

## Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

### Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – 2 August 2020

This material was written before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Worship leaders can use the most up-to-date sources of information and take into account the experience of their communities for creating appropriate worship at this time.

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank Rev Jock Stein, retired Minister, formerly of Tulliallan and Kincardine, for his thoughts on the ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

Our new online music resource is now live: [here](#) you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4). The search function allows you to bring up a list of songs by keyword, tune, theme, author, composer and metre, covering all of the indexes in the hymnbook. The site features Weekly Worship and thematic/seasonal playlists, alternative settings and background information on the hymns.

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## Introduction

This Sunday is in the middle of the holiday season, and you may or may not be following a sequence, like the story of Jacob in Genesis, or the readings in Matthew's Gospel. Holidays can be an opportunity to do something different, like preach on a psalm, so all six passages are outlined below, and a variety of sermon ideas are included. All the readings are 'purple passages' (one rather dark purple), so choices have to be made, but as the readings are very short it is easy to have OT, Epistle, Gospel and sing one of the psalms.

### [Genesis 32:22-31](#)

This well-known story of mysterious divine encounter follows Jacob's dream at Peniel two weeks ago in the lectionary. There are several unanswered questions – the purpose of such questions in Scripture is not so much for us to guess the answers (though we can do that), as to let us put ourselves into the story and think how we might find ourselves in a similar situation (and what might we do then?).

- Why did Jacob send his family across the Jabbok and wait behind alone?
- Who is the stranger, and why the wrestling match?
- Is the hip socket significant?

There are three bits of wordplay going on in Hebrew in this story:

- The name Jabbok is like the name Jacob with two consonants swapped round.
- The word for 'wrestled' in verse 24 has the second and third consonant of 'Jacob' (this word does not occur anywhere else in the Bible, but the idea of 'wrestling' was introduced in Genesis 25:22, when the two twins struggled in Rebekah's womb).
- The word for dislocate (the hip) also swaps round consonants in Jacob's name.

Wordplay of this kind helps to make a story memorable in the receptor language, though we do that in a number of ways in English. The darkness, the river crossing, the struggle, the new name are all features of Jacob's rebirth into a new identity. After the previous dream at Bethel, Jacob simply made a vow (and conditional at that) – now the devious Jacob seems more deeply changed – he has seen the face of God.

His new name, Israel has a double meaning: God struggles, or, he struggles with God. Just as Israel preserved a reminder of the story in how they thought of the hip (v.32), so the very

name Israel preserves the idea of two parties struggling with one another – but in this story, there is a promise that the struggle either way will bring a blessing.

### [Psalm 17:1-7, 15](#)

This psalm is very much a companion to the psalm before, with fairly similar language and theme, though it includes the wish for God to sort out our enemies – and it is safer to pray like this than act like it. (These psalms are a great place to ‘cuil wir birse’). It is here in the lectionary possibly because ‘you visit me by night’ (v.3) – as God visited Jacob. Although verse 13 is not included here, the Hebrew there also echoes the Peniel of the Genesis story, because when the Psalmist asks God to confront his enemy, it is for God to ‘meet his face’. (‘His face’ is how Hebrew renders the presence of God.)

Including verses 8-14, the psalm is full of references to body parts (ours, God’s, our enemy’s) – lips (v.1), face and eyes (2), heart and mouth (3), lips (4), feet (5), ear (6), right hand (7), pupil of the eye (8), face (9), mouth (10), eyes (11), face (13, as above), hand and bellies (14), face (15). This reminds us of two things we get from the Old Testament:

1. God is described complete with body parts, to show God’s reality – even though ‘light’ and ‘spirit’ are also found.
2. God deals with us as we are, in our bodies; the ‘real me’ is not some vague spiritual part, it is just ‘me’.

The psalm is a plea – for God to pay attention (vv.1-2), because I am faithful (vv.3-5); to pay attention and act (vv.6-12); to act decisively against enemies and their children (vv.13-14). Like Psalm 16, it ends with a beautiful affirmation of God’s presence. To our 21st century ears this is very odd coming after a desire for revenge; to understand it better, think of how the Mackenzies are portrayed in *Outlander*, with fighting a natural part of life which goes alongside extreme devotion. Perhaps it is our sanitised way of life that is odd – and which then easily misses how radical it is to forgive enemies.

### [Isaiah 55:1-5](#)

Psalm 17 and Psalm 145 are both given the heading ‘David’s’, whether attributed to him or written in honour of him, and here Isaiah 55:3 speaks of God’s ‘steadfast, sure love for David’, made ‘a leader and commander for the peoples’. The book of Isaiah was probably being put together about the same time as the first two books of psalms, which close with

the words, ‘the prayers of David, son of Jesse, are ended.’ After the people returned from exile in Babylon, they had to come to terms with the end of the line of David (though Matthew in Chapter 1 picks it up another way) – see notes on Psalm 145 below.

Isaiah has threads which bind the whole book together, and also clear differences of content and tone – the oracles may have been remembered and put together by a ‘prophetic school’ in Jerusalem. This passage is an invitation to ‘everyone who thirsts’, to find fulfilment in coming to the God of David who makes a covenant with God’s people. In context, it is likely to be either:

- (a) An invitation to those who had not yet plucked up courage to return from exile. After Cyrus opened up the possibility of return, people came back in dribs and drabs (read Ezra and Nehemiah).
- (b) An invitation to those who had returned from exile but were finding life difficult, people who were finding the life of Israel not all it was cracked up to be. It is also a reminder that Israel has a special place among the nations.

In Numbers 13:27, Caleb describes the Promised Land as ‘flowing with milk and honey.’ Isaiah 55:1 echoes that, and promises God’s blessing ‘without money and without price’. Had the reading been extended to verse 11, as in the lectionary for last year, Easter season, then it would have explained that God’s covenant, while free, expects a response; as the saying goes, ‘the entrance to the kingdom of God is free, but the annual subscription is everything you have got’.

### [Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21](#)

There are a number of psalms that are ‘alphabetical’, each line starting with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet – this psalm is one of them. One commentator said, ‘The entire alphabet, the source of all words, is marshalled in praise of God’. It also reminds us that poetic idioms are an acceptable way to praise God and (as other psalms do) to question God’s ways, even complain to God.

The whole psalm is praise and reasons for praise, and puts together two aspects of God – God is big enough to have a kingdom that is universal in space and time, yet personal enough to lift up the fallen, indeed to satisfy the ‘desire of every living thing’ (in this age of ecological concern, note ‘thing’, not just person). The words ‘all’ or ‘every’ are used frequently throughout.

The psalm begins by addressing God as 'King'. This is the last of the 'David Psalms' in the book, and one scholar gave it the title, 'David lays down his crown'. The final five psalms all begin and end with 'Praise the Lord' and affirm that now God alone is King ("Do not put your trust in princes", Psalm 146:3). The clearest Old Testament statement of this change to God as sole King comes in Zechariah 14:9.

This psalm emphasises the goodness of God. There is a place for discussing the goodness of God with proper humility (and indeed other psalms complain that God does not seem to be as good as God ought to be). But when we gather for worship we can do no better than affirm God's goodness, power, love, and glory, in our worship – whether or not some of our critics try to argue all too neatly that 'God cannot be both good and powerful'. (God, or God's absence, is not a tidy conclusion to a neat argument anyhow.)

### [Romans 9:1-5](#)

The three chapters between Romans 8 and 12, which contain such wonderful and inspiring teaching, are easily dismissed as 'a digression of interest only to Jews'. This is a mistake. If Gentiles (probably nearly all users of Weekly Worship) are grafted on to the vine root of Israel (11:17) and if in fact Paul is deliberately writing to Gentiles (11:13), then we ought to listen – after all Jesus Himself used this illustration of a vine (John 15).

Today's five verses show Paul's deep feelings for 'his ain folk', which we may echo for ours. But in his case, these folk are the nation God chose to be the womb of God's Son. Whatever your view of the State of Israel, it is extraordinary that Jews worldwide have retained their identity in the light of all that has happened to them.

Short readings do not always show why passages fit together. Read on to verse 13, where Paul is struggling with the mystery of election, and you come across Jacob as the one chosen: the verse cites Malachi 1:2-3, where God is said to actually hate Jacob's brother Esau – but other verses suggest that Malachi (and Paul) were just sharpening the argument for a particular context, as Hebrews 11:20 and 12:16 make Esau, not God, responsible for his failure. While the Old Testament (which Paul is quoting) makes God the author of everything (so that whoever God does not choose, God must reject), the New Testament gives us an alternative way to understand God's choice (as in Ephesians 1:4, where we are all simply chosen "in Christ from the foundation of the world").

## [Matthew 14:13-21](#)

The feeding of the five thousand seems a different theme, but perhaps the connection is with Isaiah's offer of nourishment which satisfies – or even the parallel between Jacob seeking a place to be alone at night, and our Lord's custom of seeking solitude (v.13). Jesus did this when He heard of the death of His cousin John the Baptist; did that shock Jesus into a fresh appraisal of His own mission?

In the event, Jesus' privacy was soon interrupted – but in His compassion not only accepted the situation but turned it into something very special. This is the only miracle recorded in all four gospels. Before Jesus distributed the bread He said grace – a normal custom in Jewish and Christian homes to this day. The usual Jewish grace is 'Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, for You bring forth bread from the earth', a reminder that the provision of food in the normal way is itself a miracle.

Jesus involves His disciples in the feeding, and there is an obvious parallel in our call to share the good news of Christ with our generation. Our resources are poor – only a few loaves and fish – but Jesus is able to do far more than we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

When I was young the habit was to ask how on earth five loaves and two fish could feed a multitude, and for those who could not believe in miracles various clever suggestions were made. Today we are more likely simply to focus on what the story means – which is certainly what the apostle John intended, when he described all the signs that Jesus did as pointers to who Jesus really is, and to encourage us to trust in Him (John 20:30-31).

## Sermon ideas

- **Jacob wrestling (Genesis 32), with Paul's struggle (Romans 9)**

This is a story about the necessity, and the cost of transformation. It gives you a chance to rehearse the life of Jacob, with his trail of deceit from Chapter 27 on. (Depending on your congregation, it lends itself to a fair bit of humour.) Since the lectionary leaves Jacob's story with today's reading, you can bring in his continuing fear of Esau (transformation takes more than one meeting with God), and how Esau forgave him. In the end, both brothers buried their father together (35:29).

Testimony is not appropriate for every sermon, but this would certainly be an occasion for it, preferably a testimony that is not 'too easy'. Faith, meeting God, 'wrestling with the angel' really does change people's lives.

It might be an occasion also to look at ‘the mystery of Israel’, and the ‘scandal’ of God making particular choices, bearing in mind that God’s choice of one person or one nation does not imply rejection of others. Think of Paul’s angst, and how we may feel about our own families.

Here is a two line poem on a short psalm which refers to that ‘particular choice’:

### **117 Nae Hairm**

Wee psalm, nae hairm intendit.  
Jist the scandal o particularitie.

Michael Symmons Roberts has a wonderful poem on this story called ‘Choreography’ (in his book *Corpus* – these kind of poems often work best printed in an order of service, but to do that with ‘Choreography’ you’d need to ask copyright permission ([www.randomhouse.co.uk](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk)) – and the poem would also be great read in an ‘open spot’.

Here is my own poem on the passage:

### **Hip Surgery**

No holds barred  
as Jacob wrestled with the stranger.  
He who grabbed the heel of Esau,  
did a deal with God at Bethel,  
got a feel for Laban’s wealth  
and lovely daughters, how  
he’s pinned at Peniel, and limps away  
a humbler man.

No fix barred  
as now we wrestle with the danger  
of our easy days, and take our ageing  
hips to orthopaedic surgeons,  
get our broken limbs well pinned,  
our fat flesh tucked and thinned  
so for a price one walks away  
a fitter man.

No space barred  
to those who wrestle with the range of  
figures that we conjure from the dark.  
Before we cross the Jabboks of our age,  
God, give us some such journey mark  
as put the hip of Jacob out of joint  
but left him humbler, fitter, and  
a greater man.

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- **Psalm 146**

Develop the idea of ‘giving up’ on the belief that David’s kingdom would be restored – which the Jews had to do when they came back from exile. Talk about the difficulty of conversion from deeply held views. (Paul himself illustrates this in his struggle to accept that Jesus was Messiah, but after that he had to struggle afresh with the question – what then was the place of the Jewish people?)

In the time of Jesus, some Jews simply accepted that now God alone was king, and life must be lived according to the laws revealed in the first five books of the Bible. Others embraced the hints of a new, greater David, and looked for a ‘Messiah’ who would introduce God’s kingdom on earth. When John the Baptist and Jesus were at work, Galilee and Judaea were full of rumours of different kinds of Messiah. (The Pharisees had a set procedure for testing claimants – you can see them applying this to Jesus in the Gospels.)

We still pray, ‘Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’. Go through the verses of the psalm in the light of this prayer.

- **The blessings of faith (Isaiah and Matthew passages, perhaps Romans as well)**

How do we invite people to believe today? Are meals important? Take the saying ‘the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach’ in new directions.

Many sermons contrast the ‘emptiness’ of possessions with the ‘fullness’ of divine grace. How can you do this in a creative way that people haven’t heard before? A dramatic presentation might help.

How is it that God ‘satisfies’ us? How does belief in God as Trinity help us appreciate and experience this?

## Prayers

In preparing prayer for public worship, I usually borrow from the readings or hymns for the day, especially the Psalms, without making it too obvious. This helps the service to hang together, and if I am leading worship Sunday by Sunday, gives variety. Another thing is that I prefer to combine confession with the prayer of approach, as below.

In the thanksgiving prayer I use the expression 'pew-bound', since this is the norm in the Church of Scotland. However if you ever get the chance, I recommend some movement – kneeling or prostration for confession, hands in the air for praise, walking to stations of prayer for intercession, clenching fists for prayers of complaint and longing, etc.

While I personally like responses, said or sung, especially after prayers for others, this will depend on local circumstances.

### Approach

Lord God, this coming to worship is serious business.

The world is out of joint,  
and our lives are out of joint.

Generally we do our best,  
but You see what we are really like.

Sometimes we know very well we have gone wrong,  
sometimes we just know that Your holiness is beyond us.

And yet Your compassion is over all You have made.

Have mercy on us.

Forgive what is wrong,  
strengthen what is right,  
and guide us in the right way,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Lord God, this coming to worship is glorious business.

All creation is made for Your glory,  
and we voice that now.

Your Spirit plants hints of glory in our hearts,  
and we delight to offer You our praise and worship.

Help us in our song to give You honour,  
in our silence to wait for You to speak,  
through Jesus Christ, Your living word.

Lord God, this coming to worship is hopeful business.  
We come with our concerns and our fears,  
with people on our hearts,  
stalked by troubles and worries.  
Open Your generous hand,  
to satisfy our desire,  
to renew our faith that You are kind,  
and close to all who call upon You,  
as we do,  
trusting in Jesus  
who bears our burdens, and carries our sorrows.

Glory be to the Father,  
and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit.  
As it was in the beginning,  
is now and ever shall be,  
world without end,  
Amen

### **Thanksgiving**

It is good, Lord God,  
for us to live with thankful hearts.  
But now we voice our thanks,  
together as Your praising people.  
We sit pew-bound,  
but our hands and hearts are lifted in reverence and awe,  
our throats are pulsing with Your praise,  
our eyes are wide open to the wonder of who You are.

Thank You, God,  
for giving us what we need to live in this world –  
food, shelter, conversation,  
family, friendship, warmth, purpose.  
Thank You for giving us a gospel worth sharing with others.  
Thank You for the hope of a life which is not snuffed out by death.  
Thank You for the sciences with which we explore the universe,  
and for the arts which help us to appreciate its wonder.

Thank you, God,  
for the challenging times,  
when we have had to struggle through alone,  
when we have had to keep listening for Your voice a long time,  
when we have had to come to terms with who we really are.  
Thank You for all who have helped us along life's journey,  
not least those lost to our earthly sight,  
who share the splendour and joy of heaven.

Thank You God,  
for the gift of Jesus,  
the gift of the Spirit,  
the gift of faith.  
Amen

### **Intercession**

Hear us now as we pray for others in the name of Christ:

For those who are bowed down,  
that God may lift them up.

For those who are hungry,  
that they find food and the nourishment they need.

For those who choke on bad air or water,  
that the policy and practice of governments and others in charge may change.

For those who are sick,  
and those in the caring professions.

For those who call for help,  
that they find You near at hand.

For those who cannot find paid work,  
and those who take decisions which affect patterns of work.

For those who struggle with God,  
that they find themselves, and find God.

For those enduring violence,  
that they find relief, and the blessing of peace.

For the Middle East and its peoples,  
that truth may prevail over lies,  
and peace over warfare.

God, whose Son endured shame and torture,  
and the violence of those who misunderstood Your will,  
work a wonder in the hearts of angry people,  
that hatred may turn to gentleness,  
bitterness to calm,  
and fear to faith,  
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who taught us to pray,

Our Father...

### **Blessing**

May your mouth speak the praise of the Lord,  
your mind think the wisdom of the Lord,  
your hands and feet do the will of the Lord:  
and the blessing of God Almighty,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
rest upon you  
and remain with you for ever,  
Amen

### **Alternative Material**

This material has been supplied by kind permission of Spill the Beans and allows you to explore the readings or theme of the service in creative ways that include everyone gathering for worship.

New material from Spill the Beans is provided in the latest issues available from their [website](#).

## Bible Notes

### An Everyday Miracle? [Matthew 14:13-21](#)

5,000 fed just like that. How often does that happen?

Well, actually, quite a lot in the tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures. The generosity of bread is not quite common-or-garden but certainly a regular occurrence. Banquet tables are a fairly frequent topic of theological conversation throughout, manna in the wilderness is the iconic feeding story, there is the widow of Zarephath and there are frequent prophetic visions of bread for the hungry, the orphaned and widowed.

Matthew, in his retelling of the incident, like the other two synoptic gospels, sets the story immediately after the death of John the Baptist. Only Matthew, however, has Jesus 'withdraw to a lonely place'. This image provokes memories of wilderness stories, for it was often to the wilderness that people would look for promised providence in dark times: manna, stones that turn to bread, water from stones. Perhaps Matthew is expecting us to connect these incidents that hint of promise as Jesus enters this wilderness place in response to John's death. Maybe there is a subtext here that even in these difficult hours when Jesus has to walk through the valley of the shadow of death we should watch out, for God will supply with cups that runneth over and tables that are set with banquets.

Jesus' time in the lonely place, however, is cut short. The crowds gather and soon they are hungry and so Jesus sets the example and begins feeding them. No one goes hungry.

We can argue till we are blue in the face the details and theology of what happened and how it happened and while that might be interesting it is not as important as what all this means. The whole incident is packed with many layers of tradition and story that go back deep in the tradition of Israel. The incident moves us through the Exodus and the prophets, it speaks of the Psalms and of John the Baptist, who preached renewal and repentance in the wilderness. It is another story of abundance and grace found in the wilderness and echoes the theme of these older stories.

It does not stop there, however, for it moves us towards Eucharist too and the sharing of bread and wine and the abundance and generosity of the Lord's Supper. If Matthew's community had a tradition of remembering the Last Supper then this story cannot fail to connect with that.

All in all it is a story that repeats the often told story of God's generosity in the wildest and hungry places of life.

Can we leave it there, or might we recognise the other part of storytelling which, rather than hearing the same story told again and again, allows the story to apply to us? Stories often have invitations attached to them to go and do likewise or to continue telling the story in more practical ways. There is a strong moral here of wondering why we let people turn almost to skeletons in the hungry places of the world before we find ourselves responding with any amount of generosity towards them.

The Kingdom of God is perhaps not found in the miracle at all. Perhaps our emphasis should move away from the idea of miracles in order to find itself once more in the everydayness of life, the eating together and the sharing of those things. Maybe that is why bread and wine are so powerful: that in these everyday objects the whole of heaven is found and shared and the smallest crumb contains as much as the biggest loaf.

Either way, 5,000 being fed might be an everyday occurrence after all.

## **Retelling for Young People**

### **More Than Expected**

When we're growing up, we have to depend on our parents or guardians and they provide what we need, things like love and food and clothing, things we need for school and times of fun. Sometimes we do not always get what we want and some children do not even get what they need.

But there is a story in the Bible that tells us of a time when people needed something really badly. They needed hope. They had come to Jesus for it but they got a lot more than they ever expected.

They got their lunch provided by God's goodness: five loaves and a couple of small fish blessed by Jesus and shared. It was a bit of a miracle because not only was there enough for five thousand men, plus the women and children, but there were also leftovers.

When we come to church, we come to hear about Jesus and hear the stories that give us hope. We not only find hope, but also encounter so much more.

The story of Jesus' miracle of feeding the multitudes helps us to understand that life is not about hoarding possessions and belongings, but is rather about sharing what we have and giving generously: sharing the leftovers, so to speak.

Although giving to others can sometimes feel like we are losing something, it's then that we realise that we gain a bigger blessing as we join with Jesus in bringing the miracle of hope to others.

Be assured that we can all depend on our heavenly parent, who provides us with everything we need and even leaves us some leftovers.

## **Activities**

### **Gathering Activity**

As people gather, ask them if they have any food in their bags/pockets (most usually have some sweets). Invite them to place their food items into a basket so that they can be shared later in the service, perhaps just after the reading.

### **A Big Crowd**

*You will need: a large sheet of paper, thick crayons.*

Gather the children around the big sheet of paper and give them each a chubby crayon. Set a time limit, approximately two minutes, and get them to draw as many dots as possible within that time. Have they managed to draw 5,000 dots? Use this as a way to introduce the story and to talk about the size of the crowd. If you have plenty of space you could use a long strip of lining paper around which to gather all the children and ask them to draw as many faces as quickly as they can on the sheet, give them a time limit and count how many they came up with together.

### **Reflection**

The bits left over,  
what of those?

Pieces left strewn around,  
no longer required.

A plethora  
of scraps,

yet Christ leaves none discarded  
but calls for all to be gathered in,  
saved and treasured.

Baskets filled with an extravagance,  
excess cherished.

Symbolism  
that can only be imagined.

A hungry crowd,  
a boy's packed lunch,  
a great big picnic.

People fed  
and still enough  
to go on sharing  
the blessing,  
abundance,  
and grace of God.

### Take Home Ideas

Look out for signs of the 'Upside Down Kingdom' this week.

- Say to yourself each morning:  
"Today I will look beyond what I receive in order to survive and notice the excess: of food and water, of love and of grace."
- Keep a journal with 'Upside Down Kingdom' as this week's title.  
Notice what you do each day with what you have been given.
- Consider what happens to the leftovers, from your home, your church, your business, your life. What happens to leftover food, clothes, time and compassion?
- Take a quiet few minutes to be still before you sleep.  
Imagine that you are standing in the gap between poverty and abundance.  
Picture 'grace' flowing in until the gap is filled with a love which allows you and others to swim freely in a space which does not recognise labels and limits, but allows for potential, generosity, and extravagant giving.
- Give thanks for the various ways in which we can all share and care in the 'Upside Down Kingdom' regardless of age, ability, or bank balance.

## Prayers

### Call to worship

Jesus wanted to be alone,  
to mourn the loss of his cousin,  
but the people followed him.  
When Jesus saw the crowd  
he was filled with compassion.  
His own needs were put to the side.  
Jesus spent the day healing the sick  
and by evening the people were hungry.  
So, Jesus blessed what they had,  
five loaves and two fish,  
and everyone shared together  
with twelve whole baskets left over.  
We gather today as people  
who are in need of healing and  
who are hungry for God's word.  
Let us worship our God  
who is extravagantly generous  
to all people.

### Responses

**Leader:** We have gathered here

**All:** **to meet Jesus.**

**Leader:** We have come seeking

**All:** **the one who can heal us.**

**Leader:** We are hungry

**All:** **for the word of God  
that satisfies and gives us life.**

### Sending

**Leader:** Jesus gave us his all.

**All:** **It is now our turn  
to give our all to him.**

**Leader:** Having been filled  
and refreshed once again,

**All:** **we can go and do  
the task he set.**

**Leader:** Strengthened by his sustaining word,

**All:** **we can go and do  
the task he set.**

**Leader:** Made whole by his endless love,

**All:** **we can go and do  
the task he set.**

**Leader:** So go and do the same for others  
and may the blessing of God rest with you all.

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## Musical suggestions

*You can hear samples of these suggestions in the 'Weekly Worship' section of <https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/>. This new online music resource will allow you to listen to and search the breadth of music available in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4).*

*You will find hidden gems and alternative arrangements to familiar songs that will inspire creativity and spark fresh curiosity about how we best use music in worship.*

- CH4 86 – “When Zion’s fortunes God restored” – another psalm (126) which would fit a sermon looking at the place of Israel. If you don’t like the tune ‘Edgbaston’, the tune ‘Vox Dilecti’ (CH4 408) works well with this psalm.
- CH4 96 – “You are before me, God, you are behind” – another psalm (139), but its reference to running from God and finding that God is there even in the darkness seems to fit the life of Jacob.
- CH4 101 – “You are kind and full of compassion” – This is a prose version of Psalm 145, which covers the verses set for today (the well-known CH4 100 covers verses 1-6)

only). There are very few congregations nowadays unwilling to say a version like this responsively, either line about, or two lines about with the leader. Just make sure you explain clearly how it is to be done.

- CH4 175 – “Praise, I will praise you Lord” – This is a useful hymn which can go at most points of a service, and has a very ‘tight’ structure (without being boring) which some people find easier to sing than hymns with a ‘loose’ structure.
- CH4 259 – “Beauty for brokenness” – its themes are fairly similar to the intercessions.
- CH4 348 – “Praise the one who breaks the darkness” – this relates to the Genesis, Isaiah and Matthew readings, so whatever your choice of readings you won’t go wrong with this hymn. ‘Joel’ is a good tune, but there are many alternatives for that metre.
- CH4 540 – “I heard the voice of Jesus say” – relates to the Isaiah reading.
- CH4 560 – “Jesus, the very thought of thee” – relates to verse 15 of Psalm 17. Even if you are set a psalm not included at the front of CH4, you can always look up the index at the back of a music copy to find hymns which relate in some way.
- CH4 583 – “Spirit divine, attend our prayers” – suitable for the Pentecost season. If you want to push the boat out, and if you (or someone else) can lead as a cantor, two hymns which go very well together (and rescue the second from becoming a dirge) are CH4 761, leading straight into 583 (which is in the same key, so ask for a chord of D minor to start you off). If you don’t want to teach the congregation 761, then two people can sing cantor and response with a single “alleluia” sung together. (Do not allow the organist to play an introduction to 583 – s/he must come straight in with the same tempo, so the cantor should bring organist and congregation in together.)

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