

## **A SERVICE TO CELEBRATE THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY**

In 1994, Churches Together for Families grew out of a concern of churches to work together to celebrate the International Year of the Family. One of the first events was an ecumenical service of thanksgiving. We have adapted the original service which you are welcome to use at any stage during the year.

### **TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY**

A suggested outline order of service, based on the National Ecumenical Service at St Martin-in-the-Fields in January 1994.

*All* Jesus Christ is the Light of the World  
**a light no darkness can quench**

Hymn Thou whose almighty Word, *or another hymn about Christ the light of the World*

*All* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
**who is worthy of all thanksgiving and praise**

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name: to you be glory and praise for ever! We rejoice at your goodness in creation. The ancient stories tell how you saw it was not good for us to live in isolation, but in companionship and relationship. We read in scripture of your purposes made known through the tribes and families of your ancient people, the Jews. In time you sent your Son Jesus Christ, born into a human family, to redeem us, and to bring us back into full communion with you. Through him you have broken down the barriers that divide the human family and made us one in him. So we join with your whole creation, one family in heaven and on earth praising you and saying:

*All* **Glory to God, glory to God  
Glory to God in the highest! Amen**

Reading Genesis 45.1-15  
*Joseph reveals his identity to his family*

Silence, Music or Dance

Prayers We give thanks for God's gifts we discern in families around us

We thank you for the resilience we see in families, for the courage and resourcefulness of people under pressure, and their love which outweighs all hurts

*All* We give you thanks  
**and praise your holy name.**

We thank you for family caring which bridges generations, for all who can be relied on to be there for those who need them, and the selflessness of their love.

*All* We give you thanks  
**and praise your holy name.**

We thank you for the joy which shines through loving families even in adversity, for the light in children's eyes, and the inner happiness of knowing we are loved.

*All* We give you thanks  
**and praise your holy name.**

We thank you for the sense of belonging within the family, for the trust and peace that comes from being accepted as we are.

*All* We give you thanks  
**and praise your holy name.**

We thank you for the opportunities for growth which family life brings, for all the learning from each other that leads to fuller and richer life.

*All* We give you thanks  
**and praise your holy name.**

Hymn Lord of our growing years, *or another hymn about God's presence throughout life*

Reading Ephesians 3.14-end  
*We are all one because we are part of God's family*

Silence, Music or Dance

Prayers In confidence that God's love surrounds all creation, we bring our prayers for families facing difficulties, and light a candle to represent our loving concern

We pray for families who are homeless, for those who are overcrowded, for those who feel insecure.

*We keep silence whilst a candle is lit*

*All* We pray your light may shine  
**and bring healing and hope**

We pray for families who face illness and pain, for those who see people they love suffering, and who feel helpless.

*We keep silence whilst a candle is lit*

*All* We pray your light may shine  
**and bring healing and hope**

We pray for families facing loss and separation, through deprivation, disagreement and division, divorce or death; who live with the constant ache of someone not being present, or who feel rejected.

*We keep silence whilst a candle is lit*

*All* We pray your light may shine  
**and bring healing and hope**

We pray for families coping with long-term disability; for the young learning to handle everyday living; for adults for whom life is strenuous; for elderly people, learning to live with declining powers; and for all who feel life is limited.

*We keep silence whilst a candle is lit*

*All* We pray your light may shine  
**and bring healing and hope**

We pray for families who have come to the end of their resources, and now feel hopeless and despairing; for all who feel vulnerable and alone.

*We keep silence whilst a candle is lit*

*All* We pray your light may shine  
**and bring healing and hope**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn O God in heaven, whose loving plan, *or another hymn about family life*

Address

Silence, Music or Dance

Dedication *During this, the five candles lit during the previous prayers are handed to representative families.*

Take the light of Christ into your home, and with it the gift of God's presence, to give you resilience in all you face together.

Take the light of Christ into your home, and with it the gift of God's love, to inspire you in all your mutual caring.

Take the light of Christ into your home, and with it the gift of God's grace, to fill your hearts with the joy of the Lord.

Take the light of Christ into your home, and with it the gift of God's peace, to give you confidence that you belong to him for ever.

Take the light of Christ into your home, and with it the gift of God's life, that you may grow in love all the days of your life.

May we all know these gifts of God in every family represented here. We dedicate ourselves to bring the light of Christ into all our relationships, and to share God's gifts wherever we go.

*All*     **Take our hands, our feet and our hearts for your service**

*All*     Jesus Christ is the Light of the World  
**a light no darkness can quench**

Hymn     *(written by Andrew Body for the service in 1994. The intended tune is*  
*Wolvercote)*

We bring to you our thanksgiving  
for family and friends;  
the people closest to us all  
on whom each one depends.  
We celebrate the richness  
of human company  
and praise your love brought through them  
in joyful litany.

We bring to you our penitence  
for family and friends,  
for all that mars relationships,  
and seek to make amends;  
to give, forgive and honour  
we need your gift of grace  
to recognise our Saviour  
in every human face.

We bring our intercession  
for family and friends,  
that all may know the goodness  
which your pure love intends.  
we ask for strength to witness  
to reconciling power,  
that in our generation  
new hope and peace may flower.

O Father, Son and Spirit,  
the Family divine,

inspire us by your unity  
our lives to intertwine.  
Creator, overshadow us!  
Descend, O holy Dove!  
Our Saviour, make earth's families  
communities of love!

Dismissal

*All* To a troubled world  
**Peace from Christ.**

*All* To a searching world  
**Love from Christ**

*All* To a dying world  
**Hope from Christ**

*All* We proclaim Jesus as Lord  
**and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake**

*All* Arise, shine out, for your light has come:  
**the glory of the Lord is rising upon you**