



Interfaith Worship or Acts of Reflection and Commitment?

Some groups will want to celebrate and think in the context of worship. The OWW anthologies are examples of what may be prepared for the Christian tradition.

You may wish to develop your own anthology for other faith traditions or to develop this for an inter faith context. **This will require very careful consideration**, as any event involving "Prayer and Worship" needs to be sensitive to the various traditions. Shared worship is rarely attempted by local Inter Faith Organisations, although invitations for people of different faiths and beliefs to observe a community in worship (often followed by time to ask questions) are common. It may be feasible to arrange between a few, e.g. Abrahamic religions, for example the Anglican Cathedral of Portsmouth has a 22-year long tradition of holding a joint celebration of Christmas with the Muslim Wessex Jumaat ([see the video they made to celebrate 20 years here](#))

The following guidance on Prayer draws on material from the [Local Interfaith Guide](#):

Prayer is included in the activities of many inter faith groups and councils – but not usually joint spoken prayer. More common is:

- shared silent prayer or meditation
- a pattern of sequential offerings of spoken prayers and readings from members of different faiths to which others listen, but in which they do not actively participate; rather, prayer is offered individually by members of the gathering in a way which respects the integrity of each tradition.

When spoken joint prayers are used, there can be a danger that people may find themselves voluntarily or involuntarily joining in what appears to be worship of a divinity who is not recognisably as they understand the divine, and feeling pressed to do so even though they would prefer not to.

Nontheists (such as Buddhists) can be put into an awkward situation by assumptions that all religions acknowledge a Divine Being. Likewise, for traditions where the Divine is understood wholly or partly in feminine or in impersonal terms, the constant use of masculine or personal terms may prove alienating.

Some traditions may have rules (e.g. Church of England Canon Law) which govern the use of places of worship, or parts of these. These might include limitations on where it is appropriate for prayers or acts of worship linked to a different tradition to take place.

Given these possibilities for misunderstanding and offence, it is important to sound out carefully how individual members feel about shared spoken prayer, before it becomes part of your event.

Joint acts of reflection or commitment

Generally, local inter faith bodies do not hold events which would be described as 'worship' because, for reasons akin to those described in the previous section, members of many of the faith traditions might find it inappropriate to join in such acts.



It is more common to hold events during the course of which religious readings or reflections may be included but on the kind of 'sequential prayer' basis discussed in the section above. The word 'service' tends to be avoided for such events to avoid the impression that a worship service is intended. The concept of joint acts of reflection or commitment is generally more widely accepted.

The Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment by the Faith Communities of the United Kingdom is an example of this – You can read more about it and [download here](#) It would be very appropriate for closing a meeting about the kind of themes addressed in One World Week events.

An Act of Commitment

Faith community representatives:

*In a world scarred by the evils of war,
racism, injustice and poverty,
we offer this joint Act of Commitment as we
look to our shared future.*

All:

We commit ourselves,
as people of many faiths,
to work together
for the common good,
uniting to build a better society,
grounded in values and ideals we share:

community,
personal integrity,
a sense of right and wrong,
learning, wisdom and love of truth,
care and compassion,
justice and peace,
respect for one another,
for the earth and its creatures.

We commit ourselves,
in a spirit of friendship and co-operation,
to work together
alongside all who share our values and ideals,
to help bring about a better world
now and for generations to come.



A model for a OWW inter faith Act of Reflection

This model is based on an idea and event which took place in Newport in South Wales in 2010.

Each of (say) 10 faith groups is invited to offer 3 minutes (depends on how much time you have and how many faiths are represented) based on the OWW theme.

The seating can be arranged in a circle and each group presents their 3 minutes' worth. Contributions could range from a reading, a dance, a meditation, a poem, a song, a prayer, a visual presentation (e.g. a mini PowerPoint) or whatever they feel might be appropriate **relating to the OWW theme**.

It would be good to conclude by doing something together e.g. - saying together the **Joint Act of Commitment** (see above).

A double greeting circle* can work well to introduce people to each other in a random way before enjoying refreshments together and interacting informally.

* *Form two concentric circles of people facing each other, circulate in opposite directions, stop, introduce yourself and greet the person opposite you. Repeat the circling and stopping as desired. This can also be done to music.*

An example (from feedback from a OWW group's evaluation)

A special event was organised for One World Week: "Peace Depends on Dialogue". After an introduction by the Group's co-ordinator, there was Indian classical dance, lighting of candles by invited individuals of the different faiths, a presentation from a Muslim specialist in inter faith relations, and a question period. The event also included songs and a special prayer for peace

Visit our [resources](#) section for more ideas.

Please go to our [events](#) pages for further inspiration.