

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost – Year B

Sunday 13 October 2024

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Rev Graeme Glover, Minister of Galashiels Church of Scotland, for his thoughts on the 21st 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.

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Introduction

The resources for the first four Sundays in October have been prepared by [Priority Area congregations](#) (those in the 5% most deprived parishes). This is a month with a particular focus on tackling poverty. October 7-13 is [Challenge Poverty Week](#); and October 17 is the United Nations' International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. We would encourage you to explore ways in which your congregation can engage in anti-poverty issues at a local level.

I was in the dentist's waiting room, checking emails on my phone, when I came across the invitation to contribute this week's Weekly Worship. Sat opposite and slightly to the left of me in the waiting room, was a man and his young daughter. The girl was upset and began to shout at her dad: "I hate being at your house, I like it much better at mum's!" I glanced up and I saw that they – precious children of God – both looked in pain. I felt like crying.

The painful situations that so many of us find ourselves in are not, of course, limited to the neighbourhoods that the Church of Scotland classifies as Priority Areas. However, it is in these neighbourhoods that we find many people who are struggling. I was pleased to receive that invitation, but I was especially honoured to be asked to contribute to Weekly Worship this month, when the focus is on Priority Areas. Working in a such a neighbourhood is perhaps the most energising part of my ministry. This should not surprise me: it is biblical, it is where the Church should be. For when the Church is on the frontier between the kingdom of God and the evil of poverty, injustice, violence, addictions, broken relationships and loneliness; it is there that we will meet Jesus.

This week's four lectionary readings all contain stories of struggle, and messages of hope. I have set out together both my exegesis, and my ideas for sharing these passages. I am pleased that other members of our Galashiels church family have also contributed to this material. The names you will read below are people who have shown me and many others how to love both in action and in truth. I have benefited from Weekly Worship many times, and so if there is anything below that makes your preparation easier, or your sharing of God's Word more fruitful, then I will be chuffed.

The following is my ideal – and not always followed – method for preparing weekly sermons. I start by memorising the passage, until I can say it back to myself. I then try to write down the text from memory as well, which really helps me internalise it. When I give in to the temptation to skip this time-consuming first step, and instead go to the work of others, I don't feel like I properly know the text. A new part of my preparation is listening to

online sermons and podcasts about the passage. I find this a really helpful (and enjoyable) thing to do as I chop veg, drive, or go red in the gym. The relevance of how to apply the passages is helped if I have managed to do a good amount of pastoral ministry. Early on Sunday morning, I will spend a couple of hours going over my sermons, and my neat texts will become covered in scribbles.

Job 23:1-9, 16-17

The more I think about this passage, the more I think it is a call to our churches: People need you! Now. Many people may seem indifferent to the Church at the moment; but we cannot be indifferent to the neighbourhoods around us. We have too much to offer. The story of Job shows how our churches can:

- Help people who are struggling
- Help people build up resilience
- Give people hope.

Background

At the beginning of this book, we are introduced to Job and the fantastic, fulfilling and faithful life he lives. The story then cuts to heaven, and a discussion between Satan and God. The Almighty speaks admiringly of Job, and Satan taunts that Job is only faithful because his life is so good. “Take away what Job has”, says Satan, “and he will no longer trust you.” Okay, God instructs Satan, take away all that Job has, and then we will find out if he remains faithful. In a series of swift blows, Job loses all that he has. Job is soon in poverty, desperately lonely and physically ill. However, it is the inner darkness that causes Job the most pain. Job holds on to belief in God, even when life is terrible and he cannot keep going (30:16,) it feels like God has abandoned him (30:20). That terrible feeling of both outer and inner darkness (23:17,) is one that too many of us are familiar with.

1. How can Christians help people who are struggling?

Three friends come to Job, but they do not make things better. They do not offer him practical help, instead they just give him words. Christians need to help people with generous practical actions (1 John 3:18). Job is also longing for someone to be kind to him (Job 19:21). Recently, I read an article by Roger Ebert about why the film ‘Titanic’ became so popular. “The buried power of ‘Titanic,’” the famed film critic wrote, “comes not because it is a love story or a special effects triumph, but because it touches the deepest human feelings about living, dying, and being cherished.” It is this need, that all of us have, to feel cherished that is the second thing that people of our churches can offer.

Chapter 23:1-9: Job thinks that God has abandoned him

The lectionary passage is part of Job's reply to one of his friends (Eliphaz). The terrible troubles of Job seem to have been going on a long time now, and he admits he is bitter (v1). However, Job still holds onto his belief that God is good (vv1-7). He may still believe in God, but what is awful is the feeling that God is not there (vv7-9) and he feels so alone.

Chapter 23:10-15 – omitted from the lectionary reading but good to know

The lectionary reading omits verses 10-15, but these are useful for understanding this passage. By this point in the book, Job is actually doing better than he realises. He reached the point where he is famously able to declare, "I know that my redeemer liveth" (19:25, KJV). Now, he comes to the point of believing that good will come from this time of testing in the refiner's fire (Job 23:10, Isaiah 48:10 and 1 Peter 1:7). However, despite reaching this point, Job is terrified that the situation will get worse before it gets better (vv13-15).

Job is right; he is being tested, and he is becoming more like Christ. In his darkness, he may not see this change, but we can trace it through this book. For example, Job's experience of poverty and injustice has given him increased concern for those in poverty and an increased desire for justice (24:1-12). Someone recently said to me that their involvement in the work of Priority Areas has taken them into neighbourhoods that they would otherwise not have been in and that this experience has changed them. The Church's presence in Priority Areas is important for all of God's people, as it takes people into places where they see lives that they might not otherwise see. It can deepen the impetus for justice and fairness, within our churches, making us more like Christ. George M. Philip said of Job's faith that he qualified in the school of plenty, and he is now graduating to the school of poverty and suffering, as Jesus Christ would also do (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8).

Chapter 23:16-17 – Job speaks of the inner and outer darkness

Our passage ends with poor Job speaking of the feeling of darkness in his life.

2. How can we help people build up resilience?

• We do not know the whole story

The first thing is to try to remember is that just as Job does not know the full story of why these things are happening in his life, we also do not know the full story. It may be that we are being tested in the refiner's fire, or it may be that some greater purpose is playing out in our lives. It may be only in heaven that we shall know the whole story. Can we be encouraged by Job's example? He may not see the next step, never mind the end of the road, but he keeps going in faltering faith. "Act faith if you do not feel it,"

Alexander Whyte once said – "throw yourself in God's direction even though you cannot

reach him. God does not say ‘see,’ he only says ‘look.’ It is very simple, keep looking, God will take care of the seeing.”

- **Encourage people to worship regularly in good times**

Job has built up a tenacious faith, through regular worship and speaking to God during the good times (1:1-5). Building up such a habit will stand us in better stead for the times when we feel like God has left us. It is the resilience that Job has built up, I think, that allows him not to be silent even in the darkness (v17). Job didn’t know that his life had been made a battleground between God and Satan, but he held onto a sense that God was there somewhere; if only God could be found.

3. How can we give people hope?

Can we hold onto the belief that God’s plan is not to leave anyone suffering in such a way as to destroy them? God’s plan is to make us more like Jesus (full of love, joy, peace...). I am reminded here of Mother Theresa’s words: “I know that God will not give me anything I can’t handle, I just wish he wouldn’t trust me so much.” This work of God may involve us going through trials (Romans 8:28-29). Can we hold onto the belief that God will not abandon us? The only one who actually experiences abandonment by God is Jesus Christ on the cross (Matthew 27:45-46). Jesus did this so that we can say with confidence that God will never leave us or forsake us. One day God will “answer from the whirlwind,” as the book of Job evocatively concludes (38:1, KJV).

“Though we pass through tribulation, all will be well;
We expect a bright tomorrow, all will be well;
Faith can sing through days of sorrow, all, all is well.”

[Psalm 22:1-15](#)

The Old Testament is amazing in the way it points us towards Jesus Christ. We can read this lectionary reading, from an ancient Psalm of David, as the prayer of Jesus on the cross. Given that this psalm is only in the lectionary twice – as well as Good Friday each year – you may consider making reference to the whole of the psalm. In fact, could I suggest that you consider bringing in the next two psalms as well? Taken together, these three psalms tell us much about the crucifixion of Jesus (Psalm 22: 1-21a,) the resurrection of Jesus (Psalm 22:21b-31,) the ascended Jesus watching over us now (Psalm 23,) and the promised glorious return of Jesus to earth (Psalm 24). The words of these psalms, written for another time and another context, can help us live today, and give us hope for tomorrow.

Might Jesus have sung on the cross?

If you look at the superscription under the title of Psalm 22, then you see that not only is this a Psalm of David, but that it is sung to the tune “The Doe of the Dawn.” The tune has now been lost to history, but it is reasonable to imagine that this tune was still around 2,000 years ago. If the tune and the words of many psalms were as inseparable for Jesus as they are for us, then it’s not unreasonable to imagine that these words were not only spoken by Jesus on the cross, but sung by him as well. A melancholy melody sung from the heart of our Saviour; on the cross that changed everything.

[source: David Roseberry - <https://davidroseberry.medium.com/the-doe-of-the-dawn-cfb2f24c831c>]

Verses 1-2 – Separation from God

If we read Psalm 22 as a prayer of Jesus on the cross, then the famous first words in verse 1 (and Matthew 27:46) speak of Jesus’s separation from God. Words of separation continue in the second verse, as we picture Jesus crying out from the cross during the day, and when supernatural darkness came over Calvary. There is no greater love than the love between the Trinity, and here for the only time, Jesus and God are separated. Jesus is so used to God’s familiar, loving presence, and all of a sudden God’s presence is withdrawn. When we feel alone, we can pray to Jesus, knowing that He understands this feeling.

Verses 3-5 – How Jesus copes with separation from God

In this feeling of separation from God, Jesus does two things that we can learn from: First of all He re-states who God is (v3). He does not lose belief in Almighty God. The second thing He does is give thanks for the good things that God has done in the past (vv4-5). There is an interesting comparison here between how Jesus deals with this time of struggle, and how Job deals with his situation. In Job chapter 29, Job painfully contrasts past good times, with how life has worked out now. This is something we surely all do, when life is a struggle. However, can we try to follow in the example of Jesus instead, and give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thess. 16-18)? This can help us hold onto our belief that God can make things better.

Verses 6-7 – Being looked down on by others

Have you ever felt laughed at? Have you ever felt looked down on? Have you felt the things most important to you being mocked by others? If so, you are in good company, for this happened to Jesus (vv6-8 and Matt. 27: 39-44). Speak to Him, He understands.

Verses 9-11 – Loneliness

Jesus knows the feeling of loneliness – remember all His disciples have left, including dear Peter, who promised to stay with Him – and Jesus knows what it is like when there is “no one to help” (vv9-11). It is no surprise, therefore, that His plan for bringing salvation to the world is to bring us into worshipping communities. Our churches are intended to demonstrate a new way of living (wonderfully modelled for us in Acts 2:42-47). You might want to invite people to think about ways in which your worshipping community can become more of a church family. Surely, one of the great things our churches can do is to help people not feel alone. When the Church has a presence in a Priority Area, it is offering a place where people can feel welcome and not alone.

Verses 12-13 – The evil one thinks victory is near

The true enemy of Jesus was never those people who had Him killed. The true enemy is Satan, the bringer of evil in our world (Eph. 6:12). Bashan was a place known as producing the strongest, wildest bulls. The picture described for us in verses 12-13 is of strong, wild forces – like the strongest bulls of Bashan and roaring lions waiting to tear open their prey – now closing in on the cross. Jesus is separated from God, mocked and looked down on by people, and desperately lonely. The forces of the evil one are closing in on the cross, sensing victory.

Verses 14-15 – Physical suffering

These verses describe the physical suffering of Jesus on the cross, in a way perhaps unmatched in the New Testament. Jesus knows what it is to suffer violence.

Verses 16-21a – Jesus calling for God (not in lectionary reading)

These God-inspired verses – written long before the Romans invented this cruel method of killing – describe the scene of the crucifixion as Jesus cries out for God to come to Him.

Verses 21b-31 – The prayer of the resurrected Jesus (not in lectionary reading)

In the second part of verse 21, this psalm changes to a prayer of praise. Something momentous has happened to cause this change. The Resurrection! We can read these words not as the prayer of Jesus on the cross, but the joyful prayer of Jesus on Easter Morning. Jesus is no longer separated from God. The rest of the psalm is Jesus pouring out praise for the incredible thing that God has done, and how Jesus is now going to meet with others and praise God for what God has done (v22). In a parallel to Jesus’ final words on the cross: “It is finished”, the psalm ends with the wonderful words “He has done it.” Alleluia!

Extra – Psalm 23

You could then move from the celebration at the end of Psalm 22, onto the good news of Psalm 23. God's Son has been raised from the dead – the great Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20). You might want to invite people at this point to join together in saying the familiar words of Psalm 23. However, ask people this time to use these familiar words as their prayer to Jesus Christ, now in heaven watching over them.

Extra – Psalm 24

Finally, you could finish a sermon on Psalm 22, by bringing in Psalm 24. This third Psalm (a trinity of Psalms?) gives us a hope for the future that, because of the cross, can never be taken from us. One day, the gates will open and Jesus Christ, our King of glory, will come back to the earth He created.

Hebrews 4:12-16

It may not seem immediately obvious how a passage describing Jesus as our great high priest, is relevant today (I have focused on verses 14-16), so it may help to start by giving some background on the role of the high priest. The duties of the priest were to offer sacrifices, and to pray for the people. That is what the original recipients of this letter will have grown up with. Chosen from all the priests was one high priest – the only one who could ever enter the presence of God in the Temple (and only once a year). The role of the high priest was to bring the voice of God to people, and to bring the concerns and failings of people into the presence of God. Willie Barclay writes that the High Priest had to be completely associated with God, and completely associated with people. However, after Jesus had ascended to heaven, early Christians were concerned about what happens now? Who will offer sacrifices for us? Who will take our concerns to God? The writer of the Hebrews provides answers that are relevant and good news for today.

Verse 14 – Jesus is the “Great” High Priest

The author of Hebrews seeks to answer the concerns of Christians by giving them the good news that not only will the ascended Jesus perform the role of high priest, but He will be a “great” high priest for us.

Verse 14 – Jesus has passed through the heavens

Depending on your translation, your Bible may say that Jesus has “ascended” to heaven (NIV), or “passed through the heavens (NRSV). I like the NRSV. It evokes the words of Christina Rossetti's famous carol, that Jesus is so powerful that “heaven cannot hold him.” Either way, this verse is establishing that Jesus is not just in the presence of God one day a year, but He is always in the presence of God.

Verse 14 – Hold firm in the faith you profess

Therefore, because Jesus is with God all the time, hold firm in our confession of Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Hold firm. Don't get tricked by the lies that praying to Jesus is useless. Jesus is in the presence of God and brings our prayers to God. A great high priest indeed.

Verse 15 – Jesus empathises with us

And so, in verse 14, having established that we have a Great High Priest who is completely identified with God, we go on to see that Jesus is completely identified with us as well. When we bring our prayers to Jesus, He is able to empathise with the situations we bring, because He has been tempted every way we have, and without sin. It can become a cliché to say that Jesus was without sin, however, it is actually extraordinary. Jesus being tempted every way, without sin, means that He never once gave in to temptation. Willie Barclay tells us that Jesus' battle with temptation was far harder than any one of us will ever go through. We fall to temptation long before the tempter has put out the whole of his power. We never know temptation at its fiercest, because we fall long before that stage has been reached. Willie Barclay invites us to think of this in terms of pain. There is a degree of pain which the human frame can stand – and when that degree is passed a person loses consciousness so that there are agonies of pain he or she cannot know. It is like this with temptation. We collapse in the face of temptation; but Jesus went to our limit of temptation and far beyond it and still did not collapse. Willie Barclay concludes that it is true to say Jesus was tempted in all things we are, but also true to say that no one was tempted as He was. This means that we can say with confidence, that when we pray to Jesus, we are praying to a Great High Priest who knows each of the temptations that we have given in to, and that caused us to sin.

Jesus will be more forgiving towards us than any human can be

The situations that we take to God are not necessarily situations that other people have faced. Therefore, this can make it hard for other people to understand why we have failed. It makes it hard for them to truly forgive us. However, Jesus knows every situation we are going through and so can give us forgiveness in a way that people cannot. "To know all is to forgive all," as the expression goes.

Jesus is able to help us when we pray

Jesus has been there and bought the t-shirt, so to speak. Whatever struggle we bring to Jesus in our prayers, He will not only be able to forgive, but is also able to help. Think about it this way; when we are about to start a new job or go to a new place, who do we ask for help? We ask for help from someone who has been there before us. They are the ones able to help us. Every winding path we may be on, every turning we have taken that we are now convinced was wrong, Jesus has been there before us and therefore can help us.

Verse 16 – Therefore we can pray with confidence

Therefore, verse 16 concludes, because of these things we can approach God's throne confident we will receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. This is the truth. Therefore try praying, as the banner outside many of our churches says. When we pray in the name of Jesus, He is able to forgive, able to cast far away all that pains us, and all that offends God.

“Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me.”

Mark 10:17-31

Three people come into church

Imagine that one Sunday morning, three new people come to in to your church. If your church is anything like ours, then I imagine that there will excitement at seeing new people come. One of these three new arrivals is a wealthy young man with leadership experience, and a deep concern for eternal life. The second person is a lady with a bad reputation, whom people choose to avoid. The third person is called Zacchaeus. He works in finance, and the rumour is that he is crooked. You barely notice him coming in – he doesn't stand out in a crowd – and of course he immediately starts climbing; up to the balcony. Of these three people, which is the one that you would be most pleased to see in your church? I imagine, being honest, that many of us would be pleased to see the keen, religious, wealthy young man. We may already be thinking about when to approach him to become an elder, and the healthy effect his tithing is going to have on the church finances. Yet when these three people met Jesus, it was the lady with the reputation who went away from her encounter with Jesus and became a successful evangelist in her own neighbourhood (John 4:1-42). It was Zacchaeus that left his encounter with Jesus as a changed man (Luke 19:1-10). However, in the whole New Testament, the wealthy young man is the only person described as feeling sad after meeting Jesus. There is a lesson here about how we see people, and how Jesus sees them.

Jesus loved each one of these three people equally, and in His love for them all, He sent two away happy, and one away feeling sad. Why might it have been loving of Jesus to send the young man away feeling sad? Why might it be loving to sometimes send us away feeling sad?

On the surface, the answer is wealth, but really it is much deeper than that. Having wealth is a powerful thing, as it opens so many doors in life. However, money cannot open the door to the most valuable thing of all: the Kingdom of God. In fact, money can make it more

difficult for us to get through the doorway. This means that wealth, instead of being a great thing, can actually be the worst thing we can have. However, this passage is about much more than just money. It's about Jesus loving us and putting His finger upon whatever it is that we prioritise above God.

Verses 17-20 – The beginning of the passage

As Jesus starts on His way – after telling us to receive the kingdom of God like children – a wealthy young man, already involved in religious leadership, runs up to Jesus and falls on his knees before Him and asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. (Note: in Luke 18:18 we learn the man is involved in leadership, and Matthew 19:20 informs us that he is young). Jesus says in response, you know the Ten Commandments, and He gives a number of them (the ones that can be summarised as “love your neighbour”). The young man sounds relieved with this answer, as he is sure that he has been keeping the commandments since he was knee high to a King James Bible.

Verses 21-22 – Jesus looked at him and loved him

And then Jesus looked at him and loved him. Because Jesus loved this man, and wants to spend eternity with him, Jesus told him the truth. He speaks about what it is that is getting in the way of the man entering the kingdom of God. It's what Jesus did with the Samaritan lady at the well, it is what He did with Zacchaeus, and it is what He does with us. Because Jesus loves us, He reveals what we lack. “One thing you lack,” Jesus says to the young man, “go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” The young man goes away sad, because he cannot bring himself to do what Jesus asks. Jesus knows this young man better than he knows himself. It turns out that there is something more important to this young man than eternal life. The young man thinks he has been keeping the Ten Commandments, but Jesus reveals that he is failing to keep at least the first two. This man does not keep the command, Jesus reveals, to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength.” He is not loving God with everything he's got. He's holding back. Commandment number two says do not make any idols, but this man has made an idol of his money and cannot bring himself to get rid of it. God requires us to make God our first priority, and this is hard. The kingdom of God requires us to put God before everything else: family, career, money...

What happens next to the young man?

The Bible does not tell us what happens to this wealthy young man, but another Bible story about a wealthy young man tells us what God desperately wants to happen. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, we have another young man who prioritises wealth above a loving father. He too becomes sad. However, eventually he realises that the father is more important, and returns, dependent like a child. He was lost and now is found. This is what

God wants for this beloved young man, and what God wants for each one of us – to make God our priority. It is impossible to enter the kingdom of God by our own efforts, that is like trying get a camel through the eye of a needle. But with God all things are possible (10:23-27).

Note: I have focused on verses 17-27, but the remaining verses – beginning with Peter’s comment about the disciples giving up everything for Jesus and Christ’s reply that anyone who gives up everything for Him will receive homes, brothers, sisters in this life, as well as persecution and eternal life – could lead to a valuable discussion what it means to be a “church family.”

Sermon ideas

Sermon ideas are developed in the exploration of each of the readings.

Prayers

Call to worship (*Romans 5:6-8*)

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.”

Ellen Baird and Elaine Clipston, Leaders, Coffee Stop

Opening Prayer

Lord God, You are the Creator.

You spoke and brought all things into existence.

We give You thanks for the beauty of autumn days and for the provision of Your harvest.

You also made each and every one of us, creating us uniquely.

Thank You for all the different gifts You have given us so we can all play a part in the building of Your Church here on earth, as the body of Christ.

We are sorry for the times that we don’t use our gifts or when we forget to do what You want us to do.

We are also sorry for the wrong things we have done, said or even thought this past week. Please help us to love You and follow You more nearly, day by day.

We thank You for the people in our lives that are special to us
and for the places You made that we love to visit.

We thank You that You are a great big God and that You hold us in your hands,
and because of that, we can take comfort, knowing You will always be with us and help us.
You are sovereign God; You know all things from the beginning to the end.
Thank You that we can trust in You. Help us to do so more and more.

Most of all, we give You thanks for giving us Your son, Jesus,
who died on the cross in our place for our sins
so that one day we can be made perfect with You in heaven.
And we thank You that You have given us the Holy Spirit to be our helper.
Please help us to share this good news of what You have done with others as we step into a
new week.

In Jesus 'name. Amen.

Anne Noble, co-leader of Messy Church

Prayers of Intercession

Lord God, Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe,
we thank You that the earth You created was good and pleasing to You.

You created all living things, the animal kingdom and humankind,
with plants and herbs for food and water to sustain life.
You created all people equal, with plenty of provision for all their needs.

However, we are sorry that in today's society people are not all born, or treated equally.
There are many of us who have and there are many of us who do not have,
in terms of wealth, food, provisions, homes, home comforts,
and things which make life safe and secure.
There are many of us who benefit from a good standard of living,
and can enjoy life's luxuries.

We pray for those who have no security in life,
who experience financial hardship and struggle to make ends meet,
who are in debt, whose store cupboard and fridge are empty,
and who have to choose between fuel and food.
We pray for the stress, poor physical and mental health that injustice helps create.
We pray for the struggling neighbourhoods of Scotland, England, Europe
and the other places where the Church of Scotland tries to serve You.

We pray that the people of our churches can help each other, making You their priority.

We pray for our community, for the unemployed,
for those who *are* employed but are low-paid,
for those who need to use the food bank for basic supplies
and for people whose housing is below standard.
We pray for parents who long to provide for their children
and children who struggle at school, because their family is in need.

God of justice and peace,
we pray for people living in such poverty that as well as being hungry,
they feel stripped of dignity and self-worth,
with little choice in how to live or plan their lives.
People who are existing rather than living, unable to fully participate in society.
You know and love each and every one of us.

We thank You for organisations such as Christians Against Poverty
and The Poverty Alliance, who work to transform lives by reducing people's debt.
We thank You for befrienders, debt advisors, money management courses,
Street Pastors, job clubs, and life skills groups.
We pray for our Government; grant our politicians wisdom, compassion
and a sense of justice.

Fill us with the love of Christ, to love our neighbours.
Give us hearts of compassion to stir us to act on their behalf
and give from what we have to provide for their needs.
We pray for an end to poverty and deprivation,
for a time when people will not just live, but thrive.
When people can pray, "Give us this day our daily bread",
knowing that they can thank You, the God who provides.

We pray also for people who live in spiritual poverty.
Who do not know of Your great love for them, or that You are real.
Help us to be Your witnesses in telling them the good news of Jesus
to lift them out of the darkness that surrounds them,
so that people will experience Your love for themselves,
and to know that Your love for them was so great
that You sent Your own dear Son to die for them,
so that they would not perish but have everlasting life.

In a moment of quiet, we now offer you our own prayers for ourselves, those we love and the world around us...

[Hold a time of silence]

Thank You that there is a future home for each one of us.
A beautiful place, where we shall be with You And there will be no more death, no sorrow,
no crying, no hunger and no more pain.
For ever.

Loving Lord, Thank You that You hear all our prayers.
For we ask them by faith in the Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen

Helen Allan, Prayer Ministry Leader

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.

The following have been divided by Bible passage but most would work with whatever passage(s) you choose:

Job 23

- CH4 198 – “Let us build a house where love can dwell”
- CH4 463 – “Fairest Lord Jesus – Particularly, “...He can make the saddest heart to sing”
- CH4 528 – “Make me a channel of Your peace”
- CH4 543 – “Longing for light, we wait in the darkness”
- CH4 557 – “O Love that wilt not let me go”
- CH4 562 – “Through the love of God, our Saviour – Particularly the lines ... “Faith can sing through days of sorrow, all, all is well”

Psalm 22

- CH4 14 – “The Lord’s My Shepherd” – You could sing this to the tune ROWAN TREE, or BAYS OF HARRIS.
Here is the latter beautifully sung and played by Susan Henderson, Captain of our Girls Brigade based in the Langlee housing estate:
https://youtu.be/5ssVC_EOZpk?si=S1H_ut6Co-X97w7n).
- CH4 419 – “Thine be the glory” – a wonderful hymn to end a service
- Mission Praise 266 – “I cannot tell – A great tune and a great final verse

Hebrews 4

- CH4 466 – “Before the throne of God above”
- CH4 547 – “What a friend we have in Jesus”
- Mission Praise 502 – “O let the Son of God enfold you” – Especially relevant are the lines, “Give him all your years of sadness, give him all your years of pain and you’ll enter into life in Jesus name”
- Mission Praise 1116 – “There is a higher throne”

Mark 10

- CH4 259 – “Beauty for Brokenness”
- CH4 641 – “Seek ye first the kingdom of God”
- CH4 694 – “Brother, sister, let me serve you”
- MP 1358 – “There is a hope” – A song that will forever remind me of Galashiels. “When sufferings cease and sorrows die, and every longing satisfied. Then joy unspeakable will flood my soul, for I am truly home.”

- “Our God is great big God” – We would love to discover more great songs with actions, but this remains a favourite at Messy Church. CCLI song # 3373437
- “O the kindness of our Father” (Joyful Noise Music) – CCLI song # 7178306 (<https://youtu.be/sF0r80E6mpl>)

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](#)

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