

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost – 3 July 2022

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank Graham Fender-Allison, Liturgy and Learning Partner for The Guild of Health and St Raphael, for his thoughts on the fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

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

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

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

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

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| 2 Kings 5:1-14..... | 3 |
| Psalm 30 | 5 |
| Isaiah 66:10-14..... | 5 |
| Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16 | 6 |
| Luke 10:1-11, 16-20..... | 7 |
| Sermon ideas | 8 |
| Prayers | 12 |
| Musical suggestions | 17 |
| Reflecting on our worship practice | 18 |
| Useful links | 19 |

Introduction

The lectionary passages for this week cover a wide range of issues – power and status, healthcare partnership, lament and praise at the turning points of our healing, the value of a safe and nurturing home, restorative correction and the call to heal the sick – to name but a few.

As a charity promoting healing, we have been drawn more to the threads of healing where they exist in the texts. We have also provided a few links that you might find useful, including resources we ourselves offer.

The Guild of Health and St Raphael – who are we and what are we doing?

The Guild of Health and St Raphael is dedicated to exploring the links between faith and healing through membership communities, training and research. Currently the Guild offers a variety of resources such as the GoHealth community and podcast, the Healthy Healing Hub project, facilitated online bible studies and events, our online courses, academic lectures and a journal, prayer resources and a Facebook community (see www.gohealth.org.uk for more information).

Our annual Denis Duncan Lecture, which is run in partnership with The Church of Scotland, will take place online on 10 November this year. The Revd. Dr Richard Tiplady will be delivering the lecture: **‘A mountain-top experience? Outdoor adventure, being in nature and healing in Christ’**, some of which will be explored in our Wilderness and Wellbeing retreat in September: click [here](#) to book.

Ministry in Scotland is undergoing change when many are at a low ebb, but the healing ministry and the potential for the Church to be a hub for healing for the whole community also engenders enthusiasm and hope. Our Healthy Healing Hub project resources, trains and gives confidence to church communities to express healing in their local area. Why not find out more [here](#), or book on the next training course [here](#).

2 Kings 5:1-14

This passage is rich with themes. It is filled with deep emotion, dramatic dialogue, issues about status, money, politics and a looming threat of war. It has a cast of Kings, commanders and captives – with the least powerful having the most influence on the outcome. The following themes could be followed in a sermon or formed into questions for groups discussion or quiet reflection.

Naaman, I imagine, was used to getting what he wanted. As the overall commander of the military his words were heeded and obeyed. Yet his leprosy vexed him – he could not order someone to fix his health nor could he – *or his King* – simply purchase a cure. Though his status and resources failed him, his healing took place through a combination of unexpected sources – a captive slave-girl's words, a journey to unfriendly lands, and a simple treatment prescribed by a foreigner and the wisdom of his own slave.

Naaman, I imagine, would not have found accepting help from a foreigner easy – especially foreigners over whom his people had the upper hand. Instead of humbling himself however, he visits Elisha with his retinue and riches – a show of his own power being a way to save face – like the spoonful of sugar needed to help the medicine go down. Or perhaps following customary greeting protocols or paying for the treatment demonstrates a mutually beneficial trade rather than receiving help or charity from a country Naaman saw as beneath his own.

Instead of getting a face-to-face meeting with the mighty Prophet, Naaman is sent an instruction message via Elisha's servant. Instead of a being honoured by a display of hand-waving and the dispensing of prophetic healing power, he is prescribed a simple – almost *insulting* – skincare regime of washing. And to rub salt into the wound, instead of being directed to the 'better' waters of his homeland, he is instructed to immerse himself in the River Jordan – a place where lowly common foreigners bathed, cleaned clothes and drank.

It is all too much for the mighty man of Aram, who 'rage-quits' the meeting (such as it was) and storms off in the direction of home soil to nurse his ego and lick his wounds.

For the second time in the story, the voice of a slave changes his course – and leads him to healing: “... *if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?*” The gentle word does indeed turn away wrath.

When rich or powerful people grow old, get ill, become frail and suffer, the finite limits of money and power are exposed. Certain conditions cannot be escaped and no amount of money or power or influence can change that. Despite all Naaman's status and riches he could not cure his leprosy himself.

When people with no power and influence are given a real voice, are listened to and believed, the wisdom borne from their unique perspective is revealed. Certain solutions can only be found when everyone is raised up and their voice is valued. Despite the status of both slaves in the story – especially one being a foreigner, captive, slave and a girl – their

simple words are pivotal to Naaman's healing story – his physical healing and a reorientation of how he understands the God of Israel would never have happened without them.

Psalm 30

A psalm of joy and praise which seems as much concerned with remembering suffering, sorrow and grieving as it does with the reasons to praise God.

In reading, I felt moved by the way the pendulum swung between the highs and lows, with the Psalmist even quoting their past suffering-self by using a present-tense voice. This writing style evokes a sense of recent deliverance rather than the recounting of an old story. It seems to be a psalm for people who are only just crossing that line and who are just beginning to believe that the worst might be over. Those who have recently turned the corner but are not yet living with freedom, health and deliverance as their new normal.

There is great pastoral and liturgical value in the way this psalm helps us name before God in worship, the different stages we might be going through on our journey from suffering to freedom. Transitions from difficulty, trauma, grief, can be slow and we are well served if we find ways to notice them, stop and talk to God from the place where we are and be suspicious of things that encourage us to short circuit these emotional journeys.

That said, movement is core to the psalm – it affirms lament most beautifully but doesn't remain there. Before long, words of gladness and praise burst onto the page – until again, it dips back into the memory of suffering, dignifying grief and prayer with beautiful poetry before swinging again and again – and so on, holding both together in equal tension.

Isaiah 66:10-14

The Jewish population longed to return to Jerusalem after exile by the Babylonians and reclaim temple worship. For them, Jerusalem meant home.

The image here is more than just a home however, portraying Jerusalem as a nursing mother, and the Jewish people as a babe in arms. It is a radical new start, not described here as a grown people returning to their land, but as being born anew into the arms of Jerusalem – the bountiful and loving mother, to be nurtured and comforted.

Further, the image is not one of a child, lying in a manger or safe at home with a protective and loving mother watching over, close by. Each of the three times the image is used, the mother is holding the child: 'nursing at her breast', 'carried by her arm', 'dandling on her knee'. Whilst I am sure this is principally designed to convey a deep intimacy and bond, I can't help but call to mind images of families fleeing war and where the parents are holding their children, ready to move at a moment's notice. There is a protectiveness on show here and maybe even a hint that 'home' – (perhaps even God?) – is not restricted to a single place, but can be found anywhere that love and comfort is offered. It is an image that echoes fleeing families as well as the long-awaited comfort of returning home.

Ultimately, what home should mean on earth is nurture, safety, belonging, forgiveness, to be loved with the tenderness illustrated in this image.

[Galatians 6:\(1-6\), 7-16](#)

For this reflection I'm mainly focusing on one word of instruction from the passage: 'Restore'. Not judge. Restore. Not condemn. *Restore, restore, restore*. The Strong's concordance defines the word 'restore' (katartizó) as 'fixed, mended, joined together, brought to proper condition (whether for the first time or after a lapse)'. Corrective interventions into the lives of someone 'detected in transgression' are to be healing and mending – not condemnatory or punitive. *Restore, restore, restore*. With this view, disciplining and discipling become more about understanding, empathy, 'correcting by connecting' – restoring them to be all that they might be.

But this is no easy task – relating to one another at the point when they, or we, are at our weakest, is treacherous terrain. When our failings are there for others to see, anything less than kindness and gentle restoring can cause further damage, shame and isolation. This can be soul-crushing, even life-ending if the isolation and shame is severe. as Dr Brené Brown writes:

"I think shame is lethal, I think shame is deadly. And I think we are swimming in it deep... Here's the bottom line with shame, the less you talk about it, the more you got it. Shame needs three things to grow exponentially in our lives: secrecy, silence, and judgment."

"If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive."

In these moments, treacherous terrain becomes holy ground. And we see God, we are known and we are healed.

Paul also points out the peril to the one seeking to restore the other – that they might somehow think they are beyond the same temptations – more content than the one who is envious, more temperate than the wrathful, more self-controlled than the gluttonous or the lustful, more generous than the greedy, more devoted than the lazy but less dogmatic than the zealot – and so on. The call for self-examination rather than comparisons with others is crucial for our own growth and if we are to be of real benefit to others in their struggles. Finally, all our intrinsic commitments to Christ as well as outward manifestations – be they in works of service, mission or borne in our bodies, are seen as nothing to boast of. Our relationship to this ‘world’ or this ‘age’ is rooted in our relationship with Christ, through the cross and not a denotation of our own inherent goodness.

[Luke 10:1-11, 16-20](#)

And here we have it – the clearest evidence we have that a core part of the mission Jesus gave to His followers, ‘heal the sick’. These seventy-two were the forerunner to Jesus in towns He would later visit. Carrying little by way of supplies, they are sent into dangerous territory, unsure of how they would be received and with clear instructions about when to stay, what to do and when to leave. There is a sense of task-focused urgency about it all. Don’t pack. Don’t stop to greet anyone, don’t hang around where you’re not wanted – go!

Whilst the mission is to bring healing and offer peace, receiving hospitality is core to the work – especially as this ‘model’ of mission seems based on the followers having a dependence on the town hosts. I recall a former leader of an international missionary organisation telling me that she never sent missionaries on language learning courses before travelling to the communities they would serve. It was always better, she said, if they learned the language from the people who they would be amongst. It allowed them to understand the culture better, but more importantly it mitigated any messiah complex the missionaries might have: ‘It’s hard to feel superior to people whom you are dependent upon to help you buy food’, she said.

Jesus also says, ‘eat what is given’. Whilst this is obviously good guest etiquette it is also perhaps suggesting that any religious food restrictions be abandoned in the name of the Kingdom of God. Again, we are seeing the law being held in service to the mission of preaching the Kingdom of God and healing the people God loves. Alongside this, there is possibly something about not charging a fee for the work – ‘take what is given, not more’ or ‘don’t ask for chicken if you are offered pork.’ The offer of healing and peace was not to acquire riches and security – it was to be offered freely and in partnership with locals,

taking only what they could afford to provide and accepting their 'no' if for whatever reason, they did not want the healing peace of the Kingdom of God.

Sermon ideas

2 Kings

Throughout the story I see these following themes worth exploring in sermons or discussion:

Naaman's desire for an expensive and elaborate show of power and healing worthy of his status vs a servant telling him to simply have a wash.

His ethnocentric belief that his homeland could provide all he needed vs his journey to a foreign land for healing.

The words of two slaves (one Aramean and one Israelite) who change everything vs the actions of two Kings (one Aramean and one Israelite) who seem to have very little impact on the outcome. The King of Israel is almost comedic in his melodrama, which is possibly a literary device used to highlight the juxtapositions at play.

Naaman's healing journey is more than physical. Later we see his faith and beliefs have changed. Does he also now see slaves and captives differently? Does he now value health and have questions about the value of riches and power? Does he see value in the simple ways of finding health? And, I only slightly jest here – will he wash more? Healing in a biblical context is never just personal – here the healing leads to change in the world.

I found myself thinking that Elisha could be accused of making this more difficult for Naaman than was necessary – (I'm sure with good reason). The reality is though, that if we are included more in our healthcare treatment plans, we are more likely to be involved and do our part. Participation goes up when things are done 'with me' rather than 'to me'. To quote the phrase made popular in disability activism: 'Nothing about us without us'. Our bodies are a gift from God, they are ours and we might want to think about how to retain this sacred power if we are in the medical healthcare system for treatment.

Related to the above idea, the manner of delivery, the prescribed treatment and foreign waters were all too much for Naaman and he almost walks away from the chance to be healed (also risking an escalation of conflict). Whilst in this story, healing occurred, 'Healthcare refusal' dynamics are at play here. Naaman's disappointment, anger and confusion perhaps gives a voice for people who have felt excluded from decisions taken

about their own healthcare (especially if there are cultural norms and sensitivities being ignored) by those who sit at a distance, thinking they know better.

[This episode of our podcast, 'Learning to Heal'](#), featuring Claire Foster-Gilbert, may offer some contemporary parallels with Naaman's story – namely, Claire's interaction with medicine, her bodily acceptance of difficult treatment (pride in her body) helping her have a sense of control. It is in other ways very different from Naaman's story and these juxtapositions may serve as a bridge to Psalm 30 or help us to explore what 'heal the sick' (Luke 10:9) might look like when an illness is incurable.

Isaiah 66:10-14

Where is our home? What does home mean to us? What do our definitions of home mean for others whose experience is different? How do we respond when we hear of others whose home has been taken from them? How can we realistically and sustainably offer them help as they look to build something new? What comforts can we help to provide? What costs are we willing to pay?

Sometimes home can be hard. What home should mean on earth is nurture, safety, belonging, forgiveness, to be loved, as so beautifully illustrated by the passage. Jerusalem for Christians mean the heavenly home we all hope to return to – but it is not back to a half-remembered idyllic past. For Christians our home is one charged with Christ crucified and risen...it is new and we are reborn into it. It means forgiveness, but not infantile dependence...we are the body of Christ now, and can offer, in faithful lives, the true home and joy of the faith.

Psalm 30

The depth of the suffering endured causes the Psalmist to ponder their own mortality and reflect on the value of not only their life, but their death. Richard Rohr, Franciscan Brother and author, often speaks of the connection between growing into adulthood and the need to understand that life is valuable because one day, we will die. This inalienable truth is not something we can learn from a book – we need to feel it for ourselves somehow, be open to it and let it teach us how to live most fully.

The need for lament in our lives is profound yet the opportunity to do it, especially with others is tragically limited. Without it, our sorrow turns inward and begins to damage our mental and physical health. 'The sorrow that has no vent in tears may make other organs weep'. I often think that theodicy is how we think about God in relation to suffering, and lament is how we talk to God during it. One is what our head is doing and the other is the work of the heart. A psalm like this gives us permission to mix it all up together, along with

the causes for celebration. It helps us exist in both spaces whilst never being overwhelmed by either. It is an essential psalm for our health as there are times when we need to stay in that 'betwixt and between' space and talk to God about all of it.

Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-16

What does it look like to be restored? How can we continue to offer this to people who relapse again and again? How can we find it for ourselves as well as offer this to others?

One very simple tool that can help us put the teachings of this passage into immediate practice is to try and foster a response of curiosity rather than judgment when we find that we disapprove of someone's actions. 'Curiosity is the enemy of judgment' was a phrase I heard in a Gestalt coaching course – the idea being that if we really 'listen to understand' and try to 'follow our curiosity' to really let our hearts wonder what is happening there – then we are more likely to find an inner rise of compassion, interest and empathy. Simply put, this is suspending judgment on someone until you've 'walked a mile in their shoes.'

This seems simple – but simple doesn't always mean easy. It takes a fair amount of self-awareness to catch out our inner critic; to understand our own values and see when we're projecting them onto the world around us as the objective standard. We need to do the long emotional work to dig up our unconscious biases and ask who they serve, lest we ourselves 'are tempted'. I think this hard inner work would provide a rich area to explore in sermons or discussions, essentially asking, *'how can we foster a culture of curiosity instead of a culture of judgment, so that all may be restored and healed to life with God and one another?'*

For more resources on dealing with shame or learning about shame dynamics as you prepare for worship you might find the following link useful.

<https://www.facebook.com/transformingshame>

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Why are we hesitant to take up the call to heal the sick? How could we overcome any internal reluctance or embarrassment or remove/manage any external obstacles? What would a ministry of healing in our church or in our parish look like today? What are we already doing that fulfils this call? How can we understand healing to be core to our mission, service and outreach and not just another box to be ticked (or feel guilty that we can't tick)? What gifts do we have already and how could they be repurposed for health and healing? What could a quiet, confident and '*normal*' healing ministry look like and what unrealistic perceptions of healing ministry might we let go of?

The Guild of Health and St Raphael works with a huge array of congregations around the UK helping them to explore these kinds of questions and more. Through our various courses and resources we work to see gifts ‘fanned into flame’ and be put to use in bringing health and healing in all of our communities. Our passage from today’s Gospel sits at the heart of that mission – this simple instruction: ‘heal the sick’ given by Jesus to the seventy-two.

For many of us, asking what ‘heal the sick’ means for us and our ministry, might immediately be confronted with a whole barrage of concerns, questions, hesitations, obfuscations and procrastinations that kill the question dead (and that’s before we even mention it to another person.) So how do we begin? Or if beginning seems too much, how do we begin to think about beginning?! In our view, the best place to start is where you already are. Stop, look around and take stock. Who is having a life-giving or restorative experience through something you are already doing? If you are not sure, ask around. Ask your congregation to ask around. ‘What life-giving experiences have you had of this church in the past year?’ And listen to what comes back.

The healing ministry probably most obviously involves prayers for healing. In fact that is usually what most people think of first when the topic of healing ministry comes up. In fact, that is sometimes the only thing that people think of when the topic comes up. But, in the church, we do so many different things that brings healing to the sick. Whenever we can help people feel accepted, connected and valued, whenever we inspire and support life-giving choices and behaviour, whenever we offer lifelines to those who are most at risk – these and many more, are Christian expressions of the call to bring healing and help people live flourishing lives. Why, even a simple cup of tea can be a blessing to those who are in need – it is often said that the most important thing you need when starting a 12-step recovery group is a kettle. The healing ministry of the church at its heart is about love, acceptance and welcome, and starting where you are is the best beginning of every journey.

From there you could explore what it means to work in partnership with people in bringing about a peace and fullness of life.

Connecting the passages

Using Luke as your core passage and focusing on healing as an overarching theme would allow you to draw on several aspects from the other passages. Naaman’s holistic healing journey, restoring those who struggle in sin, our journey from despair to joy and how we speak to God openly at every stage, the power of a nurturing home to help us flourish in all of life.

If you did choose this, the following may be of use. In our 2017 Denis Duncan lecture, Former Moderator to the Church of Scotland General Assembly 2008-2009, the Very Rev David Lunan, who has been actively involved in the healing ministry for decades, highlighted several reasons why the Church might avoid participating in the healing ministry. These might form a helpful structure to your sermon or discussions or a starting point as you consider what would help you explore this area of calling.

- We see God as healing primarily through professional health workers.
- Theological view that healings, signs and wonders stopped after the work of the Early Church.
- We back away in case we lose face if nothing happens.
- Wariness, as this is an area that attracts people who desire glamour.
- We are not in charge – healing doesn't always come in the way we wish it.
- A belief that it is wrong to ask for relief of suffering and virtuous to live with it.
- It is controversial (then and now).

Prayers

Opening Responses

(Note: these opening responses are repeated after the prayer of confession and could be used again as the closing blessing – two alternative blessings are provided if you don't like the idea of using it three times word for word. One simply swaps in words about serving instead of praising but is otherwise the same, and the other is a different blessing completely.)

Sing the praises of the Lord, you His faithful people;
praise His holy name.

**For His anger lasts only a moment,
but His favour lasts a lifetime;**

Weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

**God turns weeping into dancing
and clothes us with joy.**

May our hearts sing God's praises and not be silent.

We will praise God today and forever.

Gathering prayer

We exalt You, Lord God

the God who has made all things in creation

and called them 'good.'

The God who has woven heaven and earth together,

who taught the sun to rise

and the stars to dance.

Mighty in power and works!

Strong is Your love

and tender is Your touch.

The heart of the earth is cradled in Your hand,

each grain of sand is known to You.

the whole world is drenched in Your Holy Spirit.

every atom of this universe is seen and cherished.

How can it be then,

that this very God,

this highest host of heaven

knows and loves each of us?

How can it be then

that this very God

has made it so that we might draw close

in worship and adoration;

here, now, in this very place?

Draw close,

even when we have wandered far

draw close,

even when our hearts are heavy.

When we struggle to believe You care

or that You are even there at all.

Hear us, Lord, and be merciful to us.
Lord, be our help.

We thank You, Lord,
who lifts us from the depths,
who saves us and heals us,
who restores and reshapes us,
and who equips us to restore and reshape all of creation.

Sing the praises of the Lord, You His faithful people;
praise His holy name.

**For His anger lasts only a moment,
but His favour lasts a lifetime;**

Weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

**God turns weeping into dancing
and clothes us with joy.**

May our heart sing God's praises and not be silent.

We will praise God today and forever.

Prayers of concern

O Living Christ and Ever-Present Saviour,
draw very near to the sick,
the sorrowful, the suffering and to those who have asked for our prayers.
Though absent from us we know their names are written on Your Heart
and their every weakness known to You.
Grant them, even as we pray, rest and relief,
bodily comfort and spiritual consolation.
We bring them to You in faith
and we leave them with You
in entire dependence on Your Unchanging love.
Enfold them in Your strength and bring them,
even through sorrow, to a Vision of Your Eternal Peace.
And Thine shall be the Glory, world without end.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father,
who loves all and forgets none,
we bring to You our supplications for all
Your creatures, and all Your children...
We remember before You all the sick in body
and the troubled in mind;
all who have been bereaved of family and friends;
all who are troubled by the suffering of those they love;
all who are met with earthly loss,
that in the dark and cloudy day they may find assurance and peace in You.

We pray for all who are burdened by grief,
that they may be raised to know
the secret and solidarity of the Cross;
for all who are lonely and sad
in the midst of others' joy.
May they know God as their Friend and Comforter.

Remember O Lord, the aged and infirm,
those who feel that their life work is done;
all who are passing through the valley of shadows,
that they might find that Christ, the Risen from the dead, is with them,
and that there is light at evening time.
We ask all these things through the same,
Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We give thanks for the tireless carers
except they aren't tireless
anything but – and yet they have kept going
at great cost to themselves, saving lives.
God who cares, thank You for all carers,
strengthen them in their innermost being.

We bow hearts and heads with sadness
for the many loved ones who have died
from or because of Covid-19.
Tears fall with the memories of absence,
of too many final moments spent apart.

God of all comfort, bring peace.

Closing responses

Sing the praises of the Lord, you His faithful people;
praise His holy name.

**For His anger lasts only a moment,
but His favour lasts a lifetime;**

Weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

**God turns weeping into dancing
and clothes us with joy.**

May our hearts sing God's praises and not be silent.
We will praise God today and forever.

Closing Responses (alternative 1)

Go and serve the Lord, you His faithful people;
serve His holy name.

**For His anger lasts only a moment,
but His favour lasts a lifetime;**

Weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

**God turns weeping into dancing
and clothes us with joy.**

May our hearts sing God's praises and not be silent.

We will serve God today and forever.

Closing Responses (alternative 2)

Go and serve the Lord, you His faithful people
serve His holy name.

With our hearts:

We will serve You!

With our minds:

We will serve You!

With our strength:

We will serve You!

Musical suggestions

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

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

- CH4 31 – “I waited patiently for God” – fits with some verses from Psalm 30, of being raised up from the pit. Especially if you use Psalm 30 alongside some of the themes of restoration from shame in Galatians
- CH4 250 – “Sent by the Lord am I” – one of two that might be useful towards the end if the sending of the seventy two has featured in the service
- CH4 486 – “Forgive our sins as we forgive” – draws out some of the themes from Galatians
- CH4 555 – “Amazing Grace!” – also for Psalm 30 and Galatians
- CH4 694 – “Brother, sister, let me serve you” – could work if the ‘restoring one another’ theme from Galatians are picked up – or if you use the ideas of being in partnership with those whom we serve and those whom we go out to
- CH4 706 – “For the healing of the nations” – Would work well for a closing hymn if you have picked up healing as the main theme

- CH4 707 – “Healing river of the Spirit”– Works well with the story of Naaman
- CH4 800 – “Send me, Jesus” – one of two that might be useful towards the end if the sending of the seventy two has featured in the service

Reflecting on our worship practice

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

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

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord’s Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of ‘holy chaos’.
- While singing in our congregations is still restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

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

- How inclusive was the worship?

Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/ intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different “Spiritual Styles”?

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

Useful links

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

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

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

You are free to download, project, print and circulate multiple copies of any of this material for use in worship services, bible studies, parish magazines, etc., but reproduction for commercial purposes is not permitted.

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