Walk with the world - Europe

Walk with Europe
La vie d’Europe

- Europe has 47 sovereign states – take a moment to call to mind the ones you have visited. How many cultural sites, languages and foods have you experienced?
- Write up any countries in Europe that you have visited onto the flip chart, and thank God for the people of each one as you do so. (If a country you have visited has already been written up, put a tick next to it.)
- Think of all the art, music and literature that has been written in Europe, and the many ideas and inventions that have been discovered by its people. Thank God for the creativity, ingenuity and originality of many people who have lived on this continent.
- Thank God for the many good things about living in Europe today, and the material blessings and opportunities available to the majority of its citizens in contrast to other areas of the world.
- Colour in one or two of the nations on the map as a symbol of the plenty, influence, and positive impact that Europe has had in the past as well as what it experiences in the present.
Money markets

- Pick up some of the currency and think about how much money means to Europe’s culture.
- Since 2008’s Credit Crunch, and the economic down-turns that have followed, most of Europe has entered serious recession.
- For the past few decades, many countries in Europe have had extraordinarily good welfare systems and public services, ensuring provision of healthcare and benefits for those most vulnerable in society. Much of this provision is now under threat as governments make cuts to reduce deficits – pray for leaders to have wisdom and to work hard to avoid cuts which will affect the poorest people.
- Pick up some Euro currency and pray particularly for those in the Euro zone who have been affected, and particularly for nations such as Greece and the Republic of Ireland. Pray for restoration of economic stability.
- Now kneel down, still holding the currency – pray that God would help Europe rebuild in a different way. Ask that this shaking would lead them to worship him, and to build on solid foundations of righteousness and justice, rather than continuing to worship money and be motivated by greed.
- Before moving on, pray especially for Europe’s youth, particularly those who are disaffected, dissatisfied, or simply feel betrayed by politicians. Offer particularly to God young people in the UK and France who are struggling to find work, or have recently been involved in rioting.
the past

the present

the future

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Post Christendom?

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8)

• For nearly a thousand years, Europe was the primary stronghold of Christendom, but for the last 250 years the church here has been declining, despite huge progress for the gospel globally. It still holds massive influence over Christendom internationally, and many worldwide denominations are led from within it.

• But Europe is now largely post-Christian. Secularism and atheism are strong forces, and the church is in a much weaker position. Nominal Christianity muddies the water of Christian witness, resulting in people perceiving Christians as acting no differently to their own everyday life, and large proportions of the population now simply being unaware of the gospel.

• God is sovereign over Europe – he is the Lord of its past, its present, and its future.

• Start at ‘the past’ section of Europe’s timeline – spend some time thanking God for Europe’s past, and particular breakthroughs that you are thankful for. Thank God that you experienced Christian witness, and that you benefit from the Christian past of Europe by having the Bible in English, and experiencing laws largely based on Christian morality.

• Move to ‘the present’ – offer your concerns, fears and intercessions to God. Ask for him to have mercy on Europe, and to reveal himself again to those who do not know him.

• Move forward to ‘the future’ – spend a few minutes allowing God to stir up old dreams and new visions in you – what do you want to see in Europe’s future. Pray into this, and ask God to give you more of a heart for your continent, and the many nations and peoples who live in it.

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Torn in two

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” (Philippians 2:1-4)

- Read this scripture several times, and allow its truth to sink into your heart and mind.
- Think about Christ’s heart – broken and torn in two – over the division in his church.
- Pray for the divisions in the church to be healed, and for unity to be built. Offer up all the denominations and networks you can think of, and pray that they would love each other, and work together, to better point to Christ.
- Thank God for diversity, and for the specific and deep revelations revealed to different parts of church – but pray that this would be used to reflect his fullness, rather than to fragment the witness of who he is. Pray for an increase in openness to learn from different parts of the church.
**Poverty shocker**

- Look at the images – are you shocked that they show situations in European countries? Did you imagine they were from ‘the West’?
- In the nineteen nineties, following the 1989 revolution, poverty in post-communist Romania and other former Russian bloc countries dominated the news as the level of poverty, particularly that affecting orphans and abandoned children, was revealed.
- The news has moved on and since countries like Romania have been admitted into the EU, people assume that poverty is no longer an issue. But it is still a big issue – particularly now in nations such as Romania, where international grant money is no longer forthcoming given its new EU status.
- Romania is the best known, but extreme poverty is also experienced by large proportions of the population in nations such as Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Moldova, and the Ukraine. In 2005, Romania had 25 per cent of its population still living below the poverty line*, and Moldova is ranked 99 out of 169 on the UNDP’s 2010 human development index**.
- A number of these nations suffer as a result of bad governance and corruption as well as poor infrastructure following communist oppression.
- Use a compass to find what direction East is in and turn to face it. Thank God for the liberation of Eastern Europe and the fact people are now free to practice Christianity.
- Pray for communities living in poverty, the growth of income generation, and the work of governments, relief organisations and developing public sectors – that these nations might see an end to poverty.

(* 2010 www.nationmaster.com, ** 2010 UNDP)
Peace at last?

- Europe’s history has been dominated by wars, and this reached a peak in the twentieth century.
- However, the last two decades have been relatively peaceful, with most nations on the continent enjoying peace, liberty and the right to decide who governs them.
- Light a candle, and place a poppy at the foot of the cross image. Take some time to remember those who have given their lives, particularly in the world wars, and recent conflicts in Eastern Europe.
- Thank the prince of peace for the relative stability of Europe at present, and pray for protection against further conflict.
- Offer up areas in Europe which have only recently achieved peace, are still experiencing conflict, or lingering sectarian threats – particularly Northern Ireland, and Kosovo.
In the news today...

- Read one or two of the stories displayed, and cast your mind back to any other news stories you have heard recently about the continent, its institutions, or specific European countries.
- Offer up these situations to God. Remember that he is still sovereign. Ask for his mercy, guidance, peace, comfort and forgiveness for all who are affected. Offer his thanks for all who are standing up for truth, or providing comfort, especially any who are doing so in his name.
- Take a moment to consider how many stories get overlooked by the news. Thank God that he sees everything that is happening across the continent – thank him for all the good news, and surrender all the bad to his love and power.
- Ask God to prompt your heart if there is anything you should be doing in response to news stories, or specific issues, in Europe that he has laid on your heart – perhaps writing to you MP or MEP?
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Family break-down (© geekphilosopher.com)

Violence and abuse (© imageafter.com)

Obsession with relationships (© pictyle.de)

Constantly wanting more (© imageafter.com)

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Social circle

- Step inside the circle with this piece of paper...
- Whilst Europe contains many of the world’s materially richest nations, it also contains some of its most socially fragmented.
- We have turned to many other gods to satisfy us, putting our wants and desires as the top priority. And our focus on instant gratification, and personal fulfilment at all costs has led to a society with many broken lives, disintegrated families. Much of our sense of community has been lost.
- Turn to each picture in turn, and offer up these issues to God. Pray for his comfort, peace and restoration for individuals, families and communities affected – and for his guidance and wisdom for social workers, governments and community leaders working to address these issues.
- Now take a moment to come back to the centre – where you are standing. Pray that Jesus, and his life-giving teaching, would once again be at the centre of Europe’s focus – healing, restoring and rebuilding her society.
Global players

- Europe contains some of the world’s most powerful and influential nations.
- Take a moment to think about Europe’s impact on the globe – good and bad – throughout history, and its current day influence...
- Pick up a dice. Throw it as many times as you like, and use the number guide below to guide your prayers for different issues depending on where it lands each time:
  1. Pray for global institutions in which European nations have a key voice (i.e. the UN, the G8, the World Bank etc).
  2. Pray for European institutions whose policies have global effects (i.e. the EU, and the European court of human rights).
  3. Pray for forgiveness for one or two specific European nations’ past oppression of other countries through colonialism and imperialism. And pray for conviction against any continuing of this attitude in modern incarnations.
  4. Pray for positive and effective leadership from influential European politicians and officials in relation to issues which affect poorer nations today – particularly in relation to trade, aid, and debt relief.
  5. Pray for positive and effective leadership from influential European politicians and officials to secure a fair and binding plan for global reductions in carbon emissions, while there is still time to allay the worst affects of our changing climate.
  6. Pray for ordinary European citizens to realise what the impact of their lifestyle choices on poorer communities, and the planet, are. Pray for them to lead the way for a grassroots movement for change.
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Adopt a country

- Take a moment to prayerfully consider all the nations and situations that you have been thinking about, and offering to God, during this time.
- Stand on the map and commit to God every nation, situation, and issue you have prayed about for Europe today.
- Step off the map and consider which issues from this time have stayed with you particularly?
- Choose one or two countries that you want to remember in prayer in the coming week.
- Use the tracing paper and pencils provided, to trace the outline of your chosen country, and then to transfer this onto a piece of card. Cut the shape out (if it is a larger nation) and write on, or around it, bullet point reminders of what you want to pray for.
- Take your adopted nation away with you and keep it in your Bible, or somewhere else where you will see it often this week. Use it as a stimulus to pray for that nation, and the continent of Europe.