

**24<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

## Unity

**"Inspire ... the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity and concord."**

*Book of Common Prayer, Holy Communion Prayer*

Rev Dr George Matheson was blind from the age of seventeen, yet he had a brilliant academic career and was a significant figure in the Church of Scotland in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of his writings, his hymns are the best remembered, and "O Love that wilt not let me go" remains important in Christian worship. However, it's another of his hymns, published at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that's in my mind today

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 1603, four hundred and nineteen years ago today, Scotland's king, James VI, son of Mary Queen of Scots, became James I of England in succession to Queen Elizabeth I, thus uniting the Scottish and English crowns. This Union of the Crowns had political, social and religious significance. It pointed to a unity that would change a nation for ever.

But this isn't a political piece. It's a plea that we continue to strive for unity in *all* areas of our lives, particularly in the Church. So I offer you the words of Matheson's hymn: "Gather us in", and leave you to ponder for yourselves this remarkable prayer for unity from a century ago.

*Gather us in, thou Love that fillest all!*

*Gather our rival faiths within thy fold!*

*Rend all our temple veils and bid them fall,*

*that we may know that thou hast been of old; gather us in.*

*Gather us in: we worship only thee;*

*in varied names we stretch a common hand;*

*in diverse forms a common soul we see;*

*in many ships we seek one spirit-land; gather us in.*

*Each sees one colour of thy rainbow light;*

*each looks upon one tint and calls it heaven;*

*thou art the fullness of our partial sight;*

*we are not perfect till we find the seven; gather us in.*

*Some seek a Father in the heavens above,*

*some ask a human image to adore,*

*some crave a spirit vast as life and love;*

*within thy mansions we have all and more; gather us in.*

### A prayer for today

*Lord, you call me to work for unity. Forgive me when I don't.*

*Help me when I do, and to do so for you. Amen*