



The Church of Scotland

Weekly Worship
21st February 2021

Taking part in today's service:-

Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly, The Church of Scotland
Rev Jill Clancy, Prison Chaplain HMP Barlinnie & Kilmarnock
Mathew McKenzie, Camperdown & Lochee Ministry, Dundee
David Austin, St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall
Rev Fraser Macnaughton, St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

With music from Balfron Parish Church, Fischy Music, and Ruth & Joy Everingham

Introduction – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Hi everybody. Can I be really blunt with you? If you think that God is only to be found within a church building, then your idea of God is somewhat lacking. The truth of the matter is that God is to be found everywhere, anywhere, at any time. If you can't find God at the kitchen sink, if you can't find God in the everyday ordinary places of life, then something's missing.

What does it mean to talk about God being with us? It means that he is with us all the time and wherever we are.

So of course many of us long for the day when we will be properly back in our church buildings but in the meantime let's meet God in worship every day and in every way.

I'm thankful as usual to all those who are contributing in this service of worship today - thankful for their time, their energies, their commitment. And as always, I'm thankful too, to the technical teams behind the scenes putting these services together.

So folks, wherever you are, whatever you're going to be up to today, let's pause now and recognise that God is with us. Shall we worship together!

Hymn – 'Build your Kingdom Here' from Balfron Parish Church

Come set Your rule and reign
In our hearts again
Increase in us we pray
Unveil why we're made



Come set our hearts ablaze with hope
Like wildfire in our very souls
Holy Spirit, come invade us now
We are Your church
We need Your power in us

We seek Your kingdom first
We hunger and we thirst
Refuse to waste our lives
For You're our joy and prize
To see the captive hearts released
The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace
We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause

*We are Your church
We pray revive this earth*

*Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here
We pray*

Unleash Your kingdom's power
Reaching the near and far
No force of Hell can stop
Your beauty changing hearts
You made us for much more than this
Awake the kingdom seed in us
Fill us with the strength and love of Christ

*We are Your church
We are the hope on earth*

*Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere*



*Build Your kingdom here!
We pray!
Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here!
We pray!*

Prayer of Approach – Rev Jill Clancy, Prison Chaplain HMP Barlinnie & Kilmarnock

This is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it.

O Lord of heaven and earth we come rejoicing in our hearts that you, the one who flung the stars into space, the God who created the whole universe, the one who never changes, the God who is the same today, yesterday and forever would be interested in us. We thank you, and we thank you that as we come together in this time of worship you are closer than we could ever imagine. For you are a God who is not out there, you are not at the other side of a computer screen. No, you our creative and loving God, you are right here by our side, in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit and so we thank you.

We praise you for your constant love shown towards us that is new every morning and we praise you for all you have done for us in Christ, revealing in Christ your greatness and goodness, filling our lives to overflowing with your unfailing love.

O God you are amazing, you are worthy of all our praise for you have blessed us in more ways than we can ever begin to number, your goodness greater than we can ever hope to measure, you love beyond anything we can even begin to fathom and yet we know you as a living reality in our hearts, as the one who gives shape and purpose to all of life.

But God we know that we haven't always realised that you are with us, we haven't always felt assured, we haven't always seen that purpose in our lives. These days have been testing on us all and for many we have felt our spirits drown in fear of the future. So may we take this time now to confess to you how far we have gone from your love, from your truths, from your light and hope. Forgive us when we have only thought about self and not about those around us. Forgive us when we have seen no hope, no light. Forgive us when we have taken our frustration and our anxiety out on those whom we love the most.

O God we know that you are slow to anger and abounding in love, so as you forgive us help us to forgive ourselves and be inwardly renewed. As we reflect today on the baptism of our Lord Jesus



Christ and the Spirit coming down on him like a dove may we know of that same Spirit resting on us filling us with your peace.

Lord thank you that you never left us alone O Lord, but the Holy Spirit is our continual companion on our journey of life, guiding, teaching, renewing, encouraging, enabling us every day.

So hear these our prayers, accept this time of worship we bring, and speak to us through all that we share. Deepen our sense of wonder, increase our sense of joy, strengthen our sense of trust, encourage our sense of thanksgiving. And help us to know you more fully in our hearts so that we may show your greatness more completely in our lives and live always to your glory. Through Christ our Lord we pray. AMEN

All Age Talk – Mathew McKenzie, Camperdown & Lochee Ministry, Dundee

PUPPET SKETCH - TEMPTATION

Matthew: Hi everybody, welcome to our church Zoom call.

We use these calls to catch up with some families and just chat about life during these strange times.

We're just waiting on a couple more people..... here they come now.

Granny Smith and Sophie appear

Matthew: Hi Granny Smith, Hi Sophie... How are you both today?

Granny Smith mouthing at the screen

Matthew: Ehmm Granny Smith.... You need to unmute yourself, you know... the microphone button?

Granny: Oh there we are, I'm not used to this technology stuff, I only got an iPad last week and I'm still learning what to actually do with it.

Matthew: Well I'm glad you managed to get on, how are you doing this week?

Granny: Oh you know, pretty much the same, just plodding along.....

It's just so hard to see people waving at the window or on Zoom and not being able to go out and have a proper chat or a hug!

It's just so tempting.

I've been chatting with a few of the other grannys and I think we're all going to try and meet up in the park for a little bit, just to have a good chat..... who know's I might even bump into the grandkids!

It's not like I'm going to hurt anyone.



Matthew: Now Granny, are you sure that's a wise idea? I know it's difficult but these rules have been put in place for all our health, should we really be going around just breaking them whenever we feel like it?

Granny: Well I'm sure once won't hurt, just for a little bit.

Matthew: Hmmm, I'm not sure, let's put that aside for now.
Sophie, how have you been getting on?

Sophie: I'm ok, just doing some home school stuff. I've been chatting to my friends though and they're planning to meet up this weekend and I'm really tempted to join them.
Being stuck in the house all the time is so boring and I really want to see my friends in person!

Matthew: Oh Sophie, do you think that's a good idea? Have you not seen what's on the news about meeting only one person from one other household?

Sophie: I know Matthew, but it's just so difficult when all my friends are doing it, surely it wouldn't hurt anyone if I joined in, would it?

Matthew: Y'know, both of your situations remind me of a story I read in my bible and a certain verse from Mark Chapter 1. It says
"At once the Spirit made him go into the desert, where he stayed forty days, being tempted by Satan."

Jesus is sent into an unknown place to be tested by different temptations but he doesn't give in and builds his Kingdom even more!

This pandemic is sort of like our unknown place and we might be tempted to take the easy option which is sometimes the wrong option but we need to trust in God that he will get us through this and give us the strength to keep going until we get back to familiar times.

So do you think you guys can keep following the rules and see what comes in the next announcement?

Granny: I suppose so. I should be setting a good example for those young ones.

Sophie: and I shouldn't be breaking rules or putting anyone at risk either.

Matthew: Well I'm glad you guys agree.

How about we say a quick prayer before we end our call, and our other friends on the call can join too, when I say "God protect us," you can say after, "and be our guide."

Now lets pray together.....

Father God, We Thank You for this new week of fellowship where we can come together virtually to worship You.

Help us through the week ahead, God protect us.... And be our guide.

Lord, we pray for anyone we know suffering from Covid or any other illness and pray for your healing over them, God protect us.... And be our guide.



We know it is difficult Lord but please help us stay on the right path by following the rules for school, social distancing and the rule for living in your word. God protect us.... And be our guide.

Amen

Well guys, thanks so much for joining me today and I hope we can catch you again soon. Bye!!

Song – Bad Times won't last, Fischy Music

When the rain is pouring, when the winds are blowing
and it feels like it's always gonna be this way
When the colour's faded, when the world is jaded
and it feels like it's always gonna be this way

*Sometimes it's hard to see that (x 2)
Bad times won't last nothing lasts forever
good times will come, things will get better*

When your dream's been taken, when your hopes are shaken
and it feels like it's always gonna be this way
When the news is spoken, when your heart is broken
and it feels like it's always gonna be this way

*Sometimes it's hard to see that (x 2)
Bad times won't last nothing lasts forever
good times will come, things will get better*

Bad times (bad times) Good times (good times) (x2)
Bad times won't last nothing lasts forever
good times will come, things will get better

Who oh oh oh (x3)
it's gonna get better [repeat x 3]

Scripture Reading – David Austin, St Magnus Cathedral

Mark 1:9-15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens open and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."



The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Sermon – Rev Fraser Macnaughton, St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall

It is no mystery why the early followers of Jesus often referred to themselves as people of the way.

The Greek word for way is "hodos", not to be confused with the Glaswegian colloquialism 'haud on'....and is often translated into English as path or road. The writer of Mark, the first written of the four biblical Gospels, is devoted to explaining what this path was all about. For Mark, it is first and foremost about the importance of discipleship.

Mark starts his gospel with Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River. There is no birth story, no immaculate conception, no little town of Bethlehem, no baby in the manger and no wise men or shepherds. The central focus and theme of the book of Mark has to do with Jesus' own journey into Jerusalem. Everything prior to that journey is part of the build up for that event. And everything after is a way of explaining its meaning. All of this leads to the ultimate question that Mark asks of his readers, "will you follow him?"

According to Mark's story immediately after Jesus' initiation ceremony by John, Jesus goes out into the desert. If there is any historicity to this story, this would have been a time when Jesus had to sort out his relationship with the Infinite Mystery we call God. It is impossible, of course, to have any idea about what the issues might have been in this young man's mind, but it seems clear that he felt he had to do something to make a difference. His people were suffering beyond imagination.

He must have struggled with the options. Was it John's way, who was likely a Zealot? Was it to be the way of the more radical Sicarii rebels? Was it the way of power and influence or was it the power of love and compassion?

Although Mark gives us little information about this struggle in the desert, it seems clear that Jesus chose a path of giving up all attempts at earthly power, violence and further hatred. Jesus apparently chose the path of letting go, or emptying oneself.

Today we might consider the "oneself" term here as ego or ego needs. This kind of spiritual path can open the heart and give the courage to love recklessly.

When we look at the entire story of Jesus, including his teachings as well as his life, it seems clear his path always presumed a spiritual death before one could experience a sense of new life or rebirth. His Way required a death to the old before there could be a birth to a new way of seeing, a new way of understanding and experiencing life. The writer of John's gospel understood this



clearly when he wrote of the need to be born again of water and Spirit if one wants to experience this Way of God.

And what is that new way? It is a way that is driven by love rather than fear, even the fear of death. Like so many of the great spiritual teachers throughout history, Jesus understood we are motivated primarily by two energies. One is love and the other is fear. Nothing saps our ability to love and to be loved more than fear. In fact love and fear are diametrically opposed energies. One who is motivated by love cannot be easily hampered by fear and for most people this is a different way of living.

Far too many of us still see the world through a lens of scarcity. We see the world with limitations not abundance. We live in fear of not having enough. We want our share and a little extra for safety's sake. We feel the need to hoard and to protect. We want control so we can't be hurt. We want guarantees. We want protection. We want to know the destination before we start a journey. We limit our love to limit our potential hurt. And if the pandemic has taught us anything, it is surely that living this way is not authentic or meaningful.

The way of Jesus was very different then and still is for most people. Jesus invites us into a path of love without guarantees except that we will discover a new perspective and a new experience of life. He invites us into a relationship with the Infinite Mystery we call God. He says if we truly follow this path we can learn to live without anxiety and fear. "There is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear" as the first letter of John tells us.

So during this season of Lent, if we take it seriously, we are asked—invited really—to journey with Jesus to our Jerusalem wherever that is and whatever it is, without fear. If we want to experience the promised new life, we must be willing to take this journey. It will require some deep soul searching and hopefully a willingness to empty ourselves of those things, those thoughts, those emotions that we hold onto out of insecurity, or our hurts, or our losses. I'm not suggesting for a minute that this is ever easy. For many of us, it is a lifetime journey.

It is a path that challenges us to focus on the abundance and the blessing and to be motivated by love. It is a way that does not give in to fear. It is a way that acknowledges our interconnectedness to all life and one that trusts that in spite of all of its short comings, our lives are a gift and this world in which we live and are part of is truly marvellous and good.

Prayer of Intercession - The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

'Pride of man and earthly glory, sword and crown betray his trust; all that human toil can fashion, tower and temple, fall to dust. But Gods power, hour by hour, is my temple and my tower.'

Though much of the country is now in the grip of winter, we know that spring will come by your command, and new life with it. So we have every confidence in turning to you in prayer - in bringing to you our heartfelt longings, our deepest concerns.



Hear us then, Loving Lord

- as we pray for our loved ones
- as we pray for our churches - especially through this pandemic - that you would show us new ways to be
- and as we pray for our communities, folks who are hurting, broken, folks who are anxious, folks who are lost, folks who are burdened with guilt from what was done in days gone by. Come we pray, free the captives.

And we pray too for those who have been bereaved, directly as a result of Covid or otherwise, in these days. For your peace we pray.

Yes, all things come and go. Much is reduced to rubble and ruin. But you, Lord, are forever. We trust you now and for all the days to come.

Amen.

Hymn – What a friend we have in Jesus, performed by Ruth & Joy Everingham

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer
Oh, what peace we often forfeit
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge
Take it to the Lord in prayer
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer;
In His arms He'll take and shield you,
You will find a solace there.



Blessing – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

And now, go in peace and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you all and remain with you today and for evermore.

Amen.