

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – 10 July 2022

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank Very Rev Albert Bogle, Minister of Sanctuary First and members of the Sanctuary First team for their thoughts on the fifth 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.

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.

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Introduction

The remit given to me for writing the material was to provide resources that can be used in worship in all settings or adapted to a particular context, equipping and encouraging worship leaders to become more creative.

Much of the material this week has been drawn from the Sanctuary First archive. I've done this to reflect the thinking that has shaped Sanctuary First's current daily worship material for July. This year we decided to revisit material previously written by our writers, under a new title, "In Good Time" and allow their reflections to speak to us once more. With this in mind I have looked at the lectionary passages for this week and drawn on archive reflections by three very distinctive writers: Neil Urquhart, Minister at Irvine Fullarton ConneXions; Rev Laura Digan, Minister at Glasgow Whiteinch; and Rev Linda Pollock, Minister at Aberluthnot with Laurencekirk.

Using the four passages of scripture for this week, you are invited to allow the Holy Spirit to challenge you at a personal level about your personal worship and the attitudes you bring to the preparation of public worship.

At a personal level, I cannot begin to shape public worship until I am personally touched in some way by the theme and context of the public worship I am inviting others to participate in. I think the words of the hymnwriter: "Lord speak to me that I may speak, In living echoes of your tone", still apply to the one who is preparing worship.

These days I find myself working in a team, submitting ideas to others and collaborating with them until the final shape of the service emerges. In this way it leaves more room for the Holy Spirit to speak, but it also leaves room to allow other voices to participate and shape the worship.

Might I suggest that you use the reflection on Amos as the key passage, giving some insight into what the true nature of worship is meant to produce? The subsequent passages and styles of approach to understanding the passages can help to inform you as you create a service or act of worship that seeks to inspire God's people to see that worship is not solely about words and liturgies, hymns and prayers, but it is about the pursuit of justice and righteousness in our communities.

Albert Bogle

[Amos 7:7-17](#)

All worship has consequences

The book of Amos speaks out against the northern kingdom of Israel that had declared its independence from the southern kingdom of Judah about 150 years earlier (see 1 Kings 12).

The northern kingdom had become influenced by the gods of Canaan. The prophet Amos believed that their idol worship had stopped the flow of justice to the people. Amos especially saw the poor being enslaved by debt, without recourse to justice and the courts. For Amos true worship centres around not just what we say but what we do. For us today true worship will lead us to the place of right relationships with our neighbours and the world around us.

The book of Amos is a collection of sermons, poems and visions relating to how God is going to deal with the idolatry and sin of the northern kingdom. It also sets out a standard of justice for all people. The famous quotation, “Let justice flow like a river and righteousness like a never failing stream” (Amos 5:24) highlights the relationship between justice and doing right. The Hebrew word for justice (*mishpat*), meaning actions taken to correct injustice, and the Hebrew word for righteousness (*tsedaqah*), which means treating people fairly regardless of their social standing, give us a wonderful insight into what the prophet believes God’s purpose is for God’s people – they are to be custodians of the blessing of God.

Amos rebukes Amaziah the priest at Bethel. Standing in the line of all the prophets that have gone before him, Amos declares he will speak the mind of God and that he will not be silenced in order to be politically correct.

Chapters 7-9 depict a series of visions Amos experienced about God’s coming judgment, involving locusts, fire, and overripe fruit and how the kingdom will be overtaken by an invading army.

All of this is the result and consequence of the injustice of Israel. Instead of fulfilling her calling to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, she had become just like the other nations of the earth – self-absorbed, allowing the rich to usurp their power over the poor. The very last section of the book holds out hope that one day God is going to bring about a kingdom where all the nations of the earth will find justice and acceptance.

This book speaks to us today of the need for our worship to go far beyond words. Worship is an active, ever-flowing stream of doing the right things at the right time for the right reasons: loving and serving God and our neighbour.

Albert Bogle

Psalm 82

Ethical consumerism?

People who know me will know I have a serious dress habit! Whatever the occasion, I need a new dress for it, preferably one that is unique, colourful and that reflects my personality. To my shame, there was a period of a few years when I wouldn't be photographed wearing the same dress twice. How wasteful...and expensive!

Then I watched the TV documentary, 'Stacey Dooley Investigates: Fashion's Dirty Secrets' and I was shocked to learn how my fashion choices were damaging the environment. That chemicals in the clothes dyeing process were polluting rivers and poisoning the people who lived near the factories. Looking deeper, I learned about the people making the clothes and how my need for fast, cheap fashion could be having a brutal impact on people's lives, keeping them in poverty. I was forced to ask myself if what I wore actually reflected my Christian values.

And it isn't just what we wear. Does the food and drink we buy lift people up or does it keep them in poverty? What happens to the packaging? Does what we buy support repressive regimes? Was this new furniture made from sustainable wood or does it come from a rainforest?

So many ethical questions to consider...

I will admit I still have a bit of a dress habit but I'm buying a lot less. I'm trying now to pick pieces that I can get a lot of wear out of. I'm trying to buy second-hand, vintage and recycled clothes. I'm trying to think of how I can be a mindful consumer.

Laura Digan

[Luke 10:25-37](#)

Interpreting the rules (The Message)

True worship will always be challenging, forcing us to change our attitudes and actions, turning us from being people of self-service to serving and loving even our enemies. Neil Urquhart, who has been a chaplain to many in the world of sport, writes:

Viewing your arch-rival in sport and life as the neighbour that God instructs you to love as much as you love yourself, is pretty mind-bending and countercultural! It's made even harder if you don't like yourself or your opponent very much. Father, Son and Spirit overflow in love towards us, and offer us the loving context and faith community within which we mature in the love with which we are loved. Whether it's Monopoly, Fortnite or football I play, I'm very good at interpreting rules to suit myself in order to increase my chances of winning. I have to check myself, not just in the name of fair play and for the benefit of my adversary, but for my own benefit and training to be more like 'Trinity' – my model captain, coach and manager.

I once believed there were only two types of loser: 'good losers' and 'those who can't act'. Now I know a third way, forcing myself to go against the grain and recognise rivals as 'beloved of God'. That doesn't mean playing with less intensity! I wouldn't want an opponent to let me win; rather, by playing our best we can help each other improve – as iron sharpens iron.

The 'win at all costs' mentality of much modern sport has turned the original meaning of 'competition' on its head. The Latin word 'competere' literally means 'to strive together' rather than strive *against*. This higher view of competition can give us the best view of rules and their role.

Neil Urquhart

[Psalm 25](#)

From fear to love

According to Father Anthony de Mello, *every* decision we make in life comes from a place of love or of fear... and fear is the opposite of love.

In Psalm 25, the Psalmist is, among other things, fearful. They wisely turn to the One who spoke them into being, asking their Creator to be their Teacher. They know that to move from fear to love, from darkness to light, from death to life, they must embrace and live the teaching of God.

Sermon ideas

Use the overall theme of Amos that true worship of God will produce justice and righteousness in a community.

Use the story of Amos and his encounter with Amaziah (Amos 7:7-17) to show that Amos was not overcome with fear, but was able to stand his ground and speak truth to power.

If Father de Mello is right about decision-making, surely Amos spoke this word of judgment out of love for God and God's people. Fear cannot be allowed to overwhelm our thinking when speaking out against injustice. Instead we must allow 'perfect love to cast out all fear'. Living our lives by decisions ruled by love gives us a new energy and sustains us in times of struggle and difficulty. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, speaks of love as the only effective motivating factor. If we seek justice without love we become the clanging bell (1 Cor 13).

Understanding that our personal actions can have a negative or positive impact on the world in which we live is the result of the Spirit of God teaching us how to worship in Spirit and in truth. Laura Digan's reflection on Psalm 82 gives us an insight into how we can share our own personal journey of transformation in order to connect with our listeners, and also to share our vulnerability as teachers and preachers. This may help others to share concrete examples of making personal decisions made out of love for God's creation and justice for our neighbour.

Returning to the Luke passage, Neil Urquhart uses his experience as a sportsman to reflect on Jesus' teachings regarding the treatment of those who might be perceived as an enemy or an opponent.

Once again in this passage we move from a theological concept to practical actions driven by love rather than legal dogma. To have eternal life is to live in the presence of God. To do so is to be in a relationship with God sustained by love – a love that is complete, reaching into our innermost identity and reaching out to our fellow human beings. The story of the good Samaritan was a shocking story when first told because it spoke of the difference between decisions made out of fear and the one decision made out of love.

Finally, James Cathcart, from the Sanctuary First team, wrote a more contemporary version of the story Jesus told. <https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/video/watch/the-bad-samaritan>.

In doing so James seeks to show that making good decisions out of love can and often do become contagious. We can affect others by our actions. Jesus tells us we are the light of the world. We cannot allow fear to stop us speaking the truth and in doing so, lives will be changed.

Albert Bogle

Prayers

Prayer of confession

Father God

open our eyes

open our ears

and open our mouths

that we might worship You honestly.

Lift our thoughts above

the pressures of our everyday lives,

that we might

confess our hidden sorrows

and our stolen joys,

our hidden sins

and our stolen intentions of grace.

We come before You with

the sincere intent of seeking

to worship You in spirit and in truth.

Take from our hearts

the stresses and strains

that have shaped our attitudes and actions.

Help us see You in all Your glory

and in doing so

see the true image of who we are meant to be.

Open the windows of our hearts

to let the light of Your glory

transform our vision of service in

even the smallest of actions that will make life better for another.

Teach us how to love You

and in doing so discover we are loving our neighbour.

Prayer of gratitude

Our Gracious Heavenly Father
in rare moments of insight
we try to grasp the beauty and the expansive nature of Your love.
No words can describe it
no melody contain it
no human being can explain it.

Yet we are surrounded by the emblems of Your love and grace –
In the colours of the sky
in the chaos of the storm
in the song of the birds
in the company of the animals
You tell us all will be well.

In our moments of great fear
when alone and anxious,
You promise to shelter and protect us.
Through days of struggle and heartache, joy and achievement,
surrounded by the companionship of family and friends,
You cover us with a blanket of compassion and kindness.
The constancy of Your grace overwhelms us,
the depth of Your love leaves us breathless.
Standing at the cross
we are transfixed –
gazing, we are
troubled
torn
and broken.

Here You don't just try to fix us –
You mend us.
Your outstretched arms
have enfolded us in a love we've never known.
Your gaze
has healed our troubled souls.
Your love –
the most incredible of all.

Let Your love
now live through us
as we pray

Our Father ...

Prayers for others

Let us pray for world peace –
as we remember countries throughout the world
where there is tension and unrest.
Grant to our leaders the wisdom to make right decisions
and to confront evil with good and in doing so
may love cover a multitude of sins and allow justice and peace to blossom.

Hear our prayers today as we name those communities on our hearts today.

(silence)

Lord hear our prayers

We give thanks to You, O God, for Your unfailing goodness.

Let us pray for members of the community
who work and serve the common good.

Sustain and strengthen all those who work tirelessly for the good of others.

We pray especially with those who are part of the emergency services;

doctors and nurses and all the support staff who work in the NHS;

those in the Armed Forces;

for police and those involved in the security of the realm.

Give understanding and wisdom

To teachers and administrators and all who work in our education system;

all politicians and individuals who seek to serve.

Raise up in our land, O Lord,

leaders and others who are willing to serve

not for their own benefit but for the good of our communities

and all those who are oppressed and forgotten.

Lord hear our prayers

We give thanks to You, O God, for Your unfailing goodness.

We pray for family and friends.

Lord bless and prosper our friends and families.

Give to each of us the insight to know when to speak and when to be silent.

To know when to offer help and when help is required without someone asking.

Be close to those we know who are struggling with ill health and facing an uncertain future.

Grant us the wisdom to know what to say and how to respond to their needs.

Give perseverance to all those who are enduring difficult times,
in frustrating relationships and challenging work places.

Give strength to those who feel they are running out of options
and feel unable to carry on.

Inspire us with opportunities to carry out deeds of kindness,
without us ever being rewarded,
save knowing that what we do is to bring glory to Your name.

Lord hear our prayers

We give thanks to You, O God, for Your unfailing goodness.

We pray for Your church.

That she would be a place of true worship

A shelter and refuge for all in need of Your grace.

As we seek to reform and reshape,

we pray for Your Spirit to guide and inspire
the Church of Scotland at every level.

And we pray for this church [*name of church*],
for all those meeting in person
and for communities that have formed online.

Lord hear our prayers

We pray that all may know Your presence and guidance.

We pray for our personal needs.

We take a moment in silence to bring before You that which we are personally thankful for
and that which is troubling us.

(silence)

Lord hear our prayers

We give thanks to You, O God, for Your unfailing goodness.

Blessing /Closing prayer

We remember before You all who have joined in worship throughout the world today. Those in cathedrals and places of great historical heritage and those who have gathered around a kitchen table.

We pray that unity among Your people might be the common calling of Your church. We pray that in unity we might go out into the world to make disciples, declaring Your love for all creation.

May the power of the Father of Lights illuminate our minds, the presence of the Eternal Son embolden our voices, and gifts of the Spirit of Grace shape our action. And the blessing of Father, Son and Holy Spirit journey with us evermore.

Prayer of waiting (Psalm 25:4-5)

Holy God, I forgo my power and open myself to Your Love.

“Make me to know Your ways, O Lord;
teach me Your paths.

Lead me in Your truth, and teach me,
for You are the God of my salvation;
for You I wait all day long.”

Linda Pollock

A Prayer for Creation

Lord of all Creation

There are so many questions for us consumers to ask and consider.

Ignorance is not an excuse and we don't live in isolation.

We read in Psalm 82 that injustice lies at the doors of all of us.

There is power in how we choose to spend our money.

Speak to me today, Lord

and challenge my shopping habits and consumer choices.

How can the choices I make as a consumer help fight injustice,
protect the planet

and give dignity to my brothers and sisters around the world?

Laura Digan

Prayer of confession

Great Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith,

forgive me for thinking only of myself at times,

with no regard to how others feel around me.
Forgive me for failing to recognise in my enemy, opponent or rival,
a human You love and command me to love too.

I praise You for the intensity of Your passionate love for me,
my colleagues,
team mates,
family and friends,
and for how much You love my foes
and those I find it hard to get on with.

You are truly stunning in Your sacrificial loving,
keep me ever learning in Your 'down-to-earth' Agape Academy.
Amen

Neil Urquhart

Musical suggestions

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.

- CH4 158 – “God moves in a mysterious way”
- CH4 519 – “Love divine, all loves excelling”
- CH4 708 – “O Lord, the clouds are gathering”
- “Love lifted me” – <https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/music/article/iaian-jamieson-love-lifted-me>
[https://hymnary.org/text/i was sinking deep in sin far from the](https://hymnary.org/text/i-was-sinking-deep-in-sin-far-from-the)

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'.
- While singing in our congregations is still 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

Up to date information for churches around Covid-19 can be found [here](#)

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](#)

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