Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany – 20 February 2022

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank Rev Mandy Ralph, Minister of Annbank with Tarbolton and Rev Dr Elijah Obinna, Minister of Carluke St John’s, for their thoughts on the seventh Sunday after Epiphany.

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

The writers for the Season of Epiphany were drawn from volunteers either connected to or active members of the Church of Scotland’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Group. Some were more directly connected to the EDI Group’s research group on ethnic minorities. The EDI Group and its network were approached with the aim that this season of worship connect well with themes that resonate through the passages read during Epiphany: messages of renewal; the universal completeness of God’s love embodied in the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles; and of welcome, acceptance and inclusion into God’s family through the story of Jesus’s baptism. All of these themes are at the heart of the EDI Group’s vision for the Church of Scotland to be a place where all are welcome. The Group’s aim is to support the Church in proactively making this vision real and visible for all members, through a diverse and ambitious programme of work and listening to the voices and experiences of those most affected by the objectives of this programme.

The overarching themes in today’s passages are relationships and forgiveness. In Genesis we see the relationship breakdown in families. You might think there’s nothing new there, over 2,000 years on. On the one hand you have the brothers a bit disheartened that Joseph is alive, as they will have to ‘fess up’ to what they actually did, and on the other hand we see Joseph offering forgiveness and acceptance of the wrong done and the hurt caused to him.

Relationships are fickle things: we can be in favour one minute and out of it the next. We all know families who have fallen out over something and not spoken for years and years and if you ask what the fall-out was about no-one can remember – it was that long ago – but holding onto that grudge is very important, so is that family feud. This is exactly what Joseph does not do here; he sees the path God wants him to take and understands his role in it and as such offers his forgiveness and embraces his family anew.

The psalm encourages us to build on our relationship with God to trust in God in all things, even when things are going pear-shaped. The Psalmist also encourages listeners to practise forgiveness, encouraging those who feel aggrieved to lay everything before God, who will act in their best interest as God still does. To do that we need to trust fully in God, there has to be the element of trust in our relationship. Luke again reminds us of that great commandment to love one another. In Luke’s writing the inclusive language leaves no room for misunderstanding – in our relationships we cannot choose to love some people and leave out the ones we don’t like. We are tasked to love all people – not to judge,
discriminate or exclude, but to welcome all people in love, just as Jesus did and asks us to do.

**Genesis 45:3-11, 15**

To better understand the part of Joseph’s story in our reading today, it would be helpful to read his whole story as recorded in Genesis chapters 37, 39-50. These chapters present to us the inner character and personality of Joseph. Joseph’s dreams, indicating that his entire family will bow to him, put him at odds not only with his brothers, but with his father Jacob as well. The brothers’ deadly plan is thwarted when they heed Reuben their elder brother’s suggestion that they throw Joseph in a pit. That way they could pretend he had been killed by a wild animal, getting rid of him without shedding his blood. Judah, the fourth eldest, suggested they could make some money by selling him to the Ishmaelites. Hoping to save Joseph’s life, Reuben returned to rescue him, but found the pit empty. Unknown to Joseph’s brothers, the Ishmaelites later sold him to the Egyptians. Joseph’s dream later came true and he is now second only to the Pharaoh himself. How could anyone (Joseph, his brothers, or his father) have known that this turn of events would be a blessing for all of them?

In Joseph’s story, reconciliation is at the forefront. Of the thirteen chapters (Genesis 37, 39-50) that tell his story, four of them (42-45 and a portion of 50) cover his reconciliation with his brothers. In a world much in need of healing and reconciliation, we find lessons on reconciliation, both for our personal and communal lives. Joseph’s story reminds us that reconciliation is possible in even the worst of circumstances. Although his brothers mistreated him, Joseph, sought reconciliation with them. No matter what happened in the past, Joseph and his brothers know that relationship is key. They choose not to let the past stand in the way of reconciliation. The text notes: “Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘Come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you” (Genesis 45:4-5).

In today’s world, so much is said about reconciliation, but many often would want to avoid the truth – facing and dealing with the past. There may be no healing, no moving forward until the wounds of the past and their effect on the present and future are openly, honestly, and truthfully addressed. Reconciliation involves action, not just words. Joseph played his part by taking care of his family. His brothers did their part admitting that they had mistreated Joseph and honouring Joseph’s request to bring the family, including their father Jacob, to live in Egypt. Above all, Joseph recognised God’s hand in his life. He understands that everything that happened brought him to this moment of reconciliation and made it
possible for him to bless many, including his family, Egypt, and nations beyond. In a world with so much pain, and division (racial, religious, political, economic, social), reconciliation is as necessary as it was in Joseph’s day.

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

When Rabbi Harold Kushner’s three-year old son was diagnosed with a degenerative disease that meant the boy would only live until his early teens, he was faced with one of life’s most difficult questions: “Why, God?” Years later, Rabbi Kushner, wrote the book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. In this book Kushner attempts to grapple with the problem of evil. Why is it, Rabbi Kushner wants to know, that good and faithful people sometimes have to suffer? Undoubtedly, our world has a countless list of good, holy, Christian people whose children, spouses and dear ones die; who are hungry; who have their homes repossessed by the bank. And there are also countless devious people who seem to be getting along just fine. Those who carry out wicked plans “prosper in their way.” Although, we read that they will “fade like the grass” eventually, they are at present blossoming so well that the upright must be cautioned against being jealous of them (v1). Psalm 37 offers no easy nor definitive answer to the issue of evil. Rather, it offers assurance that is communicated in the repeated promises that pervade the psalm as something like a refrain – the wicked “shall be cut off,” (v9) and the righteous will “inherit the land” (v9).

It can be so easy to envy the flourishing wicked, visualising how much good we could do if only the righteous had the sort of accomplishments that they have. It is easy to be furious and angry, to let our frustration and craving for justice boil over into outbursts against all the evil we can find in the world. It is easy, even if we forgo envy and anger, to succumb to a state of stress and worry, to a sense of defeat in the face of such overwhelming evil. These are the feelings we are told we should flee, forsake, and abandon.

The instructions in the psalm speak both of what we should do, and how we should relate to God. The commands are to trust in the Lord, do good, delight in the Lord, commit our ways to the Lord, be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for the Lord. Just as we are supposed to refrain from anxiety and from furious wrath, we are supposed to actively seek a state of patient stillness as we put our trust in the Lord. To do this, the focus of our mind should not be on the wicked but on God and God’s promises.
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

The preceding sections of this chapter draw attention to the significance of the resurrection to Paul’s ministry, to the gospel that he preached, and to the believers’ faith in Christ. In this letter, these words come alive: “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.” These are the words we echo as a community of faith each time we gather to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion. They are not empty words, nor mere ritual recitals. They point to what has happened, and they speak to what will happen. Paul writes in verses 51-52: “Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” Our Christian faith assures us that when Christ comes again all will be raised, and the living will be transformed.

In affirming a bodily resurrection, Paul argues that resurrection is not the resuscitation of decayed bodies, but the transformation of the body into one that has not been corrupted by the powers of sin and death. The language that Paul uses to explain the transformation is in glaring contrast to bodily existence as we now understand it — perishable rather than imperishable, weakness as opposed to power, dishonour as opposed to glory, natural versus spiritual (vv42-44). Far from the image of decaying corpses, the resurrected body sounds glorious.

Paul can make this bold claim because he has seen the resurrected Christ (vv8-11). That revelation caused him to see God’s transformative resurrection power invading lives as he knew it. Paul insists in verse 17, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” Although this passage may not answer all the questions about resurrection, it does affirm the bodily resurrection as central to our Christian faith. Although Paul’s language and experiences are limited – as is ours, this text invites us to reaffirm our faith in both the revelation of the risen Christ and the mystery that awaits us when Christ returns.


These verses are a continuation of Luke's “Sermon on the Plain”. The passage does not offer a full list of ethical sayings for the community, but mentions several examples of mercy in action within a community. It offers guidance in how Luke’s audience can live and witness faithfully within their contexts. In the world as Luke knew it, many people believed that the community was to imitate its leader. In the gospel according to Saint Luke, Jesus draws on this principle; He says be merciful as God is merciful. Mercy is releasing people and circumstances from recrimination with compassion and forgiveness. Mercy is one of God’s
primary qualities (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:5; Daniel 9:9; Ephesians 2:4; Luke 1:50). Verse 30 presupposes a socio-economic situation in which many people were exploited, lived in poverty, and struggled to survive. From Luke’s point of view, systemic economic change will occur only at the second coming, but in the meantime, the ‘golden rule’ of Luke 6:31 applies: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Instead of responding to various forms of threat with corresponding retaliation, Christ calls for attitudes and actions that seek the good of the other, which builds up the community. Luke’s form of non-violence in this passage thus goes beyond non-retaliation. The disciples are to take positive steps that promote the wellbeing of the parties with whom the community is in conflict. We need God’s grace in order to live out these words: “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.” How can we love our enemies when everything we feel inside us about them makes us want to hurt them back as they have hurt us? Jesus is not telling people to remain victims but to find new ways of resisting evil, ways that are grounded in compassion and righteousness rather than in returning violence for violence.

Jesus is inviting all of us into forgiveness, into a deep, unlimited and radical kind of forgiveness that we can fully appreciate only when we have been on the receiving end of it. Any of us, all of us, each of us, can experience the extraordinary peace and healing that comes from letting go of bitterness and letting go of anger. Because when we let go, the peace of God that passes all understanding flows into our hearts and minds through Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God.

**Sermon ideas**

The central themes in our readings for this Sunday are love for our enemies; forgiveness; reconciliation; and healing. All of these can be seen in the life of Joseph, who forgave his brothers. Forgiveness means release. Forgiveness is not about pretending that the harm never occurred. It is not about excusing behaviour that causes harm. We have to acknowledge the harm before forgiveness can happen. However, it is about releasing anger, and releasing our desire for revenge as a response to the harm done for us. In the psalm we are reminded of the transitory nature of evil. Light will always overcome darkness. Goodness will always overcome evil. We need to embody the call of Jesus to love our enemies. Like the Psalmist says, we need attitudinal changes to enable us reaffirm our faith in God, to focus on God rather than focus on the evil around us.

The season of Epiphany is approaching its high point. Next Sunday we will hear the story of Christ’s Transfiguration. It is both the turning point on Christ’s way to the Cross and also the
divine revelation of Jesus, who came once into our human history, proclaiming and putting into effect the freedom of the God of Israel: all debts are cancelled, everything is made clean and new. In our Epiphany season, this same Jesus Christ enters our hearts, as well as our contemporary cultures and communities. We are therefore no less blessed than those to whom He preached the good news in person. We too are called and forgiven; we too are enlisted into His service. We too become His own as He now lives His own life in us.

Prayers

Call to worship
Come before the God of love.
Come as you are, no pretence, no judgment,
come with your thoughts and your feeling, in the highs and lows of life,
come with your successes and failures,
come knowing that you are loved unconditionally.

Come before the Lord your God,
in the quiet spaces and the busy places,
in worship, praise and thanksgiving,
for all we have and all we are is a gift from God.

Approach to God
Eternal and everlasting God,
You came to our world in Christ.
You shared in our humanity, You walked with us.
You still come to us through the presence of Your spirit,
sharing in our experiences each and every day,
sharing in our worship whatever our number,
for where two or three are gathered, You are there.

Be with us now as we come to You to share in worship,
whether online or in person,
for we know nothing can separate us from Your love,
and whether we are together or apart, we are still part of the body of Christ.
So, as we come before You in worship, to read Your word and listen for Your voice,
open our eyes to Your presence in our lives
and open our lives to Your grace and power.
Amen
Confession
Gracious God,
We come celebrating the awesomeness of Your love
And the wonder of Your grace.
Even though we fail You time and time again,
You never walk away and You never fail us.
Undeserving though we are, You show us mercy.
You do not turn away in the moments our faith is feeble
in the moments when we doubt, or when we are hesitant disciples,
reluctant to share Your word and witness with others
for fear of what that might mean for us.

God of never-ending patience,
even in the times we fail You,
You understand our weaknesses and help us to put our faults behind us.
You dust us off when we have fallen from grace and help us to start again.
We offer so little, yet You give us so much,
our love is so weak, yet You respond richly,
Your grace defies expression
too wonderful for us to fully comprehend,
and though we fail You, You never fail us.
Lord, continue to grant us, unworthy as we are, Your grace.
Amen

Thanksgiving
God of all creation,
You have given us so much and we are truly blessed.
We thank You for Your constant guidance throughout our lives,
for Your wisdom in all things
for the way Your word encourages, inspires, feeds us and sustains us
in our daily spiritual lives.

You Lord, speak to us through Your church and the fellowship of others.
You Lord, speak to us in the seasons, the landscape and the weathers.
You speak to us in the stories of old and the word of the prophets.
You speak to us in the leadership and ministries of today.

For all the ways You have guided us, supported us
and for all the ways You continue to lead in our lives,
we give You our heartfelt thanks.

When we are foolish, You hear us and respond in love. We acknowledge and give thanks for all that enables our spiritual growth. You Lord are our rock and refuge in times of trouble, and for that we give thanks. When the storms of life come, we are assured we can lean on and trust in You. For this and a whole lot more, we are truly humbled and thankful. In Jesus’ name we pray.
Amen

Intercession
Loving God,
You have called us to be a living community. A people bound together as the body of Christ, and a family united in love. Yet Lord, in our broken world so many are suffering, so many are hurting.

Hear our prayers Lord
For those whose lives are ruled by hate and vengeance, rather than love and justice. For those whose homes are not places of love or safety, but places of fear and violence. For those who have no home to speak of and have become invisible on our streets. For those who are stigmatised because of status, ill-health, ethnicity, religion. Lord, You asked us to love our neighbours, all of them, not just the ones we choose. Enable us and equip us to carry out Your command and to make a positive difference in the lives of those who are our neighbours and are struggling.

Hear our prayers Lord
For all those in our congregations and communities who are ill at home or in hospital – bring Your healing hands and soothing balm upon them. For all who are anxiously awaiting treatment, results, or appointments due to the impact of Covid-19 and our overwhelmed health service. For anxious relatives and carers who are exhausted and there is no rest, and no end in sight while the much-needed care packages are few and far between. Lord equip us, Your servants and disciples, to assist them in their time of need.
Enable us to be beacons of light in another dark day.

**Hear our prayers Lord**

For all our medical, public health, nursing and ancillary staff
and the difficulties they face and over-stretched work environments.
For the vaccinations to sustain us through Covid and for the variants in the virus to subside.
May we also play our part, Lord, in protecting others.

Lord, You tasked us to do good to those who hate You,
which can seem difficult and to some unfair.
It’s hard to love those who belittle, who shun, who exclude and who racially abuse.
When we feel we should get our own back, You ask us to turn the other cheek.
Inspire us to be willing advocates for truth, justice and reconciliation.
Hate does not lay a healthy soil that enables love to grow and flourish,
but walking in faith in the footsteps of Jesus,
You call us all to make a positive difference and to heal Your broken world of its hurt and its
divisions.
For we can all make a positive difference in Jesus’ name and for His sake.
Amen

**Blessing**
Go now and share God’s love with all you meet.
Go now and share the joy of Jesus.
Go now and share the inspiring breeze of the Spirit.
Go in peace assured of God’s love.
Amen

**Alternative Material**

This material has been supplied by the Church of Scotland’s Faith Action Resourcing Worship Team.

The Weekly Worship material through the season of Epiphany has been written by the Church of Scotland’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Group and EDI Group’s research group on ethnic minorities. Throughout this season in our Alternative Material we will be further exploring themes of renewal, the universal completeness of God’s love embodied in the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles, and of welcome, acceptance and inclusion into God’s family through the story of Jesus’s baptism. The following material, which includes
group discussion, different types of prayer activities and reflections, is offered to help you explore the themes as part of your worship, in prayer settings or home group/bible studies.

1. Group Activity
This material is adapted from Pray Now (the Church of Scotland’s prayer book) and can be used for personal reflection, group study or adapted for use in worship gatherings.

• Read the opening reflection and spend a few minutes in conversation about your response to it

• The prayer and bible passage relate to the theme of the reflection. Have someone read the prayer and then invite others to read aloud the bible passage at least twice. Have a conversation about your response to the reading – you may like to use the questions as a guide.

• Close the session by saying the blessing together.

Opening reflection (Pray Now – Together We Pray 2018 p18)

PEACE BE TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY
I bind unto myself today
the cloak of all embracing love
and the strong shoes of practical power.

May my cloak and my shoes,
reflect the love and power
planted deeply within by the source of all light,
to strengthen, affirm and heal
the whole community.

I bind unto myself today
the hat of many options
and the stole of compassion.

May I have the wisdom to reach deep
into the hat when a conundrum presents itself,
and the humility to seek replenishment from others.
May I have the grace to wrap the stole of compassion
around those within the community who hurt.
I bind unto myself today
the feather boa of light-heartedness
and the tickling stick of delight.

In the face of overwhelming need and hurt,
– and only when the time is right –
may this community find laughter and joy
in all of God’s good creation.

Conversation starter
Take some time to reflect on the meditation above and ask yourself or in pairs/a small group

• Is there anything that surprised you?
• What impression or feeling are you left with?

Prayer before the bible reading
Dear Lord, as I arise this day, may I put on
the cloak of Your love,
the power of Your shoes,
the wisdom of Your hat,
the peace of Your prayer stole,
to equip me for all that I do, with all whom I meet,
and so to extend the reach
of Your love, power and wisdom
through the whole community. AMEN

Bible reading
Ephesians 6:10–24 Peace be to the whole community

Reflecting on the reading:
Take some time to reflect on the bible reading and if you are in a group, chat about what stood out for each of you.

These questions may be helpful in reflecting or sharing thoughts on the bible reading:
• Is there anything from the reading that you had remembered differently?
• Is there anything that surprised you?
• What impression or feeling are you left with?
• Are there any particular insights that you wish to share?
Some more questions you may wish to consider for personal reflection or to help group discussion:

- What does drawing strength from God look like for you?
- What is ‘this present darkness’ that we are facing?
- Contrast the armour described in the bible reading and the meditation – what possibilities does this suggest to you?
- What could it mean to pray in the spirit at all times?
- What would peace for the whole community look like?

Blessing
May the blessing of the God of peace encircle you,
your community,
and all whom you love,
today and always.
Amen

What next?
- What has your reflection made you curious about?
- How might you turn your reflections into actions?

2. Prayer Resources

Being open in our prayers
Language and how we use it is important in all that we do, and especially so in worship.

When we gather and send, welcome and bless, pray for or with people, how do we ensure that we are inviting them into something beautiful or mysterious, rather than excluding, confusing or frightening them off?

*He drew a circle that shut me out –
Heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!*

‘Outwitted’ Edwin Markham

How we can open that which is closed and explore what it means to have theologies and practices that empower and enable everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, means or gifting?
The circles that we can draw around ourselves can be our undoing when this unintentionally excludes others, through our practice, ritual and tradition.

The following prayers play with the idea of the Caim prayer, helping us to examine our ingrained behaviours and unconscious bias that form our ideas of who might be out or in,

The caim prayer – a Celtic tradition and part of the heritage of prayer in Scotland for centuries – involves simply drawing a circle around yourself in your imagination. This encircling prayer is grounded in our awareness of the constant companionship and protection of the Divine.

**Circle or caim prayer**
Imagine standing in the centre of a clock face with 12 o’clock directly in front of you. As you pray each line, turn and point to the 12, 3, 6 and 9 o’clock positions on the ground.

Circle me O God, keep me from harm and grant me protection
Circle me O God, keep me from darkness and grant me light
Circle me O God, keep me from despair and grant me hope
Circle me O God, keep me from turmoil and grant me peace

More accessible language to use might be:

Draw a circle round me God, keep me safe
Draw a circle round me God, help me be kind to others
Draw a circle round me God, help me wish good things for people
Draw a circle round me God, help me to be happy with who I am

Another alternative:

Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me,
Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort me and restore me, Christ beneath me,
Christ above me, Christ in the hearts of all that love me,
Christ in the mouth of friend and stranger.

Does this prayer have the potential to exclude others, as Markham’s poem (above) suggests?
Opening our caim circle
You can pray for others using the same prayer, by simply saying their name instead of ‘me’ “Circle [name] O God, keep them from harm and grant them protection”….etc.

You may like to work as a group to write your own inclusive caim prayer. This could take the form of a blessing or a responsive prayer.

3. Examen
An examen gives us the opportunity to look back on our day (or week) in order to look for God’s presence and to discern the direction God wants us to take. It helps us to form the habit of noticing God at work in our lives and seeking God’s direction in all that we do. You can lead a group through the examen or use it as an individual reflection.

Preparation:
- Centre yourself – take a few minutes to be still; silence can help, or closing your eyes, or listening to some music
- Be still – set your feet flat on the ground and continue to be in stillness
- Breathe – take a moment to notice your breathing – be aware of the air you breathe, shared with others
- Let distractions fade – take a moment to notice the noise of others around you – it may be people travelling past, children at play or the comings and goings of others – notice it and let it fade to background
- Get comfortable – notice where you may be tense and try and relax, and become as comfortable as possible wherever you are

• Gratitude: I give thanks to the Loving God, Three yet One, Community of Love, for the work of creation and for all humankind.

• Awareness: I ask for the grace to see all of creation as God does: to believe that God loves each one of us, and to recognise the feelings of rejection and the injustices suffered by those who are excluded from the communities and privileges that others enjoy.
  - What beauty did I see in others today/this week?
  - Where did I recognise someone’s need?

• Understanding: I ask for the grace to examine my attitudes and life choices and their impact on others.
  - What challenges or joys do I experience as I recall my interaction with others today/this week?
What parts of my behaviour or attitudes are preventing me from being more open to others?

- **Repentance:** I ask for the grace to see where I have fallen short in my relationship with God and with others.
  - Where have I ‘othered’ someone?
  - Where have I fallen short in caring for or welcoming people into the circles I move in?

- **Reconciliation:** I ask for the grace to reconcile relationships that are strained or broken and to stand in solidarity with others through my actions.
  - How can I repair my relationships that are strained or broken?
  - What can I do to stand in solidarity with those who are excluded?

- **Closing prayer:** I offer a closing prayer...

  Our Father in heaven,
  hallowed be Your name,
  Your kingdom come, Your will be done,
  on earth as in heaven.
  Give us today our daily bread.
  Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
  Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
  For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours,
  now and for ever.
  Amen

4. Further Resources

**Poems for Epiphany** by Malcolm Guite:

- *A sonnet for epiphany*
  [https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2020/01/04/a-sonnet-for-epiphany-8/](https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2020/01/04/a-sonnet-for-epiphany-8/)

- *Refugee*

- *Epiphany on the Jordan,* baptism of Jesus
  [https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2021/01/10/the-first-sunday-of-epiphany-jesus-baptism-6/](https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2021/01/10/the-first-sunday-of-epiphany-jesus-baptism-6/)

- *Epiphany on the Jordan,* read by Malcolm Guite and song by Steve Bell
  [https://youtu.be/ODrtd8pkyRs](https://youtu.be/ODrtd8pkyRs)

- *Epiphany at Cana*
  [https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2019/01/19/an-epiphany-at-cana-2/](https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2019/01/19/an-epiphany-at-cana-2/)
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 189 – “Be still”
- CH4 191 – “Do not be afraid”
- CH4 361 – “Forgiveness is your gift”
- CH4 362 – “Heaven shall not wait”
- CH4 513 – “Courage, brother! do not stumble”
- CH4 528 – “Make me a channel of your peace”
- CH4 561 – “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!”
- CH4 692 – “Jesus puts this song into our hearts”
- CH4 722 – “Spirit of God, come dwell within me”
- CH4 765 – “God’s love is for everybody”
- Junior Praise 139 – “Jesus love is very wonderful”
- Mission Praise 1 – “A new Commandment”
- Mission Praise 428 – “Lord for the years”
- Mission Praise 506 – “O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder”
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](#)