

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Year B

Sunday 3 November 2024

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Rev Jonathan Fleming, Minister of Lyle Kirk, Greenock, for the use of his archive material from 2018 and the Guild of Health and St Raphael for their archive material from 2021 on the 24th Sunday after Pentecost.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

An archive of resources for daily worship can be found on the Sanctuary First website:
<https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/daily-worship>

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

Archive material from Rev Jonathan Fleming.....	2
Archive material from the Guild of Health	9
Reflecting on our worship practice	20
Useful links	22

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Year B

Sunday 3 November 2024

Archive material from Rev Jonathan Fleming

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Rev Jonathan Fleming, Minister of Lyle Kirk, Greenock, for the use of his archive material from 2018 for the 24th Sunday after Pentecost.

Introduction

The connections between Deuteronomy 6, Mark 12 and Hebrews 9 are deeply interwoven, therefore I have chosen to comment on them collectively.

[Ruth 1:1-18](#)

The Book of Ruth has got it all: death, despair, love and loyalty. Ruth as a book is one of the few occasions in the Bible when two women discuss something and do something that has nothing to do with a man. Having lost the men in their lives, Naomi, Orpah and Ruth head to the land of Judah, where Naomi plans to return to her home region. Now widowed, both Orpah and Ruth would normally return home to their families. Upon Naomi's instruction, Orpah does so, but Ruth refuses to leave Naomi and forfeits the possibility of security and children in order to remain with her. Ruth, a Moabite, is prepared to worship Yahweh, Naomi's God and to be answerable to Yahweh in order to fully commit to her support for Naomi. Although Ruth belonged to a kingdom that was often despised by Israel, she was blessed because of her faithfulness and went on, as we see in Matthew's genealogy, to be the great-grandmother of King David and a direct ancestor of Christ. No one should feel unable or unworthy of God's call to serve because of their race, gender or nationality – God can and does use people from all walks of life to build the Kingdom.

[Deuteronomy 6:1-9](#), [Mark 12:28-34](#) and [Hebrews 9:11-14](#)

In this Sunday's verses from Deuteronomy, we find the words of the Shema or Shm'a in Hebrew, the central prayer of Judaism, proclaiming God is one (יהוה אלהינו יהוה ישׂראל שׂמע) יהוה אחד or YHVH eloheinu YHVH ehad", which literally means "YHVH our God YHVH one").

We also find the words of what Jesus would go on to describe as the most important

commandment – to ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.’ Jesus directly quotes both the Shm’a and this commandment in Mark 12:28. It is interesting to note that in Matthew 22, the Shm’a is omitted from Jesus’ response, given that the Gospel of Matthew is often considered as being intended for a Jewish audience and seeking to prove to his fellow Jews that Jesus is the Messiah.

God’s love should never be a burden and this is seen very clearly through the priority given to this command from the Lord. If we love God with our heart, soul, mind and strength, we will not struggle to keep to the intent of the Ten Commandments or, indeed, the other Old Testament laws that we read of.

The teacher of the law in Mark 12, impressed by Jesus’ answers to questions posed in the Temple courts, goes on to call Jesus a ‘teacher’ in verse 32. The teacher had been taught, or at least, reminded of the core of all of the laws. With 613 known laws (the Taryag Mitzvot), some religious leaders tried to categorise the different laws by their importance and the consequences of breaking them. Sin is sin and does not come with a categorisation system. Sin, however great or small to us, is still something that, according to Gustavo Gutiérrez, ‘attacks the deepest root of all servitude, for sin is the breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings, and therefore cannot be eradicated except by the unmerited redemptive love of the Lord whom we receive by faith and in communion with one another.’ [1] We see this unmerited redemptive love in Hebrews 9, where we read of the sacrifice to end all sacrifices – the blood of Jesus Christ.

[1] Gutiérrez, G., A Theology of Liberation, SCM Classics, London, 2001, p, 34

[Psalm 119:1-8](#)

Psalm 119 is the longest psalm and the longest chapter in the entire Bible, containing 176 verses in total. Found in the centre of the Scriptures, Psalm 119 is actually an acrostic poem, in which the verses of each stanza begin with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which has 22 letters.

This Sunday, we focus on the first stanza, where we read that God blesses those who walk according to the law of the Lord and seek to do so with all their heart. The Psalm as a whole reminds us that we should always stay true to God and to God’s Word, through the good times *and* the bad.

Some scholars believe that Psalm 119 was written by Ezra after the temple was reconstructed in Ezra 6. Given that there were no personal written copies to draw from,

the structure of this psalm can be seen as a memory aid to allow for its learning and indeed its teaching to generations that follow.

Sermon ideas

This Sunday's selection of passages is a perfect opportunity to talk of the power of love, our love for God and for one another. It is an opportunity to return to the very core of what we as Christians are called to do – to love God and to love our neighbour.

Next Sunday marks the end of the First World War; the end of four years of conflict that cost the lives of 888,246 British and Colonial soldiers that we know of – people who were prepared to give up their lives in the name of peace; loving without counting the cost.

As Jonathan Sacks writes in *Celebrating Life*, "Through love as the bond between parents and children we understand the love of God for mankind. Through the trust that grows in families, we discover what it is to have trust in God and His world." [2]

Within the family at home, in the Church and indeed the world, as children of God, we are called to love one another. In loving one another, we are honouring and loving God. We are loved so much that God was prepared to give up the Son for our sake – the epitome of love without counting the cost.

[2] Sachs, J., *Celebrating Life*, Continuum, London, 2000, p. 104

Prayers (written by the [Spill the Beans](#) team)

Prayer of adoration and confession

God of all seasons,

God of all time,

God of all words,

we come.

We come as we are:

out of time, out of sorts, out of reason,

yet seeking time to be,

reasons to be

and most of all to be calm in Your presence,

ready to listen, and know, and follow and obey.

Holy God, You gave us guidance.

In all of history Your guidance has been there:

muddled and devalued by words like command and order,
when what You seek of us is desire, love, compassion, hope.
Forgive us when our lives are full of commandments and rules
and bereft of compassion and love.
Forgive us when the word becomes more than the Word,
when our determination to adhere to the word
belies the Spirit of joy and hope.
Show us, gently, humbly, lightly, softly
how to follow,
how to be guided into obedience
and teach us acceptance
of Your love, Your forgiveness and Your compassion.
Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Lead us, O God, show the way
and with ten words shape our future.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world believes
beyond individual faith and individual gods
to the greater good and the God who is universal love.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world chooses what it worships:
economy or the way of love
that its graven images are laid down
and the faces of the world rise up.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world delivers what it promises
for the sake of a better place
without fear of what difficult decisions
might mean for election results.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world pauses,
that creation is allowed rest,
that the environment is given a chance,

that the bonds that bind slave and slave owner are broken
in sabbath,
the day no one is bound to work,
but bound to renewal.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world honours each generation of parents,
that hope and generosity is honoured,
that love is honoured,
that giving life is honoured.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world recoils from harm,
that conflict will pass and peace endure.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world responds with respect towards each other
beyond treating people immorally,
beyond trafficking, beyond deceit.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world learns what it has is what everyone has,
that the existence of an ultra-rich 1%
riding the backs of the 99%,
that a billion people caught in poverty,
is anathema to Your kingdom.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world speaks truth to power,
that lies and propaganda are seen for what they are,
that the vision and the goal is bigger than duplicity
in our taxes, politics and manifestos.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
that the world loves what it has
and shares what it has,
that the need to have more and covet what it cannot have
is not the answer to our global problems,
that better, richer communities grow

in the sharing of what we have.

We pray, O God of the ten words,
help us reduce those ten words to one: love.
So be it. Amen.

Musical suggestions

God Welcomes All is the new supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition. This exciting new collection features over 200 hymns and songs in a wide range of styles by writers from Scotland and around the world.

The full music version is now available; and the words-only book, digital resources including the expansion of the existing Church of Scotland music website, will be published in due course, with streaming functions and further information on each song; backing tracks; and lyric videos. *God Welcomes All* is available to order from <https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225573/god-welcomes-all>

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

- GWA 26 – “Born apart in different countries” – love shown in the story of Ruth and Naomi
- CH4 18 – “The earth belongs to God alone” – words found in Psalm 24, which resonate well with today’s theme.
- CH4 202 – “Stand up and bless the Lord” – talks of how God loves us and how we can respond through word and deed
- CH4 495 – “Spirit of God, descend upon my heart” – asks God to move within us so that we may live our lives in full devotion to Him
- CH4 550 – “As the deer pants for the water” – helps us to show how we long for God’s love and how precious it is
- CH4 521 – “Children of God, reach out to one another” – a good sending hymn for this Sunday

- CH4 553 – “Just as I am, without one plea” – a powerful reminder of this Sunday’s passage from Hebrews
- Mission Praise 1 – “A new commandment” – A good all-age hymn about the call to love one another
- Mission Praise 760 – “When we walk with the Lord” – Good for tying all of this Sunday’s passages together
- “Build up” from the Fischy Music ‘*Build Up*’ album – Great for singing about the ways we can love through actions and words

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Year B

Sunday 3 November 2024

Archive material from the Guild of Health

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank the Guild of Health and St Raphael for the use of their archive material from 2021 (in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic) for the 24th Sunday after Pentecost.

Introduction

In his book, 'The Witness of Preaching', Thomas Long offers an image of preaching where the preacher enters and dwells within the text, taking time to 'become a witness' to see what happens in the story and within themselves as they read it. Next, the task is to form words that they then share as they 'bear witness' to the events they have seen. Our task, he says, is to 'tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about what we have seen'. This process of 'dwell and tell', being the witness and then testifying and bearing witness, is for many worship leaders and preachers, one of the most rewarding, engaging and exciting activities in their ministry.

Preaching and liturgy can create moments that encourage gathered worshippers in their own ability to take the text, enter into it and pay attention to everything they see – hopefully building confidence and trust in their own insights; we hope that this resource offers simple ways to do that with these texts.

When an act of worship, or even just a small part of an act of worship, enables a whole congregation (not just those who have been preparing the sermon and prayers) to 'dwell and tell' then 'speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about what is seen', how much greater, fuller and truer might our shared understanding and telling of the Story be?

In these resources we will highlight some of the themes that are contained within the texts, offering some thoughts about how different worshippers might relate to them. Later, we will suggest some conversation starters and questions that might help shape a sermon and/or liturgy that facilitates a 'dwell and tell' experience.

The Guild of Health and St Raphael

The Guild of Health and St Raphael is dedicated to helping churches connect faith, health, healing theology and science. Currently the Guild offers a variety of resources such as the GoHealth community and podcast, the Healthy Healing Hub project, facilitated online bible studies and events, our Moodle training courses: 'Learning to Heal', academic lectures and a journal, prayer resources and weekly reflections on Facebook (see www.gohealth.org.uk for more information).

Through all of our work, including the annual Denis Duncan lecture, in conjunction with the Church of Scotland (details to follow on the **Guild of Health website**), we want to help people reflect on their experiences and understanding of what it means to flourish as human beings in relation to God, each other and the whole of creation; that we would all share in and share out the Sacred Story of healing that has been entrusted to us and entwined within us. This is why we have focussed these reflections and suggestions on storytelling and listening – healing happens when stories are told and listened to, especially within the context of worship.

Ruth 1:1-18

How can we let this story tell itself? What themes emerge from it that might resonate with those of us gathered in public worship?

Food and Famine

What do we know of the insecurity that women and widows of Ruth, Orpah and Naomi's day would have faced? When have we wondered where our next meal will come from? When have we feared that the usual places where food can be found might have less, or none?

For some, the famine in the story may remind them of Covid-related panic buying in supermarkets in 2020, job losses from lockdown measures, international trade restrictions meaning demand exceeded supply, visiting foodbanks for the first time, only to find them depleted or even closed. Other worshippers may remember back to wartime rationing or a long period of unemployment or essential benefits being withheld.

Grieving

Orpah, Naomi and Ruth are all bereaved – even without the additional hardship of famine, they are already very vulnerable. Ruth and Orpah have lost husbands and a father-in-law and Naomi lost her husband and two sons – how must they have all felt?

In our listening to the text, perhaps some will recall times when they lost a spouse or a child or a parent. There may be people who have lost more than one loved one because of the pandemic. Perhaps older people will remember entire families who lost every husband, father and son during the War. Others might not relate to the death of a family member but know what it is like when the chief earner of the family goes away, leaving the family with little income or security. Others may know what it means to be in a different part of the world, in danger and with no knowledge where support might be found.

Again, how can we honour these insights into this poignant story, which is as contemporary as it is ancient? How can we create space for people to make a personal connection, using it as way into prayer and worship in that very moment?

Blaming

Naomi believes that this was all done to her by the will and hand of God who had turned against her. Whilst the starting points may be different – food security, grieving, safety, sorrow – we may find comfort for the times when we too have felt that God had brought or allowed hardship, perhaps used ‘tough love’ to correct or punish us. We may find reassurance that we are not the only ones to ask where God was during a hard time of our lives, or even prayed ‘My God, why have you forsaken me?’.

[Psalm 146](#)

What happens when we read this psalm? What happens within each of us when we read it alone and what happens when we read it aloud together? Where are the common reactions and responses? Where does one person’s response stand out distinctly from other peoples and how can we create space for these reactions in worship?

When I read it, I found myself disagreeing with the Psalmist that ‘human beings can’t save’ – they can. So what am I missing here? I felt discomfort at idea that after praising God all my life – this past year has had moments when I wondered if I would still love God by the end of it or if I would still believe that God was real. I found myself wrestling with the Psalmist’s claims about the wonderful things God does for people in need – this year I have had to work hard to call occasional good news stories to mind rather than just auto-play the showreel of devastation that the various news Apps have brought to my smartphone, day after day.

But there the psalm stands, unapologetically full of praise, speaking from a context where the writers were no strangers to hardship, depression, struggle and loss. Perhaps it has done its job by interrupting my preoccupation with what is difficult in the world just now

and challenging me to meditate on what is still wonderful about the world and the God who made it. But honestly, right now, I'd love to hear about how other people are experiencing psalms of praise like this one. Who finds them to be out of place in a pandemic world and who finds them to be essential, vital reading?

Hebrews 9:11-14

The book of Hebrews seems largely concerned with one matter: the supremacy of Christ above all things. That Christ has fulfilled, surpassed, replaced and overwritten all that God's people relied upon. The Law, the sacrificial system, the first covenant, Levitical laws, earthly tabernacles and sanctuaries, cleansing rituals, the High Priest tradition, the prophets, kings and judges.

Christ is the High Priest and through His blood He enters the Holy Place (not the earthly one made with hands) and obtains eternal salvation. This same blood will not only cleanse us outwardly, but inwardly, purifying our conscience.

For those of us who have spent time as Christians, the centrality of Christ, His sacrifice and resurrection are so core to our faith that this passage may not seem particularly gripping. For the intended readers, this theological reorientation could have been life-changing; earth-shattering; mind-blowing.

Throughout the text the author uses logic, argument, exhortations, poetry and a host of other literary techniques to engage and persuade readers that Christ is our Way in life, now and eternally. That He is the source of our perfection, fulfilment and wholeness.

Mark 12:28-34

An interesting passage to use alongside Hebrews, here we have Jesus not abolishing the previous laws, but homing in on that which has gone before Him and is of most value – the commandments to love God with our whole being and our neighbours as ourselves. He speaks plainly, no parables or sophisticated rhetoric: 'There is no commandment greater than these.'

What interests me is that this is the only place in Mark where a Scribe is cast in a positive light. In fact, in a few verses after this passage the author has Jesus telling people to beware of the Scribes.

It is as if the author wants to highlight something about loving God and our neighbours by framing the exchange about these two commandments between Jesus and someone from a group who he would normally be in contention with. This could perhaps be an interesting angle to explore in a sermon or with some conversational moments of worship.

Sermon ideas

Psalm 146

What we are reading affects how we read it and likewise, how we read something can affect what we understand from it. Whilst we cannot read in large groups all of the time, it is vital that we experience the text like that at least some of the time. If this were read aloud in a group and the words of the text given life and volume by many voices lifted in praise, I imagine I would feel rather fired-up and confident, reassured by this powerful affirmation, rather than reading it alone in ponderous silence, when I might feel conflicted and lacking-in-faith. Alternatively, this could be read as a whole group, or have three people do a reading together – this is much easier if they can be in the same building – unison readings can be problematic from different locations (though not insurmountable and you will know what would or wouldn't work.)

One approach to Psalm 146 text might be to ask two people to read the psalm ahead of the service, choose one line or verse that stood out to them and write a few sentences about why that they would be happy to share. Give them a starting line like 'When I read Psalm 146 the thing I found most comforting is.' and 'When I read the Psalm, the thing I most noticed was...'

Another approach would be to invite everyone to listen to the reading, perhaps from a few voices and then chat to one another about any line that stood out for them that they found comforting and any lines they found challenging. Hearing what someone else was reassured by or struggled with always draws us closer together – growth in relationships, inspired by these texts, is a huge part of what it means to be a community of faith especially one where people can be heard and find healing.

Ruth

Some listeners coming to the story will see something quite different from us and others and will have insight and wisdom about the plight of Orpah, Naomi and Ruth as a result – some of which they may feel able to share if opportunity is given without expectation.

Taking some time to talk about the vulnerability of the women in the story, draw some connections of the famine to how food security, income, supportive relationships, for so

many people were threatened during the pandemic. Invite people to recall how they felt and how they coped – invite them to share that in a small group, or simply to journal/reflect and in the quiet, talk to God about it.

If you wished to take the Psalm 146 along with the Ruth passage, you might invite people to imagine what Ruth, Orpah and Naomi's reaction might be to certain parts of the psalm text. What would they cling to? What would they find challenging or unbelievable? What might they question? Have them discuss this with one another through the virtual breakout room or in small (distanced?) groups/pairs, or perhaps, just call out short accounts of their reflections.

Note: if you are also using Psalm 146, you might like to have it read by a solo voice first, then have three women read it again in unison. Give space after it to let the experience sink in and allow for people to reflect on it.

If you had more time, perhaps write a first-person monologue from Naomi's perspective – responding to the psalm by talking to God about it.

Lastly, you could create space for more voices from within your congregation, perhaps asking someone who might have some personal connection with the story or a character to share just a short account from their life. Give them a week or two to prepare. Assure them that it isn't a sermon they need give, but simply an account from their life that connects with the text or resonates with one of the characters.

Hebrews

Consider using the text and some questions to get worshippers to reflect on and share their stories with one another.

Simply asking them to discuss what they find interesting about the text can be helpful – 'Read the text and then share with your neighbour/breakout group what stood out to you and what you notice/wonder.'

More directed questions such as, 'When have you ever experienced a time when your beliefs changed significantly? What happened and how did you cope?' Or, 'Share a time when your values were challenged and changed.' Or, perhaps it is more helpful to focus more on faith practice rather than the theoretical – so, 'How have the ways that you pray changed over your lifetime?'

Other questions that may generate good reflection or discussion might be, 'Talk about a time when you acted in a certain way because you felt it was how Jesus might have acted.'

There is a plethora of songs that relate worship, the work of Jesus and His blood cleansing the worshippers that could form an extended section of singing. Consider using a few songs but break the singing up with readings from the text (perhaps use more of the chapter than just today's section) to root the worship experience in the reading.

Mark

When have we ever found ourselves in agreement with someone, or a group, that we normally passionately disagree with? Perhaps a political group we habitually treat with suspicion; a person we've never been able to get on with; or maybe a person from a different religious tradition.

The presence of the Scribe in the story allows us to explore how we relate to those we disagree with or have longstanding enmity. It gives space to speak of how we might treat our enemies, how we could learn from them or at the very least, create moments when we focus on what unites us rather than on the things that divide us.

Prayers

Approach, confession and thanksgiving

Praise the Lord

praise the Lord, all you people
praise the Lord with all your life;
in all that you do
as long as you live.

Praise God in the morning
and praise God in the evening.

Praise God when you rise
and praise God when you rest.

Praise God in times of plenty
and in the times when there is less.

In times of peace
and in times of strife.

When you are thriving
and when you are downcast.

In all of your life,
in all that you do,

as long as you live.
Praise God.

God, You are the Maker of the heavens
and all that dwells there.

God, You are the Maker of all the earth
and all that dwells there.

God, You are the Maker of the oceans and seas
and all that dwells there.

**And so we worship You,
with all of our heart,
all of our mind
and all of our strength.**

All that we know was made by Your hands
all that we know and yet also, so much more:
the farthest reaches of Heavens
that are even now, still unfolding
the secrets of the Earth
still hidden from our knowing
the depths of the oceans
from which all life came.

**And so we worship You,
with all of our heart,
all of our mind
and all of our strength.**

Mighty and powerful,
before all things,
and beyond all things
yet always a God who is faithful to all creation.
Faithful in love.
Faithful to save.
Faithful to tend.
Faithful to share.

And so we worship You,

**with all of our heart,
all of our mind
and all of our strength.**

With our human hearts, we try to love You,
the all loving God.

With our human minds, we try to understand You,
the all-knowing God.

With our human strength, we try to serve You,
the all-powerful God.

And we rejoice to know that when our hearts falter,
Your heart forgives.

When our conscience mislead us
You teach us that we are ever-loved.

When our strength fails,
You draw near and hold us close.

Hear us in the quiet as we confess to You
where we have turned away from You or others
and where we need Your healing and forgiveness.

We give You thanks, O God,
You, who upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.

Who sets prisoners free,
and gives sight to the blind,
who lifts up those who are bowed down,
and loves the righteous.

You who watches over the foreigner
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
who frustrates the ways of the wicked.

You Lord God, reign forever,
for all generations.

Praise the Lord. Amen.

Lord God,
By Your Son, we are reconciled to You

and by Your spirit we are sent out to Your world
to learn to walk in love as Christ walked in Love.

We are sent to care for those who,
like Naomi, Ruth and Orpah had no security.
And so we pray for those who have no food
because of a famine, or because of Covid,
who have no resilience to these things
because they were not allowed to work,
or were refused work because of their gender.
Grant them security and fairness Lord
and call us out of our comfort
to share what we have been given.

We remember those who are grieving the loss of a loved one.
For when the grief is so near they are numb
we ask for Your comfort.
For when they feel alone
we ask that You would meet them in the compassion of others.
For when they blame You and cannot find the words to pray
may they know that the Spirit groans for all of creation
and that Christ intercedes for them.

We think of those whose world has been turned inside out by the pandemic –
grant that they would know the support and care of others,
the help they need and the strength to carry on.

Lord Jesus, You suffer with us,
and through Your resurrection,
have taken our sufferings into the heart of God.

Help those who are alone and vulnerable
know that You have been there too,
that You are with them,
even when we cannot see You,
even when they blame You.

And for us Lord,
help us be open and willing

to be part of the answer to these prayers.

To be Your hands to care,

Your ears to listen,

The body through which You might bring healing and life.

Blessing

Bless our hearts O God, with the love of Christ.

Bless our minds O God, with the wisdom of Christ.

Bless our bodies O God, with the power of the resurrection of Christ.

Musical suggestions

God Welcomes All is the new supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition. This exciting new collection features over 200 hymns and songs in a wide range of styles by writers from Scotland and around the world.

The full music version is now available; and the words-only book, digital resources including the expansion of the existing Church of Scotland music website, will be published in due course, with streaming functions and further information on each song; backing tracks; and lyric videos. *God Welcomes All* is available to order from

<https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225573/god-welcomes-all>

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

- GWA 22 – “Sing praise to God” – an interpretation of Psalm 146
- GWA 26 – “Born apart in different countries” – love shown in the story of Ruth and Naomi
- GWA 153 – “God, the maker of the heavens” – Psalm 146

- CH4 102 – “Alleluia. Praise the Lord, O my Soul” – a musical rendition of Psalm 146
- CH4 115 – “Love is the touch of intangible joy” – this and **CH4 519** offer further reflection on the Mark story.
- CH4 258 – “When the hungry who have nothing share with strangers”

- CH4 259 – “Beauty for Brokenness” – this and CH4 258 have similar themes to the story in Ruth and may work particularly well after prayers of intercession.
- CH4 344 – “And Jesus said: Don’t be afraid” – touches on themes of grief and perhaps picks up the verses that tell us about Naomi believing her grief was caused by God. For those of us who blame God for our suffering or wonder where God is during suffering, this song offers words of comfort and reassurance. If the themes of grieving and asking where God is in our grief are part of your service **CH4 388** may be a good choice too, asking ‘why have you forsaken me’.
- CH4 359 – “He came down that we may have love” – picking up on the themes of the Mark passage.
- CH4 393 – “We turn to God when we are sorely pressed” – perhaps ties the plight of Ruth with the supremacy of Christ and his salvific works described in some of the Hebrews reading.
- CH4 519 – “Love divine, all loves excelling”
- CH4 676 – “Shout for joy!” – reflecting the tone of praise for God in the psalm
- CH4 763 – “God bless to us our bread” – takes the notion from psalm 146:7 (upholds the oppressed and feeds the hungry) and touches on the theme of famine and food security found in the Ruth story. As a shorter song it would work well during a prayer of intercession, or perhaps as a song to follow the reading of the Ruth passage.

Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord’s Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of ‘holy chaos’.

- If singing in our congregations is restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different “Spiritual Styles”?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?
Did it function well as a whole?
How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?
- How balanced was the worship?
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/
community?
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

Useful links

God Welcomes All can be ordered from [Hymns Ancient & Modern](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)

You are free to download, project, print and circulate multiple copies of any of this material for use in worship services, bible studies, parish magazines, etc. If you would like to reproduce this material for commercial purposes, please contact the copyright holders, the Faith Action Programme, for permission: faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

©Faith Action Programme

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353

www.churchofscotland.org.uk