

## Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost – Year B

**Sunday 20 October 2024**

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Moira Wilkinson, Elder at Garthamlock Parish Church, for her thoughts on the 22<sup>nd</sup> 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.

When I prepare for Sunday Service, I first read the texts and then give myself time to think over what I have read. There is usually plenty of choice, but I pick out the passages that speak to me as having a message for the congregation in my church.

From the choice of reading I try to take one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. If it is appropriate I will take a verse or two from the other readings and use them at the start of the service.

I then give myself time to reflect and gather my thoughts. I pray for guidance, especially if I am struggling. I will then read through some commentaries and the guidance in the lectionary. It is always good to get other people's thoughts as they might see something that I don't, before I bring everything together.

I try to keep it short and only repeat the part of the message I want to emphasise. Too much repetition becomes boring. As we have a mixed age congregation I speak in a language that is easily understood by all. If that means using two short words instead of one long one then I will – the last thing I want is anyone sitting there thinking, "where is my dictionary?" I want to make the reflection accessible to all.

We have a few youngsters who come along, and so I like (in an appropriate part of the service) to choose a parable with a video and end with an activity that reinforces the story, and end with a Children's song. The congregation likes to get involved and it can be good fun. Don't ever be afraid to do something different; to mix it up. For example splitting the congregation into small groups to discuss the text then bringing them together to share what they have talked about. Or turn it into an activity and have a show and tell.

There are lots of ways to "do church", so never be afraid to try something different.

## [Psalm 91:9-16](#)

What a promise we have in God, who will defend us, will allow no harm to come to us, and who will send angels to guard us. They will hold us up and not allow our feet to be hurt on the stones. Here we have promise after promise on how God will protect us: from wild beasts, from wars. God will protect those who love and claim Him Lord.

This is a lovely psalm, a comforting psalm... but believable? I think not! How many of us have had a tragedy in our lives? A loss so bad that we turn away from the Church, searching for answers to questions we know there are no answers to? Who has cried out to God, “WHY?” – not to question God, but to better understand our sorrow.

We know that God’s own Son wasn’t spared, we know the trials Jesus went through. Jesus lived among us as a human and was not spared the trials and tribulations that we all face in life. Why? To take upon Himself our sins. Even verse 11: “He will send His angels to hold us up and not allow our feet to be hurt on the stones” is reflected when Jesus is tempted by the devil in Matthew 4:5.

Each of the disciples and Paul were eventually put to death for their beliefs. So how can God promise us a pain-free life? Do we really believe that? No, it’s like the old adage “Whatever does not kill you, makes you stronger.” So, when we have bad experiences in life, when we suffer trials of our own, perhaps it gives us the strength to help others who are going through similar experiences.

It is however a lovely psalm, giving us comfort and re-igniting our love of God.

## [Isaiah 53:4-12](#)

When you read this passage you can read it as a prophesy on the life and death of Jesus, a prophesy of the coming of the Messiah. For me, verse 10 explains how God sent Jesus to be a sacrifice to bring forgiveness to us. It may be helpful to read this chapter from verse 1, or even from chapter 52:13-15.

This passage brings the reality of God’s plan for us, and as this book was written about 850 BC it serves as a reminder that our ideas of time are not God’s.

In my preparation I also found a commentary about Isaiah 53 being called the forbidden chapter. This chapter was regularly used in Jewish worship up until the time of Jesus. It is a popular myth that when the stories of the work of Jesus of Nazareth began to circulate and

filter through the Jewish population, it was forbidden and no longer allowed. I found it interesting, and it raises good questions about who controls how we experience Scripture, so it could be something to read and ponder on.

## **Hebrews 5:1-10**

In this letter to the Hebrews the author is trying to keep Jewish Christians focused on Christ. The Jewish Christians are beginning to long for the robes and ceremony of the Jewish tradition. Something they can see and understand, someone they could focus on, not a figure who is not there in person.

They were used to an Aaronic priest dressed in splendid robes, embellished with gold and precious jewels – the robes God had ordered Moses to place on them (Leviticus 8:7-9). This office was handed down through Aaron's line. They were to live amongst the people and intercede with God for their wrongdoings, to carry out the ritual sacrifices as laid down by God and to act as God's spokesperson.

Jesus was not of Aaron's line and, more importantly to them, they could not see Him and they were beginning to have doubts; they were losing their faith. The author is explaining that Jesus is of a higher order of Priesthood – the Order of Melchizedek. Now Melchizedek is only mentioned three times in the Bible: Genesis 14:18-20, Psalm 110:4 and here in Hebrews. There is no genealogy of Melchizedek, no birth, life or death. In Genesis 14:18-20 he is described as the king of Salem who brings bread and wine to Abram after his victory against the kings of Sodom Gomorrah, Adham, Zeboliim and Bela. As a high priest of the Most High God, he blesses Abram.

This was a real pleasure to explore: who was this man? In a higher order of priesthood directly appointed by God, and Jesus was its last and final high priest. This is the reality that the author is telling the Jewish Christians – that there is no one higher in the sight of God than Jesus, God's own son.

I found this to be really exciting reading and one that involves a lot of study and deserves to be better known.

## **Mark 10:35-45**

When James and John speak to Jesus, they ask: “When you come into your glory will you grant that we sit on your right hand and your left hand?” They did not understand Jesus at all.

Jesus asks if they are prepared to suffer what He must suffer. Yes, they reply. Jesus then lets them know that they will, (we know that the disciples were all put to death in the end) and explains that He does not have the power to do as they ask, only God can say who will sit where. Jesus then explains that although the leaders of this world have power over us, that is not His way – He came to serve, not to be served and that is what they must do. To be great in Heaven they must first serve others.

For His first 30 years, Jesus lived as a carpenter. An ordinary life... but the people who knew Him best knew He was anything but ordinary. After all, at the age of 12 did His parents not find him at the Temple in Jerusalem, speaking with the elders and amazing them with His knowledge?

When Jesus did come into His ministry aged 30, the people of Nazareth mocked Him so Jesus left Nazareth and went out into the wider country gathering His disciples – Simon, Andrew, James and John, who were not powerful men, but lowly fishermen. As Jesus went about healing and preaching, others were drawn to Him. Jesus was a humble man – no rich clothes or other symbols of power, what Jesus had He gave to others, asking nothing in return. Jesus fed many of those who had come to listen to Him, healed many people, and preached to thousands, gaining many followers. Jesus was a kind, sensitive human being, and at the end of His short ministry washed the feet of the disciples; a servant’s job!

Jesus came to die that we might be saved, to atone for our sins, and in so doing, changed this world forever.

## **Sermon ideas**

### **Psalm 91:9-16**

This would be suited to a short reflection on some of the promises God gives us in the Bible. You could consider how this psalm connects – or not – to life right now. If you don’t want to use this passage in your sermon, can you bring it into your prayers?

### **Isaiah 53:4-10**

The power of prophesy: explore this passage and others in the Bible that prophesy the coming of the Messiah.

When we read this passage through, we acknowledge the plan that God has for us (“Through him the will of the Lord shall prosper”, v10b). This is an ideal chance to look at God’s plan and how it is being fulfilled in your parish, town, or even as you see it in the country. What is God’s plan for .....? Add the name of your parish, and explore what needs to happen and the part you need to play to bring God’s plan to fruition. You can ask more questions or discuss in groups this together.

### **Hebrews 5:1-10**

I had the best time picking the bones out of this passage. It was difficult to comprehend at first, but what a bounty, what a wealth of opportunity to do church differently. Think of the splendour of the robes of the Aaronic priests. What an opportunity to go wild with the craft box! With gold paper, tissue paper, coloured pipe cleaners and stick-on jewels, you could make a breastplate together and have fun. You would also have something to hang in the hall or elsewhere to remind you that we don’t have to sit and listen all the time, we can get involved.

### **Mark 10:35-45**

By asking Jesus these questions, James and John let you know that they didn’t understand Jesus at all. They wanted to be raised above the others, but Jesus does not chastise them, rather He quietly explains to them that this is not in His gift. It is God who decides who sits where. Then we come to verse 45: “for the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Perhaps as a simple way of underlining this would be to have the congregation serve one another. There are many ways to do this but one that springs to mind is to set up tables and have some of the congregation set the tables, while some serve tea/coffee and the others clear away. This could be made quicker by having the component ready in the kitchen.

## **Prayers**

### **Call to worship**

At Garthamlock we always start our service with ‘As We Are Gathered’ (CH4 197), then a welcome and a verse or two either from the Psalm or one of the passages.

### **Adoration**

Loving Lord,  
we are gathered here today  
to praise You,  
to sing to Your glory,  
to come together, Your people  
to strengthen and support one another;  
to confirm our steadfast love for You,  
and to bring that love to those we meet  
in our daily lives and those in our community.  
In the name of Your Son, our Saviour  
Jesus Christ, Amen

### **Confession**

Forgiving Lord,  
we know that we do not always act  
as You would have us act.  
We know that we are but weak humans  
and have faults and prejudices  
that are against Your teachings.  
You sent Your Son to be our Saviour  
to take our sins on Himself.  
Even though we disappoint You,  
we will do all that we can to be better disciples  
and turn Your disappointment into joy  
and do our best to always follow in Your ways.  
Amen

### **Intercession**

God of all Creation,  
You created this world  
and all that grows and dwells in it.  
You gave us all that we need,  
but still some want more.  
You knew us all before we were born –  
You loved us, You are our God.  
We need Your guidance now  
to know how to put an end to the evil  
that is encroaching into society.



Help us to bring this world back into communion with You.

Send Your Holy Spirit

to enter the hearts of those

who have the power to make a difference

to stop the hatred and the greed

that is on the rise.

Bring us back to a world

where peace and love abound

and all live in fellowship with one another.

All this we ask in the name of Your son, Jesus,

who came to bring Light to the world.

Amen

### **Blessing**

I usually pick something that is contained in the closing hymn, or a short sentence that picks up on what I have been talking about in my reflection.

### **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.

- CH4 55 – “Safe in the shadow of the Lord” – a version of Psalm 91

- CH4 124 – “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation” – do we really need an excuse to sing this wonderful hymn?
- CH4 458 – “At the Name of Jesus”
- CH4 374 – “From heaven you came, helpless babe” – reminds us of Jesus’ words in Mark 10
- CH4 559 – “There is a Redeemer”
- CH4 739 – “The Church’s one foundation” – reminds us why we are there
- CH4 804 – “You shall go out with joy” – it’s always uplifting to leave church on a happy, positive note

## 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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