

Week of Prayer for Christian unity – Luton event 2024

## **The nature of unity and the oneness of God**

We gather during what is officially named the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity . An Octave is eight notes with which melody and harmony can be created, when we shorten this to the week of prayer we are ignoring the essence of what we are called to be.

The focus of the octave is Christian Unity. Christian – I invite you to consider for a moment what all Christians have in common? All Christians are humans, all humans are involved in relationships of some kind, those who have chosen to follow the way of Jesus are involved in relationships specific to the message of Jesus, relationships focussed on love. We might think that those things would naturally provide unity but often they don't.

Unity - a unit is defined as an individual thing, person or group regarded as single and complete, or the smallest part of a complex whole. Unity is defined as the state of being one or a unit. There is often an implied harmony involved, demonstrated by agreement. Unity is not uniformity, the agreement may be to hold different ideas.

What can we understand by unity? Within creation there are three primary colours, red blue and yellow, from which all other colours can be formed. When the primary colours are all mixed together they create a very nondescript brown and that is what uniformity can appear as, something with no distinctiveness and lacking in the variety and diversity of creation. If unity is taken to apply uniformity of thought and belief then it is not representative of the diversity of creation. Creation is a unit but within that unit there is incredible variation.

As Christians, when we talk of unity we often limit it to that which we know but the term oneness challenges that which we know.

The term oneness often feels foreign and new and yet in John's gospel we read of Jesus speaking of oneness and some of the psalmists included the idea of oneness. However the 20<sup>th</sup> Century introduced the term more widely as discoveries in quantum science demonstrated a connectedness within creation which was beyond anything we had imagined, and which challenged many of the accepted theories of science.

Early in the 21<sup>st</sup> century these discoveries were already being explored by theologians in terms of expressing a new understanding of God. Others also explored how these discoveries affected our humanity and experience of the world. Lynne McTaggart wrote about the zero point field and Greg Braden explored the Divine Matrix. Experiments were demonstrating the relational nature of the world, the universe and the cosmos. The amount of matter in creation is infinitesimally small and most of what we see is actually created by bonds of energy, relationships between distant matter. This energy is constantly changing including the energy which creates our bodies or what we call our bodies. This means that we are connected through energy and all in constant relationship through energy. Energy is what binds the cosmos together and that collective energy goes by many names – the collective consciousness, the divine matrix, the field or quite simply that which we call God. Since 325C.E. the church has used the idea of the trinity to demonstrate the relational nature of God, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the term oneness is used by many to embrace the idea of a relational God in a relational creation.

Energy is everywhere and in everything and therefore God is everywhere and in everything. Theologians have spoken about this in varying ways, usually with long titles, since the beginning of time but quantum science is making the notion something more tangible rather than theoretical. The same science is demonstrating the power of collective thought, which we might call prayer, to change reality. Within the quantum world you will come across an equation 'imagination + desire = reality'. The basis of this technique has been used in the likes of karate where exponents imagine their hand on the other side of a seemingly impenetrable substance and desiring it enough it becomes a reality.

Of course even that impenetrable substance is actually simply energy but we perceive it as solid and therefore treat it as solid.

A key aspect of oneness, and the oneness of God, is imagination. If we limit life to what we have already experienced, we will never experience the fullness of our humanity. If we limit God to what we have already experienced, we are not truly living in creation. To live life is to use all of our imagination to see creation in all its magnificence and mystery.

There is a story of how when Captain Cook arrived at the Americas, and anchored off the shore, the native people of the island could not see his ship. They had never experienced a boat and so it was beyond their imagination. They could perceive something but not the total image. However, one wise man, stood on the shore and squinting managed to create an image of the ships. He described them and suddenly everyone could see them.

Jesus saw God differently, he perceived the relationship with God differently and he described this to those around them so that they too would perceive God differently. It is not the churches' best moment that it turned the gospel of Jesus and this new vision of God into something that would fit what was already perceived through the experiences shared in the Old Testament. However, many theologians and spiritual writers have worked with the Jesus understanding and now with the discoveries of quantum science we find ourselves in a different place and on the cusp of a whole new way of understanding our humanity.

We are all connected, we are interdependent however much some may wish to be independent, John Donne's 'no man is an island' has taken on a whole new meaning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Jesus sought to draw everyone into this understanding of interdependence, challenging those who saw themselves as independent and those who through circumstances perceived themselves as dependant. He encouraged his followers to see themselves as one with their neighbour and to love others as if they were all one, or to love them as themselves. This latter has also been misinterpreted as loving others as you love yourself and whilst there is an important point about how we love others being dependant on how we love ourselves I do not believe that was the point Jesus was making.

This connection is important to our understanding of prayer and this is a week of prayer with a particular focus on unity. When we understand creation as one, and the energy of creation as connecting everything then we begin to understand the significance of collective consciousness. Quantum science suggests that our memories are not held within what we understand as our physical body but within the energy of creation. The mechanics of your brain enables us to connect with this energy and retrieve our memories, in dementia is this connection which becomes faulty, however the retrieval process can be flawed in other ways and we might collect someone else's memory creating what we refer to as 'déjà vu'. In addition, when we have blood transfusions or transplant surgery we acquire connections to the experience of the donor creating the effect of suddenly knowing things we did not know before.

The collective consciousness is the sum total of all knowledge and when we develop the connections fully we have access to all knowledge. Someone once said we already know everything but we have to learn to access the knowledge, that is what teaching is all about. I have experienced connecting and finding myself knowing things of which I was unaware, it is an amazing experience. For me this usually happens through a specific type of prayer I refer to as 'talking it through' prayer. We do a lot of praying in church and we often talk about corporate prayer implying a praying together, however I challenge the idea of church corporate prayer and suggest the power of collective prayer lies in agreeing what we will pray for at a specific time which could be during worship, and then silently praying together for that thing. Science fiction has explored the power of collective thought to change reality, and experiments were done in the Middle East and Zimbabwe which involved groups of people all thinking about the same thing at the exact same time of day. The results were astounding.

During the war between Lebanon and Israel that began in 1982 researchers trained a group of people to "feel" peace in their bodies while believing that it was already present within them rather

than simply thinking about it in their minds or praying "for" it to occur. For this particular experiment, those involved used a form of meditation to achieve that feeling. At appointed times on specific days of the month, these people were positioned throughout the war-torn areas of the Middle East. During the window of time when they were feeling peace, terrorist activities ceased, the rate of crimes against people went down, the number of emergency-room visits declined, and the incidence of traffic accidents dropped. When the participants' feelings changed, the statistics were reversed. This study confirmed the earlier findings: when a small percentage of the population achieved peace within themselves, it was reflected in the world around them. A similar effect was noted in what is now Zimbabwe, during the troubles in 1978 forty people were despatched to Salisbury, the then capital, with instructions to do intensive periods of meditation each day. The average number of daily deaths dropped from 26 to 4, rural people returned to normal life and schools reopened.

All this has obvious implications for our corporate prayer. The desire or hope for a thought to come alive, without the emotion to give it that life, is a *wish*, it's simply the image of what is possible. In the absence of the emotion needed to bring it into the world of reality, a wish is open-ended. It can last for seconds, years, or an entire lifetime as the vision of what could be, suspended in time. Simply hoping, wishing, or saying that a healing is successful may have little effect upon the actual situation. This is important in our understanding of prayer.

Prayer needs to be more than wishful and it can be. When we believe in our prayer, when we feel the reality of that prayer coupling what we think is true with what we feel is true then prayer changes reality. I believe this is the sort of prayer that Jesus talked about. A successful affirmation or prayer of healing would be based in feeling the completed outcome. It's as if the healing has already happened. Through gratitude for what has already occurred, we create the changes in life that mirrors our feeling. We have to feel as if the outcome has already happened.

As we seek unity we need to be conscious of what we are really seeking – harmony and agreement not uniformity and we also need to tap into what it means to understand God and ourselves as one. Most importantly we need to feel one, feel united not wish to be united.. There are plenty of books which explore this at different levels and from different perspectives and I have listed a few of them below. Oneness is a revelation, it turns our understanding of ourselves upside down and opens up new possibilities. Oneness invites us to imagine and to desire and through this to create a new reality, we might call this the kingdom of justice and love, if we do not imagine and desire we are creating the reality which is often the opposite of the kingdom and our prayers often limit the coming of the kingdom as we pray from a place of poverty and need. When we pray asking for something rather than imagining something already happening through the power of God's love then all we do is affirm the presence of need rather than creating the reality of abundance.

In his book 'The Spontaneous Healing of Belief', Gregg Braden explores the idea of prayer as a computer programme and that Jesus gave us an example of this form of prayer in what we know as The Lord's Prayer. The words are not to be used slavishly but are an example to the three stages – the begin command (adoration), the work command (address) and the completion command (acknowledgement). Adoration acknowledges what we are doing and the power of collective thought, we then move to the actions of the prayer, what is happening to make us feel one (explore the middle of the Lord's prayer) these are actions which accomplish the instigation of feelings of release and relief which are the work of the program, and words of completion which denote a handing over of the prayer and a acknowledgement that the prayer has been accomplished.

Here I offer an example of the Lord's Prayer through the lens of quantum theology.

### **Quantum Lord's Prayer**

*God who is love in all space and time, we come in prayer uniting our thought in your thought for you are all that is.*

*Love is the building block of peace and the beginning of Kingdom, may the peace of love infuse the earth and unite all people.*

*May all people know the blessing of love in the fullness of life and the nourishment of body as we share and accept each other as expressions of your power in creation, valuing each life and living generously within the harvest of creation. In the knowledge of your mercy to us, when we hurt another may we acknowledge our role and seek the forgiveness of the other restoring right relations in the oneness of your love.*

*May love guide our words and actions, and the Spirit of Creation guide our choices as we rest within your presence, our souls forever one with all that is. With grateful thanks we offer this prayer for today and everyday. Amen*

I suspect that we have long misunderstood prayer as a tool for change, and especially our role in creating change. The knowledge revealed by quantum science is a challenge to the world and a very real challenge to the way we understand God, our humanity, and our relationship with each other and God. We are called as followers of Jesus to embrace the world in love and we will do this through our actions but we will change the world through our prayers, in partnership with that which we call God, the source of all being, the field of energy which is the bond between all of creation.

Heather Whyte 2024

### **Questions for consideration and discussion**

1. When we offer a prayer of thanksgiving do we give space to acknowledge what God is already doing and do we believe that God is changing things. How might creating all prayer around thanksgiving change our understanding of prayer.
2. Corporate prayer is something done together and yet often one person writes the prayer. As we focus on Christian Unity how might our prayer life together better demonstrate a reality of unity?
3. How do you feel about the idea that prayer is about our corporate power to change reality?
4. How do you feel about the notion of being a part of God, an expression of God in the world, and how would this change your behaviour and other people's experience of God?

### **Books for further exploration**

**Quantum Theology:** Spiritual Implications of the New Physics Paperback (2004 ), Diarmuid O'Murchu – The text book to introduce the theory.

**The God Shift:** our changing perception of the ultimate mystery (2004), Adrian B Smith – a broad exploration of application

**God, Energy and the Field,** Adrian B Smith 2008, - a specific look at how we understand God and Jesus and prayer.

**The Divine Matrix:** bridging time, space, miracles and belief (2007) Gregg Braden

**The Spontaneous Healing of Belief:** shattering the paradigm of false limits (2008) Gregg Braden

**What we talk about when we talk about God** (2013), Rob Bell – a personal exploration of God using the ideas of quantum science.

**The Field** (2003), Lynne McTaggart – an overview of some of the science exploring applications of quantum discoveries.

**The Bond:** connecting through the space between us (2011) Lynne McTaggart – looking at how we connect. I think this may have been rereleased in 2013 but I have not seen a copy.

**Roots and Wings** (2006), Margaret Silf – a book full of questions, inviting you to participate in the 'great conversation' about our origins and our destiny and what it might mean to become fully and truly human.