

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost – Year A

Sunday 12 November 2023

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Rev Scott Brown, Minister of Buchlyvie with Gartmore Parish Churches and Convener of the Committee on Chaplains to HM Forces, for his thoughts on the twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost. Archive material from Rev Martin Ritchie provides reflections on the Lectionary readings for Remembrance Day.

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

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

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

An archive of resources for daily worship can be found on the Sanctuary First website: <https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/daily-worship>

It is worth considering that our gatherings for Remembrance Sunday may be filled with a mixture of people: from members of military organisations, emergency services and youth organisations in uniform, people who perhaps find it challenging to be there, bereaved family members and friends, and those from the community who attend on special Sundays. So, at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God hears us all and blends our voices into one song of worship.

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Introduction

Remembrance Sunday is a time to remember those who fell in battle and the civilians who waited and suffered at home; to pray for the peace of the world today; and to thank God for the freedoms we enjoy because of the sacrifice of others.

It is not an easy Sunday for many Ministers, with few having personal military experience. Some find it easier to concentrate on the themes of reconciliation and peace.

The Church of Scotland Book of Common Order has a very good liturgy for Remembrance Sunday, for both in church and at a war memorial. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland publish their liturgy, alongside other resources, and is available here:

<https://ctbi.org.uk/remembrance-sunday/>

If you do not follow the Lectionary, the Remembrance Day service in Book of Common Order suggests the following readings (page 420):

2 Samuel 23:13-17, Isaiah 2:1-5, Isaiah 25:1-9, Isaiah 26:1-4

Romans 8:31-39, Ephesians 4:25 - 5:2, Ephesians 6:10-18, Revelation 21:1-7

Matthew 5:1-12, John 15:9-17

There are many themes that you may wish to explore:

- The cost of war
- The sin in all of us that leads to war
- Hope
- Forgiveness
- The Communion of Saints
- Our calling to follow the one who is the Prince of Peace

What follows is a traditional service I led for Remembrance in 2022, please feel free to use all or parts of it.

Service of Remembrance

Introduction

Remembrance is a poignant time for many; every village, town and city will have a war memorial, from the simple to the grand, remembering those who primarily fought in the two world wars of last century, but also in wars since, most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They commemorate the sacrifice of the men and women from our own communities, of all faiths and none, who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

A hymn may be sung

Prayer John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled,
and do not let them be afraid.

We read in the book of Micah in the Old Testament:

“What does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God.”

Let us pray:

We meet in the presence of God.
We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith
for reconciliation in our families, communities and nation,
that all people may, together,
live in freedom, justice and peace.
We pray for all who, in bereavement, disability and pain
continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.

We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow
those whose lives,
in world wars and conflicts past and present,
have been given and taken away. Amen.

The Word of God – [Matthew 5:1-12](#)

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus tells the crowd to sit down and listen to these words. They are known as the Beatitudes, but they simply reflect the values and standards of God’s Kingdom. It’s interesting too, that other World Faiths have similar writings in their holy books, as these truths can be universal.

“When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'"

Homily

Not long before the First World War, a French poet, who was to be one of the earliest casualties of that conflict, wrote that 'everything begins with mysticism and ends with politics'. Is he saying that every human story starts with vision and hope and love and deteriorates into conflict and compromise? Or is he saying that we have to move on from fine words and ideals and change things for the better in the 'real' world?

A Naval Chaplain was sitting with the Captain of HMS CARDIFF, in the run-up to what we now call the second Iraq War in 2003, with the ship only seven miles off the coast of Iraq, discussing the rights and wrongs of what they were about to be engaged in. They talked about values and ideals. They talked about politics and the practicalities for our people. If we care about justice and peace, we must fight for them – and that involves all too frequently the messiness of war – to be ready to pay the price of our fine words. Then, as wars develop and when wars end, it's often said that what happens shows how ideals gets tarnished as the fight against injustice breeds its own new problems, and we certainly saw that in Iraq in the aftermath of that conflict, and indeed its legacy remains today. Admiral Lord Nelson, at Trafalgar, said that 'humanity after victory' must be the predominant nature in the British Fleet.

Today, the men and women of our Armed Forces continue to serve with distinction. Who would have thought that in 2022 and in 2023 we would see war again on the European continent. And if and when our Armed Forces are called to put their lives on the line, the families at home wait, with the pain and confusions of war itself, with the ultimate fear of an officer and a Chaplain chapping the door. No amount of talking about ideals makes this easier; they know the cost in a unique way.

But as we look out at a still uncertain landscape, with regional and international powers vying for power and control, as we bring to mind those who have died or been injured over the last decade or so, both military and civilian, we have to acknowledge that moral vision is harder to convert into reality than we would like.

And there are two responses that for me don't work. We can't just say, "We have no responsibilities, we'll stick to the mysticism and let the politics look after itself." It is worth working at what changes the world for good. Religion is inextricably linked to politics as we seek to establish God's rule. If faith is not faith in action then it is useless.

But equally, we can't say, "Spare us the mysticism." We have to go back and test what has happened in the light of our original vision; we have to find out what we have learned, what now looks different, where our integrity has been stretched or challenged. We don't just put this complicated and tragic history aside without asking if our values and commitments are still intact.

Today, on Remembrance Sunday, one of our main tasks is simply to pause in the presence of God. We give thanks for many lives of skill and bravery – the lives of the servicemen and women whom we remember; and the lives too of peacemakers and community builders of all kinds; and those who bore the cost without choosing or volunteering, those swept up in the unplanned death and terror that all conflict brings.

But we can use this pause in God's presence to think a little about what it means to turn vision into reality. This is part of what we owe to the dead, part of the honour we give to those who struggled and sacrificed.

We are not promised safety or peace, we are not promised an easy conscience. What we are promised is an anchorage in our God. Nothing can break this secure line to a God of goodness and love. There may be terrible risk and suffering; there may be the sense of failure; there may be immense personal grief and loss, but the relationship with our God remains, silently feeding us so that we are able to go on putting one foot in front of the other, by faith, finding what needs to be done and doing it well.

What we are given isn't confidence in our own purity of motive, not even unquestioning faith in what people or our politicians tell us is the righteousness of our cause, but confidence in a God who is able to use whatever we do in good faith.

"Blessed are the peacemakers", said Jesus. That is why we remember. Amen.

A hymn may be sung

Prayers

(You may wish to intersperse each stanza with a Kyrie or a short Taizé chant)

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace.

For the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God;

May God give peace.

For those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss;

May God give peace.

For all members of our Armed Forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return;

May God give peace.

For civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity, praying in particular today for Ukraine, Yemen and Myanmar and their people (*adapt as necessary*);

May God give peace.

For peacemakers and peacekeepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free;

May God give peace.

For all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership – political, military and religious; praying in particular for His Majesty the King,

and all who govern over us in London and in Edinburgh,
asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve
in the search for reconciliation and peace.

May God give peace.

O God of truth and justice,
we hold before You those whose memory we cherish,
and those whose names we will never know.

Help us to lift our eyes above the torment of this broken world,
and grant us the grace to pray for those who wish us harm.

As we honour the past, may we put our faith in Your future;
for You are the source of life and hope,
now and for ever. Amen

Act of Remembrance and Commitment

Will you join with me in an act of remembrance and commitment:

Please stand

They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old;
age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning,
we will remember them.

Last Post

Silence

Reveille

[I have Last Post and Reveille available as MP3 files, recorded for me by the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Portsmouth. For a copy to use in this service, please email me at

[SJBrown@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto: SJBrown@churchofscotland.org.uk). *A small donation to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity would be appreciated]*

When you go home
tell them of us and say,
for your tomorrow
we gave our today.

Let us commit ourselves to responsible
living and faithful service.

Let us strive for all that makes for peace.

Let us seek to heal the wounds of war.

Let us work for a just future for all humanity.

Merciful God, we offer to You the fears in
us that have not yet been cast out by love.
May we accept the hope You have placed
in the hearts of all people,
And live lives of justice, courage and mercy. Amen.

A hymn may be sung

Blessing

God grant to the living grace,
to the departed rest,
to the Church, the King, the Commonwealth
and all people,
peace and concord,
and to us and all God's people,
life everlasting.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you and remain with you always.
Amen.

'God save the King' may be sung (CH4 703)

Lectionary-based material for Remembrance Day

Our thanks go to Rev Dr Martin Ritchie, former Minister of Edinburgh Greenbank, and now Pastor at the Presbyterian Church at Tenafly, New Jersey, for the use of this archive material from 2020, based on the Lectionary readings for Remembrance Day from the Book of Common Order.

Introduction

We all know Remembrance Sunday so well – a “red letter” day in our church calendars, and one that is imbued with all the emotional trip-wires of Easter and Christmas. Remembrance Sunday also has the missional opportunity of connecting with people who come to church only once, or a few times per year, and who feel that it is important to come on this day in particular. So, the service planner and preacher go where angels fear to tread!!

The passages selected from the Revised Common Lectionary are potent texts. They include words that can be used to justify war, and to give the quest to overcome an enemy a sense of divine endorsement. On the other side of this perspective, they can be used to offer comfort to the families of those who have been killed in conflict: God has prepared a better place for us, and those who have gone to eternal light. The fight was not in vain, and God gathers us to Godself in the final harvest of humanity. At the opposite end of usage of these lections is one of the dominant themes of all scripture: God’s desire for peace and reconciliation and for the flourishing of humanity. Each text, of course, has particular contexts in mind, which involve visions of the future that entail overcoming an oppressor. Here we get into the difficult territory of ethics, and we should be prepared to struggle with that. The art of Remembrance Sunday – some would say the “high wire act” – is to honour the sacrifice of the fallen whilst casting a vision of a better future. Today’s readings are rich in material to support those on the wire!

[Isaiah 25:1-9](#)

Whenever we think that we live in exceptionally volatile times, we only need to look to the three-voiced writings of Isaiah to find poetic accounts of the experience of conflict and suffering. This reminds us that in our humanity, nothing is new, and that we continue to endure what our ancestors did, but with more sophisticated and effective methods of killing each other. The sentiments of Isaiah are therefore all the more poignant, as we read of both hope and tragedy in an apparently endless cycle of human failure to co-exist peacefully.

I suppose that this passage in its two sections of 1-5 and 6-9 might be termed “poetic reportage”. The experience of conflict and destruction is described as being overcome by the power of God, which is a place of safety for the vulnerable and victims of conflict. Hope that the ruthlessly powerful will not win out over those unable to defend themselves shines through here.

From verses 6-9, the focus shifts towards the idea of the holy mountain of God, where a divine banquet of reconciliation will be held, hosted by Yahweh and open to everyone. This hints at the meeting on Mount Sinai with Moses (Exodus 24:11) where a meal is shared before the Law is given. For some, the rich food and well-aged wines will bring to mind a communion celebration, and the notes of reconciliation that we find in The Lord’s Supper are not out of place. As Christians, how can we avoid thinking of the triumphant theme of the resurrection that we proclaim in the Lord’s Supper when Isaiah writes that “he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples”. The grave shroud is cast aside in our hope of life beyond the power of death. But in our living, what comes after the reconciliation? Verses 6-9 proclaim a future where it is possible to come to terms with disaster and move forward positively. If we look to verse 10 though, just outside this lection, we find a declaration that some enemies will be crushed by God. We find something that corresponds more to the retribution of “an eye for an eye” that is referred to in the Gospel reading. This highlights the importance of remembering that Scripture is complicated and contextual! We don’t always find within it a perfect blueprint for our living and should be humble in the way that we use it. We have to discern what is most important and sift out what is more to do with our humanity than to do with God.

[Psalm 20](#)

This psalm is one of invocation of God’s favour in war. Putting on the ancient eyes of its writer and audience, we can imagine it being recited before going off to battle. How often do we invoke God in our cause? Throughout history clergy have invoked the righteousness of the cause in order to bolster and rally the troops. Looking at the death toll of senior clerics in the battle of Flodden between the Scots and the English, for example, reveals just how heavily the church has been involved in conflict “in God’s name.” In that type of situation, when the tragedy of conflict is certain to occur, the approach is perhaps understandable. Certainly, the Hebrew Bible is full of similar petitions in the context of oppression, deportation, exile, and domination by hostile powers. It seems an inevitable move for the people of every age. How do we approach such texts today? What does victory mean to us? Is there an alternative to victory when addressing the aggression of another nation or terrorist force? Such a paradigm would transform the notion that to be in charge we need to defeat another culture.

Another way of looking at this Psalm is to wonder whether God is really on anyone's side in conflict. Can war really lead to anything like a lasting peace? At the end of Lewis Grassic Gibbon's classic Scottish novel, *Sunset Song*, the Minister preaches a fiery sermon which wonders whether the post-war regime will itself be better than what existed before. We too are challenged to ask that question about the conflicts of every age.

One can only imagine the dilemmas faced by leaders in times of war. This year has seen the commemoration of VJ day, and the final end of the Second World War with the defeat of Japan after the terrible atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Reflecting on the weighty responsibility of using these weapons, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said:

"This revelation of the secrets of nature, long mercifully withheld from man, should arouse the most solemn reflections in the mind and conscience of every human being capable of comprehension. We must indeed pray that these awful agencies will be made to conduce to peace among the nations, and that instead of wreaking measureless havoc upon the entire globe they may become a perpetual fountain of world prosperity."

Can the words of war really be beaten into ploughshares? The Prophets thought so, but it is up to us to show that it's possible.

[Revelation 22:1-5](#)

The closing chapters of Revelation take us from the place of tribulation to the place of heavenly peace. How often this seems aspirational rather than real, but in Biblical terms it is part of the great hope that we are never abandoned by the God of Israel who will never go back on the covenant made with humanity, following the great flood. The image here is powerfully visual, and returns us to the Eden of Genesis, thus in the canon of Scripture providing perfect symmetry. God our good Makar (creator/poet) finds a way for us to return to the source of all that is good. In my church at Greenbank in Edinburgh, the main window above the communion table contains glorious stained glass designed by Alexander Strachan and made in 1928 (1), not far away in the Strachan studio at Balcarres Street. It is the scene of the heavenly court, presided over by the Redeemer and the Lamb, and with the elemental forces of the world held in check by angels bearing great swords. It often seems that the only way to stop our human tragedy of war is to hand everything over to God. But this reassurance of our ultimate home with God, that God is in charge, does not alter our responsibility to act to stop war and to prevent conflict. Yes, the promise of the ultimate care of God is there. The same promise that is proclaimed in Isaiah. But we have

work to do to bring people safely to the end of their days and to receive the fulfilment of the promise then, rather than in premature death through conflict.

[1] See Donald G.M. Mackay, Guide to the Stained Glass Windows in Greenbank Parish Church, Edinburgh: The Revelation Window, p10

<https://d3hgrlq6vacptf.cloudfront.net/5f41804a8eafe/content/pages/documents/1431897554.pdf>



Picture courtesy of <https://www.facebook.com/GreenbankParishChurchEdinburgh/>

Matthew 5:38-48

Matthew's portrayal of Jesus as standing in the line of Moses is amplified in the journey up the mountain in chapter five, echoing the ascent of Mount Sinai by Moses for the giving of the Law. Remember that Matthew has Jesus say that not a letter will be removed from the Law, and that Jesus has come to fulfil and not negate the Law. The Sermon on the Mount, which appears at the start of chapter five, is an astonishing manifesto that follows the drift of the New Testament: the poor, vulnerable, and defenceless will be the special recipients of God's grace and favour. The Beatitudes in (5:1-11) are God's manifesto, and need to be set against the parts of the Law that seem so harsh. So we hear in this passage the deepening of the Law as Jesus draws on the great commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself. It's a counterintuitive development that reveals how challenging Jesus must have been in his time. Embrace the "cruciform theology" of vulnerability, risk and pain in order to show the true face of God. We are to go beyond the terms of the law and find mercy and reconciliation in every situation. This should shake all of us when we find that

although we are on board with the idea of peace and reconciliation, it may only on our terms and without commitment to the necessary effort of giving up what we might feel that we are entitled to, or the grievances that we may hold.

Sermon ideas

Standard in-church service

In 2020 we may well be struggling to hold our usual type of Remembrance Sunday services. What then will be the key things that we will try to include in any online or physically distanced worship?

It may be that we can use the distancing and masking as a counterpoint to the theme of the day. We are talking about the need for reconciliation, yet our distancing speaks of the human frailty that tears us apart. Is there something of this frailty in our tendency towards conflict? It takes a tremendous effort to bring back together those who have been set against each other. It's easy for masks to be seen as a defence rather than a loving kindness that speaks of our intention to safeguard the wellbeing of others as well as ourselves. Has COVID-19 strengthened our resolve or merely amplified a tendency towards the "survival of the fittest" in global terms? Is our humanity finding a better way to live globally, recognising our global vulnerability through the inter-connected nature of people and planet? Perhaps the liturgical dimension of worship for Remembrance Sunday in 2020 might be used to highlight both our current distancing and the hope of working together towards an enduring closeness, both in terms of the eradication of COVID-19, and the way we live together on this planet. Paul's universally applicable ethic for living in Romans 12 might be worth weaving into the service this year.

Texts of renewal

Today's texts from Isaiah, Revelation, and Matthew, might all be said to be "texts of renewal". Isaiah looks to a future of return from deportation and exile, wondering about how the Temple might be renewed and what society will be like. Revelation looks beyond a position of persecution under the empire of Rome, and Matthew tussles with the Jesus movement's negotiation of its Jewish identity alongside that of Gentile culture. The preacher might focus on the hopeful emphasis of new starts which honour the service and commitment of the past whilst imagining a better future.

A Remembrance Sunday-themed school discussion

These readings would make an excellent basis for a discussion with Secondary School RMPS classes about the relationship of war and the Judeo-Christian tradition, and a good opportunity to look at some Biblical texts in class. Perhaps the Revelation reading, along

with the story of the Greenbank window as a visual aid, could be used to explore the material culture around remembrance of the war dead, and how the experience of war was understood through a faith lens. The ongoing volatility of the geographical setting of Revelation might help to connect the ancient world, the experience of our more recent ancestors, and the ongoing conflicts of the Middle East today.

Prayers

Approach to God

Gather us into Your presence, God of peace.

We trust that Your vision for the world –
the great creation of Your imagination,
entrusted to us as a place for our flourishing –
is still there behind all the challenges of our lives.

We come today remembering that even in the darkest of days,
Your flame of hope and new life flickers
drawing us on to find the good
and to illuminate the world with Your Gospel of love.

Help us to find You in the smallest of things
and the most ordinary of our experiences.
For You are the great source of our being
and the power that sustains us through Your Holy Spirit.
When we search hard for You,
we may miss Your presence in the everyday -
so, help us to look out for You -
in the face of friend and stranger,
in the wonder and beauty of our world,
in the complexity of design
in the creativity of artist and scientist.

Confession

We live in You,
the great mystery of our being
which is beyond our understanding –
yet revealed –in the life, death, and resurrection of Your Son.
You are there underpinning our lives,
offering to us all that we need to live well.
All too often we grasp after our prosperity and our safety,

building walls of self-sufficiency,
storing up great resources in the barns of our nation,
finding “the other” and difference to be a threat to us.
We fall into ways of war when Your ways are of peace.
On this day of remembrance,
when we pay tribute to those who have given so much
when war became the way,
we confess the faults of nations who have gone to war
and missed Your ways of peace,
and hold all of this before You in the silence now.....

Silence for an appropriate length of time

Kyrie Eleison: Lord have mercy upon us

[this could be said, or a sung version e.g., CH4 777 could be used]

Declaration of forgiveness

God of all,
Your ways are of mercy,
Your heart is for reconciliation,
so help us to accept the hand of forgiveness that You offer.
Help us to leave behind what has weighed us down,
to seek the ways of friendship and peace,
and to trust that You want the best for us.
Bring us the peace of being part of Your offering of forgiveness,
and to embrace our role of being peacemakers in the course of our ordinary lives.

Collect prayer

Lord of the ages,
our hope in times of trouble,
and our consolation in grief;
bring us a spirit of renewal,
so that Your people may honour those who have given their lives
in service to their country in conflict.
May their service kindle in us the desire for peace and unity,
which is Your hope for all people.
This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen

Thanksgiving and intercession

Hear us now as we offer our prayers of thanksgiving
for all the good in our lives.

On this day, we hold with gratitude the service of those who are peacemakers
in their service of our country.

We are grateful for a vision that will hold the darker forces of our humanity in check
with an ethos of cooperation, harmony and mutual flourishing.

We pray for the dedicated service of our armed forces in all the generations,
remembering especially those who still remain with us from the Second World War.

We thank You for their testimony
which reminds us of the tragedy of conflict.

Help us to hear it
even as we honour the sacrifices made in search of the good.

Ubi caritas et amor..... [The Taizé chant is found at CH4 801, or it could be said
responsively]

On this day when we are drawn together from many backgrounds,
and with faith flickering, strong, or with no faith,
we thank You that there are times and causes
around which we can all rally for the common good.

Help us to find that common ground more,
and to work through our differences.

May the example of Jesus, His boundary-crossing life,
His open-hearted embrace of all peoples,
be the inspiration for our weary and wounded world.

In the visions of Isaiah and Revelation,
Your faithful people have penned the dreams and challenges of our deepest thinkers,
our most creative and perceptive voices.

So we give thanks for the people who will look at our world
and will be the dreamers.

We pray to for the fixers:

for the people who will take the dreams and make them reality.

So we hold before You all of our leaders,
praying for tenacity, energy, and an open-eyed, open-hearted vision
for our communities and the world.

Ubi caritas et amor.....

On this day of remembrance,
we pray for those who have lost loved-ones in conflict,
and through the collateral damage of war.
We think of those close to home in our army, navy and air force.
We remember those on the other side to us in conflict,
and we think of the deep scars of conflict that mark our world
whenever there is war.

May our remembering be for new beginnings,
so that lives lost are the foundations of new worlds.
May the vision of the prophets be our vision too.
May Your forgiveness be our forgiveness.

Ubi caritas et amor.....

God of the cross and the empty tomb,
God of the road to Emmaus
and the breakfast on the shore.
You have shown us in Jesus the way that is beyond death,
so hold us in the faith of Your future.
Help us to rest in the confidence of new light and life,
to trust that those we have loved and lost have returned to You,
and that our own walk is the way home
where You wait for us in the mystery of eternal life.

May our prayers rise to You like incense,
God our maker, our saviour and sustainer.

Amen

Blessing

May the God of love fill Your heart with peace
and send You into the world to live it.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,
be with You and those You love,
this day and always

Amen

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.

A [suggested playlist of songs from CH4 for Remembrance Day](#) can be found on the Church of Scotland website.

- “If the war goes on” [I will not sing alone, Wild Goose Publications] – is a haunting hymn of hopeful resistance to the narrative of conflict in so many places and an encouragement to the Church to renew its vision of peace. A choir or soloist would be best for this. The style is hymn-like with a timeless and universal quality to the music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znxADLz7H7E>
- CH4 11 – Psalm 20 – with words by John Bell that reflect the elements of thanksgiving for what is good in our lives, the realistic recognition of the ways in which humanity fails to live up to God’s hopes, and a vision for a better future. It has a lovely haunting melody, and could make a good solo to follow the two-minute silence, or immediately prior to the sermon to focus us on the mix of feelings that are contained in today’s service. The music lends itself to a gentle folk style, and instruments such as guitar, violin, cello, flute, and penny whistle could all be used to good effect
- CH4 14 – “The Lord’s my shepherd” – Psalm 23. A loved hymn familiar to most, which speaks of God being with us always
- CH4 54 – “Lord, you have always been our home” (Psalm 90) – is often used on Remembrance Sunday, reminding us of our frailty and smallness in the bigger picture of God’s reality. The other side of this is the encouragement to seize the day and live well. Do not waste your life in conflict – find a better way. This is a wonderful setting of some of Psalm 90, particularly using the tune Athchuinge, known to some as a theme tune for the National Mod. It is well worth adding to the repertoire, and is easily singable. If not known, the first two verses could be sung by a soloist or choir, and then the congregation could join in for verses 3-5

- CH4 81 – “I to the hills will lift mine eyes” – Psalm 121. A hymn that reminds us that our help in times of trouble and distress is in God
- CH4 153 – “Great is thy faithfulness” – A hymn of praise that God is close to us and remains constant in his affection for us
- CH4 159 – “Lord, for the years” – a favourite hymn of trust that God will show us positive ways forward in our national life: renewal is the dominant note here. This would be a great closing hymn for the service
- CH4 161 – “O God, our help in ages past” – A well-known hymn that recounts God’s presence with us and promise to be with us in the future. Churches with skilled organists might like to pick up the melody which underpins the fugue of J.S. Bach’s Prelude and Fugue in E flat Major
- CH4 182 – “Now thank we all our God” – a classic hymn of thanksgiving; a great way to conclude the service
- CH4 192 – “All my hope on God is founded” – a robust hymn, great for a large congregation, which speaks of placing our trust in God rather than the ways of humanity (both tunes are excellent)
- CH4 260 – “Eternal Father, strong to save” – known as the Naval Hymn, it speaks of God’s power in creation and its refrain reminds us to pray for those who find themselves upon the power of the seas
- CH4 361 – “Forgiveness is your gift” – a beautiful Skye folk melody, lovely for a music group, to accompany Ian Fraser’s expression of God’s forgiveness that leads to new beginnings
- CH4 528 – “Make me a channel of your peace” – a popular setting of the hymn of St Francis, which encourages us to think about our vocation in Christian living
- CH4 562 – “Through the love of God our Saviour” – A hymn that reminds us that God will reconcile all things to Godself
- CH4 580 – “Abide with me” – A hymn of grief that seeks God to be with us

- CH4 704 – “I vow to thee, my country” – A hymn of dedication to nation and to God, and speaks of the Kingdom of God in the second verse
- CH4 706 – “For the healing of the nations” – A hymn that speaks of the hope for peace to reign upon our world.
- CH4 710 – “‘I have a dream’, a man once said” – great words to a very well-known tune (Repton, used for Dear Lord and Father of Mankind). Cleverly drawing together resonances of Martin Luther King, Jesus, and the Prophets, this is a great hymn of encouragement – we can find unity and peace. It is in our hands.
- CH4 712 – “What shall we pray for those who died” – A hymn for peace for all who have known war. John Bell’s words, created in partnership with the Carnwadric Parish Church Worship Group, dig into the human experiences of war and remembrance, with clear-eyed recognition that we can be tempted by voices which make war seem like a good idea in support of a cause.
- CH4 715 – “Behold! the mountain of the Lord” – a Remembrance Sunday classic sung to the tune Glasgow. The paraphrase picks up on the themes of a mountain-top banquet of peace which transforms our warring ways.
- CH4 721 – “We lay our broken world” – this beautiful hymn with its simple and wistful melody is clear-eyed in recognising the broken aspects of our humanity, but ultimately offers a vision of renewal that encourages us to live towards a better world.
- CH4 726 – “When we are living, we are in the Lord” – a hymn that reminds us that we all belong to God
- CH4 737 – “Will your anchor hold in the storms of life” – the Boys Brigade hymn, if you have a BB unit parading it may be appropriate to include this hymn
- CH4 740 – “For all the saints” – a hymn that reminds us of the communion we hold with those no longer alive
- Congregations may sing the first verse of ‘God save our gracious King’ (CH4 703), traditionally after the Benediction, or sing all three verses as a hymn 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'.
- If singing in our congregations is restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

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

- How inclusive was the worship?
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different "Spiritual Styles"?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?

Did it function well as a whole?

How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?

- How balanced was the worship?
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/
community?
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

Useful links

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](#)

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