

# church of the poor?

A selection of prayers and worship ideas connected to Church Action on Poverty's call to action for UK Churches ([www.church-poverty.org.uk/poorchurch](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/poorchurch)).

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## Opening prayers

O God, you are the gathering one  
who calls us into community  
with each other  
to love and work,  
to support and heal.

You are the gathering one  
who calls us into community  
with all people;  
to bring justice and hope,  
freedom and truth.

You are the gathering one  
who calls us into community  
with the whole creation;  
to live in harmony,  
to cherish and renew.

**Let us worship the God who makes us one.**

*(Taken from Just Church, [www.justchurch.org.uk](http://www.justchurch.org.uk))*

Loving God,  
you have led us to this place, not to shield us  
from heartache and the pain of human life,  
but to heal us and inspire us, to gently  
redirect us,  
till we see the world as you do and love it  
with your love.

Amen

*(Taken from the Iona Abbey Worship Book)*

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## Prayers of faith and concern

Give us, O Lord, Churches  
that will be more courageous than cautious;  
that will not merely 'comfort the afflicted'  
but 'afflict the comfortable';  
that will not only love the world but will also  
judge the world;  
that will not only pursue peace but also  
demand justice;  
that will not remain silent when people are  
calling for a voice;  
that will not pass by on the other side when  
wounded humanity is waiting to be healed;  
that will not only call us to worship but also  
send us out to witness;  
that will follow Christ even when the way  
points to a cross.

To this end we offer ourselves in the name of  
him who loved us and gave himself for us.

*(Christian Conference of Asia, taken from 'They  
Shall Not Rob Us of Hope...', CAFOD, 1995)*

Poor Ones,  
Please take the bread. It is yours.  
The house with running water belongs to you.  
A plot of land, a dignified job— all yours.  
Forgive me for offering it.  
Charity is no substitute for justice  
but your children are hungry now.

Spirit of Justice,  
break open our hearts.  
Break them wide open.  
Let anger pour through like strong winds,  
cleansing us of complacency.  
Let courage pour through like spring storms,  
flooding out fear.  
Let zeal pour through like blazing summer sun,  
filling us with passion.

Force of Justice, grant me  
anger at what is,  
courage to do what must be done,  
passion to break down the walls  
of injustice  
and build a land flowing with milk and  
honey  
for God's beloved,  
God's special love,  
God's Poor Ones.

Spirit of Justice  
break open our hearts.

*(Sister Mary Lou Kownacki)*

### **Prayers of the people**

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

*(Luke 1:52–53)*

Lord, in a world where the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer, we know that your kingdom is not being fulfilled. Renew us, inspire us, teach us how to live out our calling. We will seek out those laid low by greed and capitalism, and we will lift them before you. We will fill the hungry with good things and help those with money and resources to use them for the good of all.

**Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.**

*(Luke 3:11)*

Lord, in a world where tax havens are seen as legitimate and where millions go hungry and have restricted healthcare and education, we long to build communities where resources are shared. Help us make sure that food banks and clothes banks, that credit unions and local exchange and change projects, are places that empower and build up resistance to oppression. Help those with money and gifts to share, use them wisely and generously.

**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.**

*(Luke 4:18–19)*

Lord – if our church services and our prayers are not about bringing good news to the poor, then let us repent and start over. Jesus begins his ministry with the call to be a people of faith who bring joy and freedom to those who need it most. Let our faith and our churches be led by that same spirit.

**“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.”**

*(Luke 6:20–21)*

Lord, those who have gone without know what the kingdom of God should be like. Let those who have suffered guide our worship and our discipleship. Let the destitute refugee teach us about welcome, let the homeless single parent teach us about generosity, let the children teach us about hope and joy. Let the disabled teach us about the use of gifts. Let those who have been imprisoned teach us about being free. Let us turn this world's expectations upside down.

**Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.**

*(Luke 6:37)*

Lord, let us learn not to judge others, but to love them as they are. Let us learn not to condemn others but to embrace them. Let us learn to forgive, and forgive again, so we may be free from the wounds of vengeance and anger.

**But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.**

*(Luke 14:13)*

Lord teach us to open our homes and our churches to the most vulnerable. It may feel like a huge cost to us, but we will discover that we are welcoming Christ back into our lives

**So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.**

*(Luke 14:33)*

Lord – let all that we have, our homes, our cars, our most beloved possessions – let us offer them to you in service. And if we cannot do this, let us learn to let them go. You are all that we need.

**Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”**

*(Luke 22:19–20)*

Lord, as we gather to worship you, when we share the bread and wine as a community, let us remember you and your teachings. You teach us to share, to love, to reach out to those in need and to be alongside the vulnerable. You teach us to be sacrificial, believing that even if the journey is hard and brings death to old customs – there will always be new life in you.

Amen

*(Chris Howson, Chaplain to Sunderland University)*

## An affirmation

It is not true that this world and its inhabitants are doomed to die and be lost;  
**This is true: For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him shall not die but have everlasting life.**

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction;  
**This is true: I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**

It is not true that violence and hatred shall have the last word, and that war and destruction have come to stay forever;  
**This is true: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given in whom authority will rest and whose name will be prince of peace.**

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil that seek to rule the world;  
**This is true: To me is given all authority in Heaven and on Earth, and lo, I am with you always to the end of the world.**

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the church, before we can do anything;  
**This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all people, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people shall see visions, and your old folk shall dream dreams.**

It is not true that our dreams for the liberation of humankind, our dreams of justice, of human dignity, of peace, are not meant for this earth and this history;  
**This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.**

*(South Africa, taken from the Iona Community Worship Book)*

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## A prayer of confession

O God,  
you have given us the vision  
of working for your kingdom,  
but we fall far short of that hope.  
Forgive us, O God.  
You call us to be the Body of Christ,  
but we fail to see the gifts that are among us  
and often stand divided  
Forgive us, O God  
and give us faith, hope and love.  
Amen

*(Taken from Just Church, [www.justchurch.org.uk](http://www.justchurch.org.uk))*

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## A blessing

O God, to those who are hungry give bread,  
And to us, who have bread,  
give hunger for justice.

*(Latin America, taken from 'They Shall Not Rob Us of Hope...'; CAFOD, 1995)*

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## Suggested hymns

- Sent by the Lord am I
- Jesus Christ is waiting
- Inspired by love and anger
- A touching place (Christ's is the world)
- The Spirit lives to set us free
- O Lord, all the world belongs to you
- Make me a channel of your peace
- Go tell everyone ('God's spirit is in my heart')
- Seek ye first the kingdom of God
- We lay our broken world
- Kum ba ya
- When I needed a neighbour