

[God of encounter 13](#_Toc29391801)

[Your presence and your peace 15](#_Toc29391802)

[Past, present and future 16](#_Toc29391803)

[A future yet to unfold 18](#_Toc29391804)

[Your gentle rule 18](#_Toc29391805)

[God’s love endures forever 19](#_Toc29391806)

[The evolving and expanding universe 21](#_Toc29391807)

[Your steadfast love endures forever 21](#_Toc29391808)

[The next stage of our journey together 23](#_Toc29391809)

[Tie in a living tether 24](#_Toc29391810)

[God of Redemption 24](#_Toc29391811)

## READINGS ABOUT RECONCILIATION

This is a selection of quotations from articles, statements or speeches about Brexit mostly from 2019, some from within churches or church organisations and others from wider society. The selection as a whole is offered for use in talks and sermons, and in discussions and conversations.

### Aiming for reconciliation

…In this political situation, just talking in increasingly hostile language does us no good.

Nor is it helpful to only look backwards. What has happened is past, and every Christian, every citizen, from every side of the debate, should be aiming for reconciliation and working to reunite our country.

The Church of England is wonderfully diverse and of course contains a spectrum of views on Brexit. What unites us is our faith in Jesus Christ. We recognise that through His undeserved love, there is hope and purpose and full life on offer to every person.

There is no single Christian view of these matters.

We all hold our different political beliefs and ideas within the love Christ calls us to have for each other, even our political opponents.

We will disagree passionately about politics, and robust disagreement is essential.

In that disagreement we must find better language (me included) that helps us remove the bitterness and prioritise each other’s dignity and humanity.

*─ Rt Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, summer 2019*

### Humble and repentant hearts

We need, first of all, to listen ─ and to listen in particular from the Nazareths of England and Wales; the unglamorous, left-behind places, which modern capitalism does not value.

… This cannot be accomplished by pontificating from afar. It requires a patient engagement; listening and building relationships. Such patience was of course the practice of Jesus himself ─ not lecturing the people of his own day from afar on the need to welcome Samaritans but living and working in Nazareth for thirty years before living out that costly hospitality.

The Church of England shares some of the demographic weaknesses of the Remain campaign: disproportionately full of graduates, and disproportionately middle class.

But the church remains, for now at least, present and engaged in the poorest neighbourhoods, among the communities worst served by our current economic arrangements. It can play a crucial role in our nation's reconciliation.

This will not be achieved with vague appeals for niceness, but by listening deeply to those communities' anxieties, and helping the very people now encouraged to see each other as rivals to discover their common interests ─ organising together for affordable housing, an end to predatory lending, and a Living Wage.

But the Scriptures make clear that "good news for the poor" is about more than material change ─ though they give us no grounds for pretending it is ever about less.

… The Remain and the Leave campaigns both had the shakiest of ethical foundations. As Rowan Williams … observed, the referendum was ‘fought on both sides without a clear vision of either national or international identity, reverting again and again to manipulative, irrelevant anecdotal appeals to self-interest.’

The two issues ─ social justice for the communities left behind by capitalism and a spiritual foundation for our common life ─ are of course deeply connected. The church is called to live out a Gospel which affirms the unique dignity of every human being, whose true fulfilment can only be found in communities which worship God and embody his mercy and justice.

This is not a time to issue pronouncements from a place of privilege and self-righteousness, but to follow Christ into England's Nazareths with humble and repentant hearts.

*─ Revd Angus Ritchie, summer 2016*

### Complex and varied

… The ballot paper didn’t ask for an explanation; two crossed lines says very little.  Yet, there has been no shortage of interpretations, often reflecting judgements based on prejudice.  We can, and must, conclusively say that the reasons behind people’s decisions were complex and varied.

Stereotypes simply won’t do: ‘leavers’ aren’t all ignorant, bigoted, racist xenophobes and ‘Remainers’ aren’t all greedy, selfish middle-class elitists.  Realities are much more nuanced.  Sadly, however, Christian responses, in my observation, have not necessarily been any more measured or thoughtful than the general tone. If nothing else, the results demonstrate deep divisions running through UK society. Christians, in my experience, have been no less divided than the wider population.

… We are challenged to take the servant stance and offer ourselves again to God.  At the intersection of human responsibility and divine sovereignty rests the servant’s prayer of faith: “Your kingdom come; Your will be done”.  The renewal of our minds entails increasingly becoming gospel people, shaped by the great and true story of Scripture.

We must, therefore, reject petty and false stories that say that a bright future can only be secured by endless growth of a greed-fuelled economy, even if it keeps others disadvantaged at home and impoverished overseas.

As the debate over the consequences of Brexit unfolds, we will have increased opportunities to speak a different story – the gospel story of a sovereign God who is creator, redeemer and ultimate restorer of all things.  Into fear we speak faith.  Into uncertainty we speak hope.  Into hatred we speak love.  And our words are not empty – they must be met with concrete demonstrations of God’s presence as we serve others in His name.

*─ Dr Paul Coulter, lecturer in practical theology and missiology, Belfast Bible College, summer 2016*

### How we are going to live together

How we are going to live together with our neighbours, peaceably, fairly and creatively is the paramount concern prompted by the gospel, and the key issue in the referendum debate is whether we think staying in or coming out of the EU is the better of way of serving that concern. That of course still leaves room for sincerely held opinions to differ on whether the EU is in fact a serviceable instrument for God’s purpose of justice and peace in the world.

*─ Keith Clements, formerly general secretary of the Conference of European Churches, April 2016.*

## ‘WHY ARE YOU SO ANGRY’ - RESOURCE PACK FOR SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**There has been, and there continues to be, much anger, dismay and worry in the UK around Brexit. This paper contains four separate sections: an introduction entitled A difficult problem to solve; group discussions – some do’s and don’ts; things people say; and relevant weblinks. The selection as a whole is offered for use in talks and sermons, and in discussions and conversations.**

### A Difficult Problem to Solve – Insights from ‘Middle England’ novel by Jonathan Coe

Sophie and Ian are characters in a novel by Jonathan Coe set in the period 2009- 2018[[1]](#footnote-1). In 2016 they argue bitterly with other about whether or not the UK should or should not leave the European Union and they decide to take their dispute to a relationship’s counsellor, Lorna.

Lorna remarks that many of the couples she is seeing at present have mentioned Brexit as a key factor in their growing estrangement.

‘I usually start,’ says Lorna, ‘by asking each of you the same question. Sophie, why are you so angry that Ian voted Leave? And Ian, why are you so angry that Sophie voted Remain?’

Sophie thinks for a long time before answering. ‘I suppose,’ she eventually says, ‘because it made me think that, as a person, he’s not as open as I thought he was. That his basic model for relationships comes down to antagonism and competition, not cooperation.’

Lorna nods and turns to Ian. ‘It makes me think that she’s very naïve, that she lives in a bubble,’ he says, ‘and can’t see how other people around her might have a different opinion to hers. And this gives her a certain attitude. An attitude of moral superiority.’

Lorna turns to the two of them:

‘What’s interesting about both of those answers is that neither of you mentioned politics. As if the referendum wasn’t about Europe at all. Maybe something much more fundamental and personal was going on. Which is why this might be a difficult problem to solve.’

The more fundamental and personal things going on seem to include, Coe is suggesting, differences of worldview ─ different narratives about reality, human nature, evolution, progress, history, morality. Also, they include different expectations of one’s life partner, soul friend, intimate, significant other, best mate.

### Questions & Enquiries Based on the Sample Fiction

1. If Lorna had focused her enquiry around things such as these it would have been even more difficult for Ian and Sophie to answer her. It would, however, have captured more obviously why Coe wants to explore middle England at the current time, and why his readers want to keep turning the pages of his book.
2. The enquiries to Sophie and Ian might then have run along lines such as these:
3. Do you remember where you were and what your feelings were when you heard the result of the referendum in 2016? In what ways have your feelings changed since then? How do you feel about people whose views are different from your own?
4. This land you live in, a region in a nation which is part of the United Kingdom, part of the British Isles, part of Europe, part of western civilisation, part of Planet Earth. What do you like about the place you live in, and what are you grateful for? What do you not like, what are you ashamed of or embarrassed about, and which things do you wish were different? How do you see the past of this country?
5. In what ways, if any, do you feel not only English or British but also European? Which other European countries, if any, have you lived in or visited? How do you feel about people in certain other European countries?
6. What sort of a world do you reckon we all live in? One where a lot of people are essentially different from yourself, with different values, assumptions, interests, concerns, intentions – and are they prone, in consequence, to see you and treat you as a potential or actual threat? Do you yourself therefore need to be suspicious, wary, on your guard? Is it prudent to defend yourself, assert yourself, get your retaliation in first, be in control? Are human beings naturally aggressive and competitive?
7. Or do you think the world is basically a friendly place, a place where other people wish you well and will generally help you and trust you, be kind to you? Do you want, in consequence, to meet other people, and interact with them, and learn from them?
8. Is the world getting more friendly, would you say, and less dangerous, less threatening? Has it improved for you? Is it still improving? Is the best still to come? Or is everything going downhill, getting nastier, falling apart?
9. This land you live in. England, part of the United Kingdom, part of the British Isles, part of Europe, part of western civilisation, part of Planet Earth. What do you like about this place you’re in, what are you grateful for? What’s not to like, what are you ashamed of, which things do you wish were different?
10. Is the world getting more friendly, would you say, and less dangerous, less threatening? Has it improved for you? Is it still improving? Is the best still to come? Or is everything going downhill, getting nastier, falling apart?
11. And what do you look for in a spouse or best mate, a husband or wife? Someone who gives you moral support, courage, affirmation and confirmation, reassurance, belief in yourself? Or someone who admonishes, warns, challenges, points out when you appear to see demons that in point of fact aren’t there, someone who tells you when you seem to be getting arrogant, above yourself, superior?

No wonder Lorna comments that ‘this might be a difficult problem to solve’!

### Guidance: Group Discussion – some Do’s and Dont’s

* **Be sensitive**: Remember that for some people the result of the EU Referendum is still very sensitive. For example, there may have been heated arguments and disputes within families or between friends and colleagues, or other members of the same team, organisation, political party, union or church. And/or there may be worries around immigration status or job prospects.
* **Assume the best intentions in others:** When exploring ideas or challenging issues, people may use phrases that you find difficult or problematic. If this happens, try to give them the benefit of the doubt. The best of intentions may be hidden behind clumsy words.
* **Be prepared to listen:** Too often we listen only to respond or to correct. Try to listen actively in order to understand, engaging fully with what is being shared. If you are contributing more than listening, try to pause and give others the opportunity to share; if you are listening more than you share try to contribute to the conversation.
* **Try to understand rather than to convince:** Our ability to convince ourselves is much greater than our ability to convince others. Rather than trying to change the opinion of others use this as an opportunity to fully understand their thoughts and feelings. If everybody does this, it is likely that a great deal more will be exchanged as a result.
* **Comment on ideas and not on people:** If something inspires you or if there is something that jars it may be appropriate to highlight it to the rest of the group. It is important however to do so in terms of the ideas that were shared and not the people who shared them.
* **Stay curious**: Resist the urge to pigeonhole others by asking questions and respecting the complexity of the issues and the depth and experiences of the individuals that are sharing with you.
* **Confidentiality and respect:** Personal information shared within the group is confidential to that group and should not be passed on.
* **Source and acknowledgement to be given**: this is the appropriate approach.

### Things People Say

**This series of comments by people are presented as conversation starters, what do you think about what they are saying, why do you think they are thinking and speaking in the way that they are?**

* *“Basically, multicultural/multiracial/multi-religious societies cannot and do not work”*
* *“It was madness to let the whole population to ‘decide’ by ticking a box whether UK should remain in the EU”*
* *“The British people told politicians they wanted to leave the EU and politician haven’t listened, it’s sickening”*
* *“The levels of abuse, threats and insults in our society are now unacceptably high”*
* *“The Remain campaign was outrageously half-hearted”*
* *“The vote to Leave was largely a cry from people who felt left behind”*
* *“Too many MPs are simply motivated to succeed in their careers more than to care about ordinary people”*
* *“The Leave campaign id largely funded by very rich people who will personally benefit if UK exits from the EU”*
* *“Remainers should accept they lost the referendum and stop whingeing and moaning.”*

### Resource Links

**The following web links provide useful resources for discussion.**

***Social psychology insights:***

Both these publications are academic social psychology. But also, both publications are intended for, and readily accessible to, non-specialists:

* **Hidden Tribes: a study of America’s polarised landscape by Stephen Hawkins, Daniel Yudkin, Miriam Juan-Torroes and Tim Dixon**, published in October 2018, <https://www.moreincommon.com/hidden-tribes/>
* **The Psychology of Authoritarian Populism: a bird eye’s view by Daniel Yudkin,** published in June 2018, <https://www.moreincommon.com/thepsychology-of-authoritarian-populism>

***UK mediation, meeting and dialogue insights:***

These resources provide practical and readable articles about mediation, meeting and dialogue the following resources may be useful for discussion:

* **The imperatives of mutual recognition by Alice Thwaite**, Open Democracy, 19 February 2019 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/alicethwaite/imperatives-of-mutual-recognition>
* **The trip from London to Lincolnshire showed me Brexit divide’s depth by Ian Jack**, 16 February 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/16/trip-londonlincolnshire-brexit-divide?CMP=share_>
* **National dialogue: post-Brexit, we need a UK-wide coming together by Gabrielle Rifkind**, 26 January 2019, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/gabriellerifkind/post-brexit-we-need-uk-wide-dialogue>
* **Where next? How to cope with Brexit anxiety** by Susie Orbach, 26 January 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jan/26/which-way-next-how-to-copewith-the-psychological-uncertainity-of-brexity>
* **A People’s Vote won’t heal Brexit divisions – we need a People’s Debate by Rosemery Bechler**, 5 December 2018, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/caneurope-make-it/rosemary-bechler/rest-and-west-thoughts-on-brexit-andmigration-part-two>
* **Helping people find common ground about Brexit by Perry Walker**, 23 October 2018 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/perrywalker/helping-people-to-find-common-ground-on-brexit>

## PRAYERS & REFLECTIONS

**This is a selection of prayers about Brexit. Most but not all date from 2019. They reflect a variety of theological traditions and are from a range of different institutions and groups. All can be adapted in accordance with local customs, contexts and circumstances, and all can be used both in public worship and in informal gatherings, and in personal devotions.**

### Prayer for the United Kingdom

God of eternal love and power,

save our parliamentary democracy

protect our High Court of Parliament and all its members

from partiality and prejudice,

that they may walk humbly the path of kindness, justice and mercy.

Give them wisdom, insight and a concern for the common good.

The weight of their calling is too much to bear in their own strength:

therefore we pray earnestly, Father,

send them help from your holy place,

and be their tower of strength.

Lord, graciously hear us.

* ***Rt Revd John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, 2019***

### Prayer for Europe

God of all hopefulness, upholding and renewing your creation,

give your grace abundantly to our European Union leaders,

that they may lead with wisdom and insight,

and with a willingness to lead and be led.

And in your mercy cast out in us all fear,

godlessness, sin and love of money,

and help us to live truth, justice,

peace, compassion and joy,

to the glory of your name.

* ***Rt Revd John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, 2019***

### New Thresholds

Timeless and eternal God,

your love extends from generation to generation.

As we stand at new thresholds,

and explore new pathways in the life of our earthly nations,

help us embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead,

with humility to learn from those who have gone before

and a renewed commitment to seek your coming kingdom.

Make us mindful of those whose tomorrows

depend upon how we spend our today.

May we be remembered

as those who pursued higher interests than just our own,

and did not sacrifice the future

through failure to see beyond

the here and now.

Amen

*Source: The Joint Public Issues Team 2019, set up by the Baptist Union,*

*the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church*

*and the United Reformed Church.*

### True citizenship

God of all knowledge and understanding,

when others make decisions on our behalf

grant us the wisdom and grace to recognise when

deeper insights and broader interests should prevail,

and when we should challenge

that which is misguided and unfair.

Help us rise to the responsibilities and

opportunities of true citizenship;

to share our understandings with clarity and grace;

to encounter disagreement with a willingness to learn;

to welcome perspectives that differ from our own;

and to empower others when their voices are not heard,

So help us together to discern

that which is truly right

rather than what is merely popular.

Amen.

*Source: The Joint Public Issues Team 2019, set up by the Baptist Union,*

*the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church*

*and the United Reformed Church.*

### These strange times

Dear God, we greet another day of these strange times  
as if sitting in a city square at twilight,  
at the mercy of unknown faces  
making choices beyond our control.  
We wonder what will come –  
abandonment or care, isolation or generosity?

We ask for courage in this uncharted territory,  
where language and motive and intention  
are not fully understood.  
You are God-with-us, so we ask – is it safe to let down our guard?  
You are God-with-us, so we ask – is it wise to stay on our guard?

Like serpents and doves, we are fearful and trusting,  
savvy and innocent, living in the presence of our own discomfort,  
bearing with fracture and frustration.  
We did not choose this turmoil,  
we do not welcome this crisis.

God, how we hunger and thirst  
for a spacious, welcoming existence,  
for kindness in politics and co-operation in neighbourhoods,  
that our everyday encounters will be with smiles and not stares.

Keep us hopeful in our efforts  
to transform strangeness into belonging,  
and your world into an ever more hospitable place.

* *Jo Love, Church of Scotland, 2019*

### Gathering, sheltering, strengthening

Gathering God,   
who spoke words of comfort to Abram,  
pointing to a bright future that seemed so unlikely

as we wander this wilderness of Brexit uncertainty,  
bewildered and confused, frustrated and angry,  
help us all to hear your words beyond the chaos and din:  
‘Do not be afraid, I am your shield’.  
Christ with us, Christ within us  
Christ behind us, Christ before us.

Sheltering Son,  
In these days of trouble, cover with your protection  
those made most vulnerable by the fall-out of indecision,  
gather under your wings all who are feeling overlooked and marginalised,  
holding their breath for fear a fragile peace might fracture  
where to call home.  
How shall we make ends meet?  
Help us all to hear your words beyond the chaos and din:  
‘Do not be afraid, I am your shield’.

Strengthening Spirit,  
waiting on you, let our hearts take courage,  
mindful of our citizenship in heaven,  
working for your will to be done on earth.  
May all those in political leadership  
be willing to seek and serve the good of all creation.  
Help us all hear your words beyond the chaos and din:  
‘Do not be afraid, I am your shield’.

Christ comfort and restore us.

Christ beneath us, Christ above us,

Christ in quiet, Christ in danger.

Christ in hearts of all who love us,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

* *Susan Brown, Church of Scotland, 2019*

### God of encounter

Today we pray for community.

Praying to the Community of the Trinity, we stand in mystery and desire for connection.

In many ways we experience this mystery with others: friendships, family, in moments of silence, in moments of work. We also know the pain of division, of separation;

we know the appeal of enmity and the temptation to think that past injuries are behind us simply because they do not affect us.

May we all be drawn into the mystery of community, that truthful, honest, demanding, forgiving, risky space that exists between us.

This is the space where we encounter each other.

This is the space where we encounter God, and it is to God we pray.

God of encounter, hear our prayer.

Today we pray for peace.

Many know the ravages of war. We pray for all those negotiating peace,

whether in houses of parliament or in places of refuge.

May they find the wisdom and generosity to shape words that will support lasting peace.

For one of the names of God is Shalom, and it is to God we pray.

God of encounter, hear our prayer.

God of land and sea, we remember that it was Patrick,

a young refugee trafficked by those whose interests were violent,

who brought a message of the gospel to Ireland.

We thank you for the love he had for a people not his own.

We bless Britain his homeland and Ireland, his adopted country.

He is rightfully the patron saint of Ireland, a

nd today we also name him the patron saint of refugees and trafficked peoples.

You are with all people, especially those who have been ignored, forgotten or mistreated,

and it is for their liberation that we pray to you.

God of encounter, hear our prayer.

God of welcomes, we are grateful for places of welcome.

We thank you for the welcome offered by Corrymeela to thousands of people every year.

We pray for the ongoing support and success of the work,

both at the Corrymeela centre and in the community.

We bless and pray for all initiatives of good will and community relations healing British-Irish relations, in both Ireland and Britain. In our shared history we see that you have given us stories that might heal us, and it is to you we pray.

God of encounter, hear our prayer.

God of wisdom, we pray for our leaders.

We give thanks for those who take the risk of public office.

May they listen, learn and lead in the ways that lead to peace,

in the ways that lead to justice,

in the ways that lead to safety.

We hold them before you, and it is to you we pray.

God of encounter, hear our prayer.

God of healing, we hold in our hearts today all who are bereaved.

When we are bereaved our hearts are changed,

and you are the one who knows every change of every heart.

You know our hearts better than we do, and it is to you we pray.

God of encounter, hear our prayer.

* *Corrymeela Community, Northern Ireland, 2019*

### Your presence and your peace

Gracious, loving God we give thanks today for all of the blessings

we have in the knowledge of your presence and your peace,

we give thanks for our nation

and the freedom that we enjoy.  
  
Two years after the vote to leave the European Union

we come to a critical time in the negotiations

that seek to agree the basis

on which the separation will work.  
  
We pray for the senior members of our government

as they meet together,

we ask that in your mercy you would bring harmony

and a common sense of purpose.  
  
In the wider negotiations with the EU we pray that

a mutually beneficial structure will be agreed

that will enable crucial trading and cooperative relationships.  
  
We are deeply thankful that for many years

we have been blessed by relative peace

and freedom from war in Europe.

As a new chapter opens we earnestly pray for continued stability

in this geographic area.  
  
Finally we ask that as a nation we would be able

to move forward together

after the divisions the referendum has exposed.

May the Christian community provide support

to the oppressed and the needy,

and in our struggles encourage us to show

the love and compassion of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We bring our petitions to you, our eternal Father,

in the name of your Son Jesus Christ,

and by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Amen

* *Revd Jonathan Beer, The Baptist Times, 2018*

### Past, present and future

God of past, present and future,

be with us as we take our next steps as nations together.

May we strive to love our neighbour as ourselves

listening and speaking with respectful kindness, embracing difference.

remembering how much all have been forgiven by you,

May we offer friendship, grant mercy,

and seek peace and justice

in our shared future.

God of our borders and our belongings,

In these days of incivility,

so much of our talk to one another is hard:

talk of breaks and splits and broken relationships.

of cliff edges and disorderly withdrawals.

Even words which should be soft are not.

Our union is disunited, our community is coarsened.

We confess it’s hard to rejoice in the richness of your blessing

if our enemy is not impoverished at the same time,

difficult to celebrate our freedoms won in Christ

if our opponents are not permanently disadvantaged.

Forgive us if our faces are flushed with anger

and the hands of our friendship

are twisted into cold fists of rejection.

So we pray:

Bring comfort to troubled spirits

whose futures are uncertain,

bring peace to conflicted hearts

whose loyalties are torn,

bring wisdom to confused minds

whose decisions are momentous.

Teach all of us grace and generosity

in this time of discourtesy

Guide us in how to enjoy the liberating work of Jesus

without the need to see God’s vengeance worked on others.

For the sake of our witness to you,

for the sake of our neighbours,

for the sake of ourselves.

* *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2019*

### A future yet to unfold

God of all time,

you are preparing us for a future yet to unfold,  
teach us to be a people willing to travel in opinion and practice  
rather than those marooned on an island of uncertainty.

God of all time,  
You are preparing us for a future yet to be revealed.  
Teach us to be a people willing to travel in opinion and practice  
rather than those marooned upon an island of uncertainty.

As politicians meet, in corridors, meetings rooms and coffee shops,  
may they look for common ground on new horizons  
where the needs of those they serve are best met.

As young and old search for identity,  
in groups, alone, or in social media,  
may they recognise the value of difference  
and of speaking with another,  
and create a world where passion  
leads to conversation rather than pain.

As communities living together,  
in villages, towns and cities,  
may we be welcoming of our neighbours,  
building a world where the difficult discussions  
reveal the Presence of heaven.

* *Mary Ann Rennie, Church of Scotland, 2019*

### Your gentle rule

Living Christ, you are present with us in all times,

sharing the brightness of our joy

and walking with us through times of darkness.

You speak words of wisdom into our folly,

you speak words of reassurance into our fear,

you seek out those who are lost and looking for the way.

In these times of confusion, uncertainty and fearfulness about our nation’s future,

we need your wisdom, your reassurance and your compassion.

Speak to all of us now, leaders, citizens, fearful residents, those with a voice and those whose voices seem never to be heard. We lay before you the life of our nation and long for your gentle rule to be established amongst us.

As our leaders try to make decisions that will address an impasse,

Give them wisdom and a true capacity for discernment, that at the forefront of people’s minds is not political advantage but the wellbeing of all people.

As people feel fearful of what the future holds, help us to build a community in which all feel welcome and heard and a truer sense of belonging to one another is established.

* *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2019*

### God’s love endures forever

God you are here,

You are in the midst of all of life

And Your love endures forever.

In our stillness and in our busyness, our coming and our going,

opening and closing –

God’s love endures forever

In our belief and in our unbelief,

our faith and our certainty,

doubt and apathy –

God’s love endures forever

In our times of feast and in our times of famine,

our too much and our too little,

enough and not enough –

God’s love endures forever

In our anger and in our angst,

our passion and our pain,

joy and jealousy,

delight and denial –

God’s love endures forever

In our wounding and in our healing, our making and our mending,

coming together and drifting apart –

God’s love endures forever

In our giving and in our grudging,

our receiving and our resenting,

accepting and rejecting –

God’s love endures forever

In our lifting up and in our tearing down,

our building and our destroying,

welcoming and hostility –

God’s love endures forever

In our living and in our dying, our hoping and despairing,

in all of our beginnings and all of our endings –

God’s love endures forever.

* *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2019*

### The evolving and expanding universe

Blessed are you,

generous and compassionate God,

to you be praise and glory for ever.

Creator of the evolving and expanding universe,

you are forming humankind in your own likeness.

Lead us and heal us through change and chance

in the tribes and nations where we happen to dwell,

and in our deals and dealings with one another;

that in our work and in our talk,

our growing and our unfolding,

we do justice and love kindness,

and walk humbly with you,

playing thus with you a part

in the coming and nurture

of your gentle rule and reign,

compassionate, contemplative, courageous.

* *A parish church in Oxfordshire, 2019*

### Your steadfast love endures forever

Our holy heavenly Father, we thank you for you are good

and your steadfast love endures forever.  
  
Your eyes are on us, the righteous in Jesus, and your ears are attentive to our prayers.

Thank you.  
  
Hear us as we bring before you our political leaders

and the challenging conversations and decisions

they have to make around Brexit.   
  
Give them the wisdom they need – your wisdom – and your favour,

so that the outcome maintains the stability and peace

that Europe has enjoyed for many years.

As Nehemiah interceded for God’s people Israel,

let us continue to intercede in the name of Jesus Christ

for our political leaders and our countryas we navigate

these uncertain times.  
  
Lord, the God of heaven,

the great and awesome God,

who keeps His covenant of love with those who love Him

and keep His commandments,

let your ear be attentive and your eyes open

to hear our prayers for our political leaders and the future of the UK.

At this time of heavy responsibility, God,

who in Jesus broke down all barriers

between people of different races,

rich and poor, male and female, Jew and Gentile,

between heaven and earth, we worship you.

At this time of heavy responsibility,

as decisions about future relationships

with our neighbours in Europe are being taken,

we pray for our leaders: that they will lead wisely,

listen attentively, exercise grace,

and in their deliberations know peace.

At this time of uncertainty within our nations and communities,

we pray for ourselves, that we shall remain open to the stranger,

welcoming to the neighbour, and committed to those who struggle.

We pray for your church of which we are a part,

that we might be a place of honest reflection,

respectful dialogue, open friendship, deep humility and warm reconciliation.

We pray that we might be a community that points to heaven,

and shows ways in which heaven is glimpsed on earth.

* *Martin Johnstone, Church of Scotland, 2019*

### The next stage of our journey together

We are a nation proud of our diversity and strong values of inclusion, acceptance and tolerance. Let these values flourish as we embark upon the next stage of our journey together. Let us turn towards each other and not away from each other in times of difficulty. Let our values and our diversity continue to be a beacon of light in the post-Brexit world.

As our great nation embarks upon a new journey outside of the European Union and begins to take its first steps towards a new future, help us to continue to build a strong, inclusive and compassionate society. Instil in our hearts a deep love, respect and understanding of each other, irrespective of our backgrounds, so that we may be in the strongest position to move forward into the next chapter in its history.

At this time of difficult negotiations and decision-making for our leaders, give strength and wisdom to the authorities so that they take the steps necessary to benefit our nation.

Eternal God, we pray that You enable all communities to come together in solidarity to continue working towards a society of peace and tolerance.

*Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner, rabbi to Reform Judaism*

*Bishop Rob Wickham, bishop of Edmonton*

*Imam Qari Asim MBE, Leeds Makkah Mosque*

*Gurinder Singh Josan, Sikh Council UK*

*Cllr Dhruv Patel, City Hindus Network*

*2017*

### Tie in a living tether

O God of earth and altar

Bow down and hear our cry,

Our earthly rulers falter,

Our people drift and die.

The walls of gold entomb us,

The swords of scorn divide

Take not thy thunger from us,

But take away our pride.

From all that terror teaches,

From lies of tongue and pen,

From all the easy speeches

That comfort cruel men,

From sale and profanation

Of honour and the sword,

From sleep and from damnation,

Deliver us, good Lord.

Tie in a living tether

The prince and priest and thrall,

Bind all our lives together,

Smite us and save us all;

In ire and exultation

Aflame with faith, and free,

Lift up a living nation,

A single sword to thee.

* *G.K. Chesterton (1874- 1936) Written in 1905*

God of redemption,

your challenge is peace.

Given not as the world gives it – with limits, conditions and reversibility,

but unconditionally – with infinite love.

We pray today for those of us who find ourselves

in places we do not want to inhabit –

a home or community where we no longer feel welcome;

an identity that feels cut off at its roots.

We pray for those of us with feelings we do not know what to do with –

loss and grief,

fear and anxiety,

aggression and vengeance,

exclusion and banishment,

uncertainty about our future.

Bless us now, whatever we feel and whoever we are.

Dwell in our souls deeply.

Give us the courage to tell our stories honestly and openly;

the compassion to hear the stories of others with an open heart;

the discipline to share what we have;

the discernment to advocate for those more vulnerable than we are,

and the means to be agents of care and connection,

justice and hope –

to seek out and celebrate the life and joy in our communities,

setting a tone in harmony with you.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus and those who came after him,

who lived in times of bitter conflict,

who were perplexed but not driven to despair,

afflicted in every way, but not crushed,

persecuted, but not forsaken.

All the time, proclaiming you.

Amen

*Prayer by Alison Webster*

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51008920> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)