

PRAYERS FOR USE ON THE SUNDAYS BEFORE AND AFTER THE REFERENDUM

The referendum on Scottish independence takes place on Thursday 18th September 2014. The member churches of Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) have remained neutral – but not uninterested – on the question of Scottish independence. Scotland’s churches have sought to urge respectful dialogue in the independence debate and consideration of the most vulnerable and marginalised in Scottish society (irrespective of the result of the referendum).

ACTS was asked to prepare prayers and liturgical material for use by churches on the Sundays before and after the referendum (i.e. 14th and 21st September). They do not comprise a single liturgy but a variety of material from which choices can be made for adaptation for different uses and context. This material also takes into account the readings from the Revised Common Lectionary and the Roman Lectionary. It is prepared by a group which is representative of the member Churches of ACTS.

The prayers can be downloaded from the site.

This resource consists of:

- 1. A suggested outline for a time of prayer for small groups**
- 2. A prayer based on the values inscribed on the Scottish Parliamentary Mace**
- 3. Materials for the main service on the Sundays before and after the Referendum**
- 4. Some historic Scottish prayers.**

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A PRAYER TIME FOR GROUP GATHERINGS IN THE DAYS BEFORE AND AFTER THE REFERENDUM OF SEPTEMBER 18

Introduction

As Christians in Scotland, and particularly as members of the nine Churches which together form the Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS), we can contribute greatly to the quality of this national referendum by our prayer. Many churches will highlight prayer for the Referendum in the Sunday worship times of September 14 and 21.

Not everyone will be at a church service on these Sundays, but many, especially the housebound, will welcome the invitation to pray for the country at this time. The following short outline for a time of prayer is offered to help individuals and/or groups (families, prayer groups, colleagues, friends) who gather in the time before and after September 18, to talk and to pray together in hope that the atmosphere and the outcome of these days will be in accordance with the mind of God.

A group time of prayer together needs a leader who will accept responsibility for managing the time agreed by the group, for making sure that the meeting place is suitably prepared, and that any materials for reading or singing are available for the group members. The leader needs to be familiar with the content and the flow of the prayer so as to be helpful to the members. Ordinarily, the leader will welcome the group members and start the prayer time. Others may well lead the singing and the reading, as appropriate. In the following outline some minimal guidance for the leader is offered by short suggestions in italics – for example, *the leader says* – but the process will depend on the size and nature of the group and is to be adapted as needed.

Opening

(For the Leader) Start with welcome, and the brief reminder that we are being asked to participate in making a very important decision for all of us in Scotland. Remind the group members that, as Christians together, we all share the prayer of Christ – the 'Our Father' / the Lord's Prayer – and most of us pray every day:

*'Our Father in heaven ...
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done'*

Suggest taking a few moments of silence now to pray those words in our hearts as we think of the Referendum.

Hymn

Let us sing, asking the Spirit of God to be in our hearts and minds as we ask ourselves what is best for Scotland and its people

Holy Spirit, come confirm us (Brian Foley)

Singing the Faith 382, Rejoice and Sing 298, New English Hymnal 140, Laudate 311, CH4 640, Hymns A&M New Standard 471, Hymns Old and New most editions

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me

Found in most collections

or another hymn

Hearing the Word of God

The passage should be read slowly and clearly, from the Bible, by a reader who has taken time to prepare the reading

I Kings 3:5, 7-12

At Gibeon the Lord appeared in a dream to Solomon during the night. God said, 'Ask what you would like me to give you.' Solomon replied, 'Lord, my God, you have made your servant king in succession to David my father. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. Your servant finds himself in the midst of this people of yours that you have chosen, a people so many its numbers cannot be counted or reckoned. Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil, for who could govern this people of yours that is so great?' It pleased the Lord that Solomon should have asked for this. 'Since you have asked for this,' the Lord said, 'and not asked for long life for yourself or riches or the lives of your enemies, but have asked for a discerning judgement for yourself, here and now I do what you ask. I give you a heart that is wise and shrewd as none before you has had and none will have after you.'

Or choose from the following:

Deuteronomy 30:11-20 (Choose life)

Matthew 5:1-10, 13 (The Beatitudes, 'the charter of the Kingdom')

1 Thess. 5:14-22 (Be at peace among yourselves, aim at what is best)

Matthew 6:9-15 (Prayer and forgiveness)

Reflection

Ask the question –

What do you hear, and what grace or strength from God will you ask for?
Silent time or sharing may follow this, depending on the agreed time span.

Prayer

Collect from the Mass for the Preservation of Peace and Justice

This could be said by the Leader or by all together

O God of peace, who are peace itself,
and whom a spirit of discord cannot grasp,
nor a violent mind receive;
grant that those who are one in heart
may persevere in what is good,
and that those in conflict
may forget evil and be healed.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing

The Leader says

Called together in Christ, open to God's future, we say Psalm 122

This may be said by one reader with the group saying the response 'For the sake...'

I was glad when they said to me,
'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'
And now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.
*For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.*

Jerusalem – built as a city, strongly compact,
to it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the Name of the Lord.
*For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.*

For there the thrones of judgement were set up,
the thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
'May those who love you prosper.'
*For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.*

'Peace be within your walls,
security within your towers.'
For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say 'Peace be within you.'
*For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.*

Blessing prayer (may be said by all)

May Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us with peace and hope as we go from this place of prayer. Amen.

For those who can spend only a short time in prayer, it may help to pray slowly, line by line, the Prayer offered in the 'Values for Scotland' sessions prepared by ACTS on the basis of the four words inscribed on the Scottish Parliamentary Mace: WISDOM, JUSTICE, COMPASSION, INTEGRITY. This prayer may also be used in the main Sunday services.

THE PRAYER OF THE MACE

Almighty God, Creator and Father,
we come to you in trust and hope,
grateful for your many gifts to us,
your countless blessings.

Thank you for this our country
and all its people;
thank you for the history which has made us who we are.

At this special time,
instil in us your Spirit of wisdom and integrity,
of true justice and compassion.

Help us to move forward in that Spirit
as brothers and sisters of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Forgive the conflicts and the evils that have influenced us.
Gently heal the scars of pain and resentment
that can remain in and among us all.

Strengthen and increase among us
the love and harmony of purpose
that belong to your reign.

Make of us apostles of truth and peace
as we move among our fellow citizens at this time.

As we come to you today, remind us of your call
to be disciples of your Son.
May we turn to him for light
and ask through and with him for your grace.

Taught by his saving command,
we dare to say
'Our Father who art in heaven ...'

If this prayer is used in another context where the Lord's Prayer/Our Father is already being said, a doxological ending could be substituted.

(The original "Values for Scotland" sessions, including this prayer, can be found at www.acts-scotland.org)

**PRAYER MATERIAL FOR USE ON THE SUNDAYS/WEEKENDS
BEFORE AND AFTER THE REFERENDUM**
at the main service

Note This is not a single liturgy but a variety of material from which choices can be made for adaptation for different uses and contexts. Except where indicated, the prayers are designed to be used on the Sunday either side of the Referendum

An Opening Dialogue

The hand of God encircles us:
God of our beginnings holding us firm.

The feet of Christ walk before us:
God of our journeying showing us the way.

The winds of the Spirit lift us up:
God who is our company, our energy, our joy.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon, *Liturgies for the Journey of Life. Used by permission.*

Scripture Sentences

Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name. Psalm 86:11

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Psalm 46:1-3 NRSV

An opening prayer

We praise you, God our Shepherd and Friend,
our Rock and strong Tower, our Wisdom and Love.
Once a nation who knew not your name,
you have formed us as your people,
summoning us through the costly lives of saint and martyr,
through preacher, prophet, artist, and politician,
through women and men of faith in every place
and in every time.

In the coming of the stranger we have been refreshed
with new insights and new skills honed in other cultures;
in the path of the invader we have found unity and purpose;
in the face of adversity we have learned the gift of sharing;
in opening our minds to your creation,
we have widened the horizons of our knowledge,
finding fresh cause to glorify your name;
in travel and pilgrimage we have learned to bury prejudice;
in the shame of our actions we have come to repentance,
and discovered the new life of the forgiven.

Now we come to you
in a time of new shaping and fresh challenge,
to listen for your word for us,
to feel your companionship as we travel on,
crossing over to a new place
and moving forward on a new terrain,
familiar yet unfamiliar.
In the name of Jesus Christ we pray,
who on the Cross broke the ground of new life
and brought us to a new freedom. Amen.

The last section of this prayer recalls the Exodus readings on the two surrounding Sundays as well as the Roman Catholic celebration of the Triumph of the Cross.

Three options for an act of intercession are offered:

- 1. A prayer of intercession with biddings (Prayer of the Faithful)**
- 2. A prayer of intercession with Kyries**
- 3. A prayer of intercession suitable for use both within and beyond Scotland**

1. A prayer of intercession with biddings (Prayer of the Faithful)

The presiding minister says

We stand together in the presence of Almighty God, especially to pray today for this our nation and for our own community.

The leader of prayer says

After each pause for silent prayer our response will be:

Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

The leader of prayer continues

We pray for Scotland and its people at this time of referendum and ask for wisdom and discernment as we look to the future ...

We pray for respect for each other in our differences, and a genuine desire to listen and learn why others think differently ...

We pray for patience and courage for the people of the land as we face uncertainties and adjustments, whatever the outcome ...

We pray for new energy to meet the challenges of poverty and injustice in our society that have come to light in our debates and discussions ...

We pray for those who govern, that they may do so creatively and wisely for the good of the nation and the wellbeing of those beyond our shores and our borders ...

We pray for those who feel hurt or dishonoured by the opinions of others, and for those saddened by the outcome ...

We pray for the churches that in continuing to work for unity among themselves they may bear witness to the richness that comes from reconciliation and acceptance of difference ...

We pray for all in our communities who are in need at this time, because of illness, unemployment, poverty, lack of opportunity or the experience of rejection, and pray that we may continue to work towards a society where all are valued and given their place ...

The presiding minister concludes

Almighty God, Father of Mercies, hear our prayers, offered to you through and with Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

2. A prayer of intercession with Kyries

The responses may be replaced with a short pause

God of all nations,
you have traced upon this world
the outline of your Kingdom,
and have granted us the hope
that we shall be reshaped in its likeness.
Hear us as we pray for this our nation,
those whom it has nurtured,
those also who have come to call it home,
and those who have crossed its borders and left its shores
but love it dearly.

Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy.

At this time of remaking of our life together,
when so much seems uncertain,
and we turn to new challenges
and continue to grapple with the old,
we pray earnestly for the good of each other
and for the peace of each one.
May we find at this time,
in the ferment of discussion and argument,
in public debate and in family life,
an understanding of how we must be as a nation
and an energy to follow it through.
May we turn from these debates with new insight,
a new passion for justice,
a new clarity about the strategies we should seek,
that make room for all,
and make room for you, our God.

Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy.

May we lay aside the passions of the ballot box,
the anger that cannot understand why others do not see as we do.
Help us to realise that difference is not just something to be accommodated
but that difference is necessary for the health of a body.
Enable our interaction with others to bring discernment,
sharpen our perceptions, increase our energy for the good,
expand our ability to love.

Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy.

We pray that all who call you Lord,
in our several denominations and Christian families,
may value and share each our heritage
but also seek to discern the Christ
that is precious to the other,
that we may show the way to unity
and be a sign and foretaste of that promised time
in which all are reconciled and at peace,
giving glory to you, our God,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

3. A prayer of intercession with silences

(This option is the most suitable, with only small adjustment, for use outwith Scotland)

Brief silences may follow each petition

Before the Referendum

I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord Almighty. (Haggai 2:7)

Gracious and ever-loving God, bless us as we prepare for the independence referendum this week. At this culmination of intense debate, we pray for wisdom, discernment, tolerance and peace.

We give thanks for democracy and the rule of law. We pray that constitutional debate in this land and throughout the world be marked by reasonable discourse and be free from violence and bloodshed; may this referendum serve as an example to the world of peaceful resolution.

We pray for those who will celebrate and for those who will be disappointed. Guide this nation in the way of justice – especially for the poor, marginalised and unloved in society. Help us to be guided by the light of your reconciling love in Christ, that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Hear our prayers also for all who govern these nations, for Elizabeth our Queen, for those who frame our laws and shape our common life; for those who keep the peace and administer justice; for those who teach, those who heal, and all who serve the community, particularly the ministers and members of the Parliament of Scotland.

Our prayers we ask in Jesus' name, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all glory and praise now and forever. Amen.

After the Referendum

The Lord is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens. (Psalm 113:4)

Eternal God, we pray for the people of Scotland in the aftermath of the referendum on independence. We pray for those celebrating the outcome. We pray for those who are disappointed.

Guide us that we might not succumb to triumphalism or despondency. In Christian unity, with tolerance and respect, help us to work together for justice, peace and the good of society, in this land and beyond, particularly those with the least share in material prosperity.

We pray for Elizabeth our Queen, for Members of the Scottish Parliament of all parties and for those in positions of influence and responsibility.

Inspire and challenge us to know that true sovereignty rests not in any earthly realm, territory or power but ultimately in you, gracious and forgiving God. So now, with new confidence and hope, may we walk forward in the light of your reconciling love in Christ, that your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Our prayers we ask in Jesus' name, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all glory and praise now and forever. Amen.

An Act of Commitment

1 From the ACTS Order for St Andrew's Day 2000:

The leader says

We are a mixture of peoples,
welded together by the legacies
of skill and art and goodly customs
enriching the whole community,
enlightening the world,
and fostering wonder and beauty,
delight and hope.

All say

**We embrace our inheritance:
and renew our commitment
to use our liberties for purposes of peace,
to care with reverence for this good land and every land,
to leave for our successors a world of freedom and truth,
honour and courtesy,
to strive for a society based on hope, trust and love.**

2 From *Liturgies for the Journey of Life*, Dorothy McRae-McMahon Used by permission.

All say together

**We will walk this way together,
with Jesus Christ in our midst.
Our hands are open to receive,
our hearts are open to give,
our minds long to learn
and our souls reach out to each other.
This time is eternal time for us
and God will be our blessing.**

FOR A EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

An Act of Reconciliation and the Sharing of the Peace

In the heat of debate, in strong feelings expressed, at a time of anxiety or of longing, we meet in the name of Christ who, entering entered human conflict, also showed in his person the divine love which undergirds all human relationships, and stands ready to lead to peace and reconciliation. Let us share with each other a sign of the peace of Christ.

In place of the Proper Preface

And we give thanks
that you have reconciled us to yourself through Christ
and have given us the ministry of reconciliation
to share with all humankind

In place of the special intercessions within the Eucharistic Prayer (diptychs)

For those who fear for the future,
those who feel rejected and unheard,
those who rejoice at new possibilities for our life together
those who regret things said and friendships put at risk,
those who carry the burden of taking the next steps in our nation's journey.

A Collect from the Mass for the Preservation of Peace and Justice

O God of peace, who are peace itself,
and whom a spirit of discord cannot grasp,
nor a violent mind receive;
grant that those who are one in heart
may persevere in what is good,
and that those in conflict
may forget evil and be healed.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Sept 14

Revised Common Lectionary

Exodus 14:19-31 Crossing of the Red Sea to freedom
Romans 14:1-12 Do not pass judgement on another; each is accountable to God
Matthew 18:21-35 The source and nature of forgiveness

Roman Lectionary (Triumph of the Holy Cross)

Numbers 21:4b-9 The complaints of the people; the bronze serpent
Philippians 2:6-11 Obedient to the point of death
John 3: 13-17 Moses, the serpent, and the Cross.

Sept 21

Revised Common Lectionary

Exodus 16:2-15 The uncertainty and unfamiliarity of the future (quails, manna)

Philippians 1:21-30 A reason for living: seeing others live in Christ

Matthew 20:1-16 The minimum wage; the first shall be last, the last first

Other suggested readings

Deuteronomy 30:11-20 Choose life

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12 Solomon asks for discernment

Matthew 5:1-11, (12-14) The Beatitudes

Romans 5:3-13 One body, many members .. gifts that differ

Galatians 5:13-17, 22-26 Love your neighbour .. the fruits of the Spirit

Thessalonians 5:14-22 Be at peace .. aim at what is best for each other

Hymns and songs

Most current hymn books have sections on national life, or justice and peace, in which will be found suitable hymns and songs.

SOME HISTORIC SCOTTISH PRAYERS

1. From the Records of the Convention of Royal Burghs 1593 (shortened)

O Lord, as nothing can prosper without thy blessing, lighten our dull senses with the light of thy Holy Spirit, and show us by thine own wisdom what is meetest to be done. Reform our hearts that we may eschew the evil and pursue the good. Set right our unruly affections, expel our coldness and ignorance, that, setting apart all partiality and self love, we may do all things with sincerity, zeal and uprightness of heart. Fill us with thy good Spirit, that we may seek nothing but thy glory, the commonweal of our estate, and the quietness of our country; for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all praise and glory for ever. Amen.

2. Collects from the Scottish Psalter of 1595

For Psalm 133 ('How good and pleasant when kindred live in unity') *altered*

Gracious Lord, who are not the God of confusion or discord, but the God of concord and of peace; join our hearts and affections in such sort together that we may walk as brothers and sisters in thy house, in charity and love, and as members of the Body of Christ. Let the oil of sanctification, that is, thy Holy Spirit, inflame us, and the dew of thy blessing continually fall upon us, that we may obtain life eternal; through the same Jesus Christ; Amen.

From Psalm 121 ('I will lift my eyes to the hills')

O Heavenly Father, Creator of heaven and earth, who hast received us into thy protection; suffer not that our afflictions so overcome us that we cast off all confidence in thee; but rather prosper and conduct all our enterprises, and give a happy end and issue to all our businesses, that we may continually be more and more assured that we are of the number of those whom thou hast chosen to salvation; through Jesus Christ, thy Son; Amen.

3. By Ian Maclaren, pen name of Rev Dr John Watson (d.1907) author of Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush and other novels of the 'kailyard school' (shortened)

O God most merciful and gracious, be pleased to remember the whole body of our people, rich and poor, high and low, young and old together. Overcome the power of national sins; spread abroad thy power in every heart, furthering every good work of our hands, advancing every pure influence in our midst, healing the divisions of society, and hastening the day when all shall have work to do and shall desire to do it in thy fear; and there shall be joy and peace and righteousness throughout our land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Additions may be made to this section