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Commitment for Life Service 2019 – All age worship

**‘Life giving faith; defiant hope; generous love’**

Please feel free to cut and paste to suit your church’s style of worship

Welcome to the service

**Call to worship:**

Jesus says,’ I have come that you might have life and have it to the full’.

Come and worship God the Creator, from whom all life originates and who sustains life in all its wonderful diversity.

Come and worship God the Son, who lived his life on earth and shows us how to be fully human

Come and worship God the Spirit, who brings colour and vitality to life, in dreams and imagination and creativity.

Come and worship, God the giver of life, the source of our faith and hope and love.

As we gather for worship our prayer is that the words of our mouths and the meditations of all our hearts are acceptable to God who is our rock and our redeemer.

**Hymn 1** *(see hymn suggestions)*

**Prayers of Praise, thanksgiving and confession**

Gracious God, giver of life, the source of our faith and hope and love, we come to worship you, to offer our praise and thanksgiving and to confess our failings before you and to one another.

We praise you for the gift of faith. We praise you for your call to each of us to’ walk the way, live the life of Jesus today’ and we remember with thanksgiving all who have journeyed with us and before us, guiding our feet and encouraging each step of that journey. We thank you for the presence of the Spirit with us to challenge and inspire, dream dreams and share in visions, and prompt us to venture down new paths of discipleship.

We praise you for the gift of hope. We praise you that through your Word we gain an insight into the world as you in intend it, where all are valued and included in the circle of community regardless of race, gender, age or ability and where the earth itself is cherished as our common home. We thank you that in Jesus, the Word made flesh, we see the embodiment of hope for humanity and a new way to live.

We praise you for the gift of love. We praise you that in the loving relationships we have in our own lives we experience something of the deep love which you have for us, a love which is individual, unique and constant. We thank you that you draw us into the circle of divine love which binds together Father, Son and Spirit and yet reaches out to include and embrace all who seek to dwell in that love.

Merciful God, by reminding ourselves of how and why we want to give you praise and thanks, we also remind ourselves of our need to confess that we have not always lived the way we would want to live and the way which brings you joy.

We confess that there have been times when our faith has faltered, and we have failed to fully engage with the impact that faith should have on our decisions and relationships with others.

We confess that there have been times when we have given up on hope, and have become overwhelmed by the desire for power and your kingdom values have got lost in our inertia.

We confess that there have been times when we have stopped loving you and our neighbour, when self has dominated all our relationships and our need to receive has dominated are desire to give.

Forgive us, gracious God. Draw us to you once again. May each turning to you be an opportunity for a new start, an opportunity to remember that we are your children, made in your image and likeness and an opportunity to experience afresh the constant love which you have for each one of us. Help us to hear Jesus word to us, ‘Your sins are forgiven. Follow me’.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

*(The Lord’s Prayer may follow here)*

**Introduction to the service.**

Commitment for Life is the world development programme of the United Reformed Church. We encourage participating churches to take action, pray and give for people across the world but especially in our four partner countries/region of Bangladesh, Central America (Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador), Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory and Zimbabwe. Commitment for Life works in partnership with Christian Aid and Global Justice on advocacy and fundraising. Now in its 27th year congregations, through Commitment for Life have raised millions of pounds.

Today, we remember again our Commitment to Life. Our worship focuses upon Commitment for Life’s new strapline, ‘Life giving faith; defiant hope; generous love’.

Let’s watch a short film, to help us begin to reflect on our theme.

*play Commitment for Life video if possible: available at* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbJHDy6GeCc&feature=youtu.be*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sbJHDy6GeCc&feature=youtu.be) *or by contacting* [*Suzanne.pearson@urc.org.uk*](mailto:Suzanne.pearson@urc.org.uk) *who can send it by WeTransfer*

**Hymn 2** *(see hymn suggestions)*

**Life giving faith**

Reading: Ezekiel 34.11-16

**Story from Commitment for Life: Working Together**

<https://urc.org.uk/images/mission/commitment/partnerstories/Working_Together__-_Shapna_Shone.pdf> or separate story file

**Activity:** Play the Shrimp Relay game from the Commitment for Life webpages

<https://urc.org.uk/commitment-for-life/resources-for-cforl.html>

After playing either game you could draw out the following points

* How hard the farmers in each setting have to work
* How they work best when they help each other
* We can offer our support and help to local farmers through our support of Commitment for Life

**Hymn 3** *(see hymn suggestions)*

**Defiant Hope**

Reading: Micah 6.6-8

**Story from Commitment for Life: For the common good - Blanca Dias.**

<https://urc.org.uk/images/mission/commitment/partnerstories/For_the_Common_Good_Blanca_Dias.pdf> or separate story file

**Campaigning Activity:** Commitment for Life supports the work of Christian Aid and Global Justice Now. In advance of your service you could visit their websites and find out about their latest campaigns. Invite people to participate in the campaign action and encourage them to tell others about it at school/college/university/workplace as well as among their family and friends.

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/>

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>

(**Offering & Prayer of Dedication** – *Gracious God, from you we receive every good gift, and so at this time of worship we bring our gifts of money as a token of our thanks for all we have received. We ask that you bless them, that they may become channels of your grace, a means of sharing your love for the people of this community and the wider world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*)

**Generous Love**

Reading: 1 John 4.7-12

**Story from Commitment for Life: Neighbourly Love YMCA**

<https://urc.org.uk/commitment-for-life/stories-from-partner-countries.html> or separate story file

**Talk**

The reading from 1st John is a celebration of love, love we experience from God, love we share within the faith community but most importantly love which leads us out to beyond what is known and familiar. It all begins with God’s love. In case we ever forget this basic, essential fact of our faith, 1 John makes it crystal clear that God is the source and the definition of love. 1 John emphasizes that God’s love is not some abstract concept. It is passion expressed in action. God made love real and present by sending Jesus to live among us and to die for us. God continues to show us love through Jesus’ life-giving presence among us. If we love others as God has loved us, there can be no boundaries. God’s love, made visible and present in Jesus, is the source for the love we share with others. Jesus ignored the limits that religious communities imposed. He ate and talked with people whom the religious leaders had rejected as heretics, as sinful, as filthy and despicable. He touched people who were considered untouchable and welcomed people whom everyone else had kicked out. His harshest words were reserved not for the impure, but for unloving, self-righteous people who saw some of God’s children as beneath their attention and certainly as unworthy of their love. If Jesus shows us what God’s love is like, then there can be no doubt how far our love for others must extend: to every single human being, each person is our neighbour in this global community and there can be no limits on the nature and quality of our love either.

Life giving faith, defiant hope, generous love. Through Commitment for Life we have the opportunity to turn the words of the strapline into a way of living in solidarity with some of the world’s most vulnerable people like Shaba whose story we heard.

Shaba’s story and those of millions like her touch our hearts but often are all too quickly forgotten in our news, perhaps even in our worship and prayers. In recent months our news has been dominated by Brexit, the quest for a deal and disagreements between politicians about the direction of travel the UK should take in relation to the European Union and seeking trade deals with other nation states. As Brexit day comes and goes, our response to Shaba is to keep her story, the story of millions of others, alive, by acknowledging that the God in whom we have faith gives life to the vulnerable; by speaking with defiant hope to politicians and society in general in favour of the weakest; by being generous in our loving response of finance, time and energy; by reminding ourselves and others that we are all interconnected in God’s world and what each one of us does affects my brother and sister in every part of the planet and the planet itself.

This is our Commitment for Life. This is how God calls us and invites us to ‘walk the way, living the life of Jesus today’. This is life-giving faith, defiant hope, generous love.

**Prayers of Intercession**

God of life, we bring before you are concerns for the world and her people.

Gracious God we turn to you

**R. for you are the source of faith, hope and love.**

We pray for our partners in Commitment for Life, for all whose stories we have heard today and for the many others whose lives have been transformed through our giving, acting and praying.

We pray for our partners in Zimbabwe, in Central America, in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and in Bangladesh.

We remember the challenges which face them acutely, but of which we are all a part – climate change, sustainability, security and wellbeing.

Gracious God we turn to you

**R. for you are the source of faith, hope and love.**

We pray for the work of Christian Aid and Global Justice Now, as they work alongside and speak for the world’s poorest people.

We pray for the staff and volunteers of Commitment for Life as they seek to inspire and encourage us in our support for our partners.

We pray for our governments that they may recognise our responsibilities within the global community and keep their commitments to financially supporting international development.

Gracious God we turn to you

**R. for you are the source of faith, hope and love.**

We pray for ourselves,

Enrich our faith that we may more fully grasp the abundance of life.

Disturb us and disquiet us with defiant hope so we may act to birth your new world into being.

Encourage us to pass on the gift of love, so others may come to know the depths of your compassion.

Gracious God, we turn to you,

**R. for you are the source of faith, hope and love. Amen.**

**Hymn 4** *(see hymn suggestions)*

**Benediction:** As we leave this time of worship,

Let us thank God for life-giving faith;

Let us commit ourselves to living with defiant hope;

Let us be filled with generous love for our neighbour, whoever and wherever they may be;

And may the blessing of God, who is life, hope and love be with us now and always.