

Palm Sunday – Year B

Sunday 24 March 2024

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Rev Dr Douglas Galbraith, author of *Assist our Song: Music Ministries in the Local Church*, for his thoughts on Palm Sunday / Passion Sunday.

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.

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Introduction

In former times, it was not just on Good Friday that the Church relived the Passion/suffering of Christ, but through the final two weeks of Lent starting on the fifth Sunday. This was 'Passiontide' and began on 'Passion Sunday'. This early start enabled those preparing for baptism at Easter – as well as those already baptised – to dwell in depth on the cataclysmic events in which their faith was rooted.

In more recent years, Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday have been merged into the sixth Sunday when, as well as commemorating the Entry into Jerusalem – a fitting beginning for reliving the events of Holy Week, there was also provision made to hear the full account of the Passion so as to place worshippers within the greater narrative of our salvation.

Common Order advises that 'Whenever possible, even if readings for the Entry into Jerusalem are used, it is desirable that the complete Passion narrative should be read, as part of the preparation for Easter'. Of course, some will hear this narrative at services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, but many more will not. How justice can be done to both these components is explored in the section on 'The Service' (below).

Having read the passages, I find it helpful at this early stage to check the books of the Bible from which the extracts are taken: the nature of a book; what period of history does it reflect; who was/were the writers and what context they were responding to. I find this in very handy form in William Neil's *One Volume Bible Commentary* (1962 but easily found second-hand). Commentaries and *The Theological Word Book of the Bible*, edited by Alan Richardson, or other reference books, follow. For a themed Sunday, I find the *New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* useful where learning about historical background can suggest innovative approaches in today's context. Also helpful are the books of commentary that accompany the Lectionary, such as *Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary* (Abingdon), but other similar resources are available. The next stage is perhaps a little unusual, checking the Biblical Index in CH4 for hymns and songs which are inspired by a passage or a verse within it. This, coupled with the relevant section in the book, plus a look at the Royal School of Church Music's *Sunday by Sunday*, provides a long-list of possible hymns, psalms and songs. It can be helpful to consult [CH4 online](#) at this point, where you can find the background to each hymn and suggestions as to how to use it. With both these types of source together in one's mind, the service begins to take shape and to have a unity. Specifically about prayers and sermon: I am an inveterate cutter-out of things to remember, which not only offers illustration or enables the development of an idea but also suggests material on which to base prayer which has resonance in the present. For the latter, if you don't mind reading a newspaper from another denomination, the *Church*

Times is always up-to-date on the Church in other parts of the world as well as containing information and reflection on issues nearer home.

My first commentary is offered on the two groups of prescribed readings.

Entry into Jerusalem

[Mark 11:1-11](#) or [John 12:12-16](#); [Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29](#)

In Year A we hear Matthew's version and in Year C Luke's. So that we hear all four gospel accounts of the Entry within the three-year cycle of the Lectionary, we are invited to choose from the remaining two.

This enduring picture of Jesus riding into the city signals the start of the final countdown. What did Jesus intend, what were the disciples thinking, what went through the heads of the bystanders, what shaped the telling of the incident by the gospel writers? The 'choreography' seems to have been from the prophecy in Zechariah (9:9), which sees a messiah whose power is tempered by humility, "humble and riding ... on a colt, the foal of a donkey". Spreading garments was a spontaneous gesture of respect (see the welcome to the king in 2 Kings 9:13). From Psalm 118 come the cries "Blessed is the one ..." (v26) and "Hosanna" (the Hebrew word usually translated as 'save us', v25), while in the Apocrypha (1 Maccabees 13:51) an earlier Jewish hero reclaims the city, and is received "with thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees, and with harps, and cymbals, and with viols, and hymns, and songs" (AV). Here, however, is not a story plagiarised from earlier writers but an event described with the help of cultural memories, with old resonances helping to clarify its meaning and significance.

John's version derives from the synoptic writers but, omitting much of the detail, he makes two significant additions. First, there is added the psalm verse (118:22) which makes a link with the Passion narrative: "the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone". A second addition explains how this account has come down to us in the way it has; he comments (v16) that "his disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him". Here is John exercising his customary role in bringing out the meaning and significance of the gospel narrative, an example of one who has "the tongue of a teacher", referred to in today's set passage from the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah 50:4).

The Passion of Christ

There is some significance in the fact that the first three prescribed passages are songs, or at least song-like. The gospel readings, on the other hand, are prose narrative, yet their contents are among the texts and themes most set to music by Western composers over the centuries and continuing today. These are events and truths so momentous, but at the same time so 'hidden', that music is required to take us further into grasping their significance.

[Isaiah 50:4-9a](#)

Here is the third of four famous and striking passages known collectively as the Servant Songs (or Servant Poems), not gathered together but singing out from within the prophecies of the second Isaiah. Much has been written about these songs – for example, whether they refer to a particular contemporary figure or to the people of God as a whole, or whether they are specifically pointing forward to the one we know as Jesus Christ. Together they show the demands that discipleship brings and what it means for a person (or a Church) to be true to their beliefs and calling. In today's song it is acknowledged that discipleship requires both understanding and action, that the latter involves risk, but in this is found divine support.

[Psalms 31:9-16](#)

That the Christian faith is one that enters into the depths to find the way to freedom is tempting to overlook or avoid. The official collection of metrical psalms used in the Church of Scotland (1929) until recently had a section at the end entitled, 'Selection of Psalms and Paraphrases Most Suitable for Use in Public Worship'. The verses set for today, the words of someone at the end of their tether (whether personal trouble or in despair at the predicament of others) are entirely omitted, clearly 'not suitable'! Today, however, we are turning again to such frank talk before God. More globally informed and more personally aware, we are more able to acknowledge that deep inside we may – as persons or as communities – be in turmoil, in despair, fearful of physical weakness, alienated from life and from God, unable to see how we in our society and our world can extricate ourselves from the cycle of cause and effect that produces a whole gamut of human misery from disease and famine to terrorism. To be able to sing or speak a psalm like this, to be able to lament for ourselves and others, is a step towards rebuilding faith in God and in our fellow humans. Here we reach inside the experience of the sufferer and find that even here God is to be found.

[Philippians 2:5-11](#)

This was the first European church founded by St Paul. He thanks them, as at the beginning of most other letters to churches, he arranges for a visit from Epaphroditus (Paul is in prison at this point), and he also addresses difficulties and problems he has heard about in the life of the local church. It is to encourage them to open themselves towards each other and to seek to live in unity that he turns to what commentators agree is an early Christian hymn, hoping that the familiarity of the words will help lodge his plea in their minds. Here too for the first time is expressed the idea of Christ's pre-existence (it had been usually thought that this emerged later as doctrines became established). His life on earth is affirmed, using the metaphor of the humble obedience that slaves have to adopt; then His humiliation and death, the cost of His discipleship, followed by resurrection/exaltation – God's work – to rule over the cosmos.

[Mark 14:1-15:47](#) or [Mark 15:1-39, \(40-47\)](#)

This version of the Passion narrative is dealt with separately in the 'Sermon, Address, Meditation' section below.

The Service

Some historical background may be useful in planning this complex occasion:

From early times, high festivals were observed by processions. On Palm Sunday, the procession would assemble at a public space (like the city gate) or outside the church door, when palm (or willow or olive) branches were blessed and the people processed to/into the church.

For the hearing of the Passion narrative, the drama was enhanced (and the attention kept) by the use of three vocal 'registers': a tenor sang/chanted the narration, a bass voice gave the words of Jesus, while an alto/treble voice sang other parts, such as Pilate and the Crowd.

Both traditions have again become part of the observance of the Entry into Jerusalem in some parts of the Church in our day, while others have adapted them to their situations. (Occasionally the involvement of a real donkey is reported!). Here are some suggestions:

- The service may open with a procession, during which one of the relevant hymns (see below) is sung. Alternatively, the children of the church prepare and form the procession, perhaps with branches or palm crosses (see below), not necessarily going straight from door to chancel but weaving round the congregation – who would be singing the hymn (or more than one relevant hymn). A further option might be for the

whole congregation, as part of the first hymn, themselves to follow a route round (inside) the church before retaking their seats (this requires a more spacious building, where there is some flexibility of furnishing). In some traditions, 'palm crosses' are used, which can either be bought in bulk or made locally (see YouTube). After the procession of children have entered, they could hand out palm crosses to the congregation.

- The service continues with an opening prayer and the relevant Gospel reading.
- It would be possible to have a short address, particularly with children in mind, when one could draw attention to the meaning of some of the details (such as the humility of riding a donkey). In addition, it has been noted that donkeys are capable of remembering a place that they have been to, or other donkeys that they have met, as long as 25 years ago. Perhaps this could lead to the idea that we are kept in God's long memory.
- That part of the service which dwells on the Passion of Christ would follow, with the set readings from the Hebrew Bible and from the Pauline letter, perhaps with one of the set psalms being sung in between (they are both relevant to both themes) (see Musical suggestions, below).
- If it is wished to read the whole of the section of the gospel prescribed [Mark 14:1-15:47 or Mark 15:1-39, (40-47)], the use of different voices should be considered, perhaps sited in different locations, including within the congregation. Or one or more of the constituent parts might be selected, enough to recall the whole, familiar, narrative. Some may wish to try the ancient idea of chanting the words, using different voice pitches to enhance the drama. It is surprising how this practice, strange to many, can be experienced as gripping to the listener. Another way of incorporating the Passion narrative is outlined in the section below.

Sermon, Address, Meditation ideas

There are three options.

1. The Entry into Jerusalem

A sermon could start from the Johannine explanation that it was not until the story had run its course, through Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost, that the many strands of this incident and the gospel writers' recounting of it would come together to reveal to Jesus' followers the true nature of the Servant King and the quality of the mission to which He called them. Our Christian growth is similarly punctuated by events not fully understood at the time but

which strengthen, pattern and illuminate our path of discipleship. Just as the full significance of these events dawned later on members of the early church, so for us our understanding of the gospel, its comforts and its commands, grows through a life of faith and our own attempts at discipleship.

2. The Isaiah and Philippians passages

This is an outline for a possible sermon on the nature of discipleship. Introduce the theme by noting how much of our faith has been conveyed in song, whose combination of words and melody has enhanced but also hinted at so much more, so that our living of the faith continues to reveal new truths and new conviction.

Explore the three aspects of discipleship in the third servant song:

- **We are given the tongue of a teacher**

The word 'teacher' traces its roots back to the Proto-Germanic word *taikijan* 'show', becoming Old English *tæcan*, 'show', 'demonstrate'. Probably all of us in some way have 'taught': children and grandchildren (grannies are often credited with special wisdom – with good reason, of course!); or explaining or showing something to apprentices or younger colleagues; or analysing the performance this season of your sports team; or explaining over a pint why the particular political view you hold is obviously the right one! You may not be teaching or telling about theology or the Bible but nevertheless some unspoken spiritual wisdom, some overriding moral priority, some message of love, or support, or motivation, may be coming through even in our everyday speech.

- **To be a teacher is also to be a learner**

With the tongue of the teacher, says the song, must come the ear of the learner. 'Morning by morning he wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.' We learn to listen both inside and outside the church community. We learn from our own relationship with Christ, but we need each other's help. How well do we in the Church share and discuss what it means to have faith, or be disciples? It used to be that holy festivals and visual aids like statues and learning the psalms or the creed by heart, or daily services in our parish churches fed the spiritual lives of our forebears. Today opportunities to listen and learn as Christians are fewer. And so there have been moves towards group Bible study, 'adult Sunday Schools', notes that help Bible reading at home and private devotions, patterns of spirituality that develop the listening ear, courses of lectures, groups in Lent or Advent, and so on. Outside the Church: how well do we listen to others, hearing what they are not saying as well as what they say? We may need to give up some of our own assumptions, or authority, or power, to listen more intently. We are often the nearest person to give help and support to someone who crosses our path.

- **More than learns and teaches but also acts, serves**

Discipleship and service can be costly. True discipleship, says our song, refuses the way of power, of retaliation, and with humility and patience accepts what life brings. 'I did not hide my face from insult and spitting ... The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced'. This gracious and humble giving of place to others removes the tension from a situation, where fear and pride can block a solution, a way through, whether it is in a close relationship or an approach to strangers – be they refugees or people down the street, or indeed nation to nation seeking to live in peace: this way opens the way to the reconciliation that is a foretaste of God's kingdom.

These insights about Christ and about discipleship are echoed in the hymn in Philippians. It reminds us that the Passion was not some new dramatic episode in Christ's life but a continuation of His level of engagement with humanity. Far from being an intervention which turns what happened before on Good Friday inside out, the Resurrection was a natural progression from Christ's depth of engagement with life right to the point of it breaking down with the demands He made on humanity. There was only one way to go – on to Easter. To engage with life as He did meant engaging with what was beyond life. This means that as we engage fully in life in a costly way, we may also find something of resurrection, of renewal, of reconciliation, and of peace.

3. The Passion Narrative

These are five segments from the longer narrative that we are encouraged to read today. They are offered not with commentaries or sermon outlines but as meditations. One or more of these might be used in preference to a full sermon on a day of two themes. Of course, any one could be expanded into the sermon for the day.

[Mark 14:26-52](#)

'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake' (v34)

It is so easy, given our knowledge of the outcome, to underplay the turmoil, the ugliness and the horror of the part of the narrative that takes place here in Gethsemane, aided and abetted sometimes by the sentimentality with which these incidents have been depicted in art and in musical setting. But at this point, the outcome is not assured. Luther commented: 'no-one feared death as much as this man'. It was not so much the fact of death, perhaps, as the point that had been reached in the struggle for supremacy between good and evil. In the temptations in the wilderness Satan had suffered defeat but now returns in a final bid for mastery (as the equivalent passage in John 12:31 suggests). In Karl Barth's words, 'the bill is being presented' and, referring to that earlier incident, he remarks that in Gethsemane it became plain that 'it was one thing to enter and continue on this way, it was

another to tread it to the end, and in this world its necessarily bitter end. ... From this we may gather something at least of the convulsion of that hour'. With Christ we wrestle with the juggernaut-proportions of the evil and injustice endemic in so many of our social structures as well as the outright exploitation and cruelty between person and person. It is then that we long for Easter.

[Mark 14:53-72](#)

At that moment the cock crowed for the second time (v72)

The vividness of this and other narratives of the events of the Passion have the ring of being first person accounts, even the leaked report of the preliminary hearing (it did not follow the rules for the conduct of formal trials) before the Sanhedrin. If Peter himself is the reporter of the incident in the courtyard, it says a lot for his honesty and the strength of his subsequent discipleship. The fact that he was there at all, unable to leave Jesus unattended, shows a consistency between the Peter who denied and the Peter who was martyred. The escalation of the incident, with the rising panic of the chief participant, is well caught, and part of the fascination of the story for the reader is how quickly and how easily one is drawn into giving the opinion or judgment or vote that is expected of us – like Peter, decent reliable people who sometimes fail to be true to ourselves. When we subsequently have the time to reflect and to take stock we often find ourselves sharing Peter's distress. For Peter, the later knowledge of the presence of the Risen Christ came to make all the difference, embraced all the more because he knew himself to be part of the problem. At this time of Christ's Passion, we submit ourselves to honest scrutiny so that we may re-emerge as Easter people.

[Mark 15:1-15](#)

But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify Him!' (v14)

There is a scene in Bach's *St Matthew Passion* where the cry, '[Let him be crucified](#)', is set to a jagged, chromatic theme, and the voices arranged so that they come in seemingly at random. The words seem to tumble over each other in their vehemence. It is an ugly sound, full of self-regard and bluster, and yet all the skill of a great composer has gone into achieving the effect. We too easily assume that injustice and wrong are rooted in stupidity, incomprehension, lack of care, poor imagination. Yet it can be people of gifts and skill who are the instruments of anguish and dispossession. The terrorist can also be a caring family member, the torturer a favourite with their grandchildren, the demagogue a person of learning. Aggression may be undertaken in the name of peace, global expansion in the name of greater prosperity for all. Even under the guise of religious rectitude we can dismiss and devalue those for whom also Christ died. It is all too easy for us to set limits to our love, build in cut-off points for our responsibility, filter out the information which does

not accord with the point of view upon which our self-identity depends. A Christian seeks to be one who is open at all points without being threatened, having the mind of Christ.

Mark 15:16–24

And they crucified Him ... (v24)

The announcement of the crucifixion is almost casual, part of a sentence where the main information is that the soldiers cast lots for the clothes Jesus had been wearing. How ordinary cruelty can be, all in the day's work. And the taunts continue. For someone who finds themselves on the wrong side, it is the mockery which brings it home to the victim that they are now, suddenly, of no account. There is no dialogue in mockery. The perpetrator is secure behind the law or is shielded by the many. Facts are wrenched from their context and twisted into a new, ugly shape. The strain of retaining a basic level of sympathy – necessary when people have to work together, to keep a family unit intact, to protect the weak – can cause perfectly honest, decent people to let down their guard. In this case, as so often, the taunts contained more of the truth than those shouting from a safe distance intended. Many sermons and many martyrdoms were necessary before the idea of a king who ruled through servanthood, and who made the experience of the excluded the perspective from which to re-order society, could become more commonplace. The fact that for vast tranches of the world's population the idea is still the cause of ridicule only serves to underline the continuing urgency of the Church's mission today.

Mark 15:25-39

... darkness came over the whole land ... (v33)

If any readings belong on Good Friday, this and its two predecessors do. But with a Christian Year that is expressed through a Sunday pattern, it makes sense to give proper space for prayer and reflection on the Cross. Thus Passion Sunday, now conflated with Palm Sunday, allows us to 'grasp' and to live through the Crucifixion, since it is only as Christian people share the darkness of Calvary, both in imagination and by acknowledging and facing our own hidden darkness, will we be able to know and embrace the Easter faith. Christ cries, on behalf of the millions, "Why have you forsaken me?" But in identifying with this one man's experience, we are also identifying potentially with the transformation that is to follow. For the cry our Lord gave was not the spontaneous protest forced from an individual but the words of a treasured psalm. In this way Jesus places Himself, and us, within the context of the promise that grows through the Hebrew Bible and issues in the final rescue of humankind at Easter. Sometimes it needs a hymn to effect the necessary exchange between our lives and the Word of God in Scripture. Take time this coming week to reflect on and pray through Brian Wren's striking hymn (CH4 385), 'Here hangs a man discarded'. It includes the words:

Life, emptied of all meaning, drained out in bleak distress,
can share in broken silence, our deepest emptiness; [...]
Christ, in our darkness risen, help all who long for light
to hold the hand of promise, till faith receives its sight.

An option is to expand the meditation, referring to other verses in the hymn.

Prayers

Opening prayer

God, You loved the world so much
that You embraced it in all its suffering
in Your beloved Son Jesus Christ:
who sought the way of the cross
that He might come to Easter
and offer us the way back to You.

We thank You, All-Loving God,
for this space apart,
not just on this Sunday morning
but in the week that is to come –
space to become more receptive
to the incredible promise of new life:
life to challenge all that is deathly in our world,
life to challenge all that is dull in our hearts.

Help us to use this time,
not just in prayer at worship,
but in the thoughtfulness
in which we go about these coming days,
listening for Your voice in all we do,
as You challenge the habits that restrict us
and the assumptions that close our minds.

Help us also to be aware of others
who at this time are examining themselves,
whether from religious duty
or because they have reached a turning point,
in a career, or in a relationship, or in a crisis.

Give us an ear that listens
that we may find words to sustain others
and an openness to learn from those we meet.

Or

Mighty and merciful God,
You are our rock, our shelter, our light,
our shepherd, our comfort, and our judge.

In these long, Lenten days
when we have searched our souls,
readying ourselves for the call to follow
our crucified and risen Lord,
make us sensitive, we pray,
in this final part of the journey,
to the sayings and searchings of Christ
as He feels His way to the Cross,
seeking to embrace all
that You ask of Him,
so that we in our turn
may learn and engage
with all You are asking of us.

Hosanna! Blessed is He
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Amen.

The prayer of confession is most usually a continuation of the opening prayer, but an alternative pattern, if people go out to join their groups, is to have a shorter opening prayer and keep confession and forgiveness until they have left, immediately preceding the readings.

Prayer of penitence and act of forgiveness

In this long Lenten pilgrimage,
as we have searched our souls,
readying ourselves for the call to follow
our crucified and risen Lord,
we have had many stumbles,

and groped along many a wrong turning.
We confess the unheeding way
we manoeuvre round the wounded on our Jericho roads,
play deaf to the Samaritan woman full of questions,
shake off the Bartimeuses plucking our sleeve,
dismiss the Zaccheuses as beneath our notice,
hardly break our table conversation
as a Mary Magdalene offers us riches without price.
Help us at this time to face who we are,
but also all we might become.

Hear the good news:
in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God.

Collect (*on Isaiah 50:4-9a*)

God with us,
You waken us morning by morning
to savour the world, to love others,
and to learn of Your purposes;
sharpen our ears and our senses
that, walking with Christ,
and taught by His words and example,
we may fully embrace His Passion
and with Him be brought to Resurrection.
Through this same Jesus Christ we pray.
Amen

Prayer of thanksgiving

O God, who sings through Your creation
in the melody of its waters and the wind in the trees,
in the lilt of the songbird and the animal's call:
we give You thanks for the singers and musicians of old,
whose songs today we have heard and sung:
the songs and poetry of the prophets,
clothing their insights in a music
which lodges their teaching for ever in our minds;
the psalmists who recorded both joy and fear
in the first song book of the Church,

giving those who followed
a vocabulary with which to address God
and a medium through which God may speak to us.

We give thanks for later composers
who, finding inspiration in the life of Christ
and His message of hope and reconciliation,
have inspired us in turn by their music
and brought us closer to the mysteries of our faith.

We give thanks too for the writers of our hymns,
who in each new age give us songs to sing,
new words to engage us afresh on the way to the kingdom.
May our music and song draw the best from us,
and our melodies bring us into community
with each other and with Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

Prayers of intercession

The chapter of Zechariah quoted in the account of the Entry also contains these verses, which may be quoted at the time of prayer (or in a sermon) to bring to mind the several areas of the world where currently there is conflict, and thus serve as a context or starting point for prayer.

“Ashkelon shall see it and be afraid;
Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish;
Ekron also, because its hopes are withered. ...
He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations” (*Zechariah 9:5,10*)

Loving and Holy Spirit of God, hear our prayers.
We believe that You want us not just to serve
but to pray for the world to whose service You have called us,
in all its longing for peace, for justice, for reconciliation.

Hear our prayers today for those who struggle against tyrannies,
those damaged by natural disasters or blight caused by others' greed,

those forced out from their communities to seek refuge elsewhere;
for aid agencies, peace-keeping forces, rescue services at sea,
world organisations and alliances, national governments,
and those offering a welcome to asylum seekers in our towns.

If statistics are tears, the world weeps for release for so many:
the dispossessed, the falsely imprisoned, the undervalued,
the cruelly undernourished, the exploited, and the sick;
the deeply anxious who have everything and yet nothing,
miserable in their comfort, longing for love, to feel of value.
May they and we travel with You to Easter.

Other topical or local petitions may be added ...

With these petitions, we give thanks
for saints and martyrs through the centuries,
and the many people forgotten by us but known to You,
who have challenged injustice and discrimination,
given voice to those unnoticed and unheard,
and helped to create communities where all are valued.
Through Jesus Christ we pray; Amen.

The Lord's prayer ...

Benediction (*Philippians 4:7*)

The peace of God,
which is beyond all understanding,
guard your thoughts and your hearts in Jesus Christ.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
Our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
be with you and those you love,
this day and always. Amen.

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.

A suggested playlist of [songs from CH4 for use during Lent](#) can be found on the Church of Scotland website.

Entry into Jerusalem

- CH4 279 – “Make way for Christ the King” – an Advent hymn by Graham Kendrick which is also suggestive of the Entry into Jerusalem
- CH4 364 – “All glory, laud and honour” – This ninth century hymn was written for a procession. In performance, the verses were sung by a small choir or soloists with the rest of the procession singing the refrain. Since this hymn does not break between verses, it is a good example to follow, and prevents a sameness spoiling the effect. Alternatively, the accompaniment should be varied between verses and refrain. Other hymns to accompany a procession are 365, 367, 370
- CH4 366 – “Come into the streets with me!” – is an exhilarating modern song, patterned on an old song of children at play. It could possibly round off the Entry into Jerusalem section of the service. Or it could go well with a children’s procession
- CH4 368 – “Shout, Hosanna” – is another song suitable for all ages, with a delightful donkey-friendly accompaniment, with a bit of a kick every so often

The psalm

- CH4 25 – “In you, O Lord” (Psalm 31) – spoken by minister and congregation in turn
- CH4 78 – “Oh, set ye open unto me” (Psalm 118)

The Passion

- CH4 354 – “O love how deep” – we sing with Christians of the fifteenth century
- CH4 355 – “You, Lord, are both Lamb and Shepherd” – by Canadian prison chaplain Sylvia Dunstan, widens the context of the Passion to include the Transfiguration, when Jesus ‘set his face to go to Jerusalem’ (Luke 9:51) and continues with pairs of opposites which show a Jesus who can’t be pinned down. Familiar tune with a magnificent rising climax at the end, perfectly suiting the last couplet which sums up each verse

- CH4 372 – “Lord Jesus, as the shadows long are stealing” – Glasgow minister Leith Fisher’s hymn, set to an old German tune, captures the shock of the disciples at the incident of the washing of the feet
- CH4 374 – “From heaven you came” – Now a well-established modern hymn by Graham Kendrick, with the memorable couplet ‘hands that flung stars into space / to cruel nails surrendered’
- CH4 378 – “Praise to the Holiest in the height” – Good theology clearly set out, but also full of feeling. It was part of the libretto for Elgar’s famous work ‘The dream of Gerontius’
- CH4 386 – “Lifted high” – Contemporary hymn by a Scottish author set to an old Scottish tune which sees the hope through the darkness. Works particularly well unaccompanied with a cantor singing the verses
- CH4 389 – “Behold the holy Lamb of God” – This Malawian hymn works well as a choir anthem
- CH4 393 – “We turn to God” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s hymn is set to the well-known tune to ‘Abide with me’
- CH4 395 – “What wondrous love is this” – An outpouring of adoration for Christ’s sacrifice with an appealing old Appalachian melody
- CH4 398 – “Sing, my tongue” – we celebrate the Passion and its outcome with Christians of the sixth century and later
- CH4 436 – “Christ triumphant” – which carries the Passion through Resurrection to Ascension

Philippians

- CH4 458 – “At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow” – Based on vv9-11
- CH4 503 – “I will offer up my life” – Matt Redman’s song contains a reference to v8
- CH4 520 – “Ye who the name of Jesus bear” – This is one of the Scottish Paraphrases. It puts in song form the hymn that Paul quotes

- CH4 536 – “May the mind of Christ my Saviour” – Based on Philippians 2:5 and set to a delightful lilting tune by Edinburgh’s Alison Robertson
- CH4 558 – “Lord, I lift your name on high” – An ecstatic setting of vv.7-9
- CH4 559 – “There is a Redeemer” – A worship song whose verse 2 captures v.8-9

Prayer chants and choruses

- CH4 774 – “Jesus, name above all names” – A devotional chorus based on v8 which, repeated several times, could accompany a time of prayer and devotion
- CH4 775 – “Jesus, remember me”; CH4 793 – “Stay with me” – These Taizé settings of the words of the man crucified with Christ and the words of Jesus in the Garden could be used to deepen a time of prayer

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

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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