



The Church of Scotland

Weekly Worship

14th March 2021

Taking part in today's service is

Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly, The Church of Scotland
Mark Evans DCS, Head of Spiritual Care, NHS Fife
Rev Bryan Kerr, Greyfriars Parish Church, Lanark
Rev Gillian Paterson, Wellesley Parish Church, Methil
Karen Wallace, Children, Family & Youth Development Co-ordinator, Presbytery of Glasgow
Lisa Whyte, Wellesley Parish Church, Methil

With music from members of National Methodist Choir of Great Britain, The Northern Baptist Association and Fischy Music

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

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

Welcome to worship all of you. It's my privilege as Moderator to be offering these services of worship throughout the period of lockdown. And today, I want to encourage us all to hang in there. Yes to stand strong and to keep going.

You know, throughout all of Christian history the Church has faced innumerable challenges, many of them have a much greater magnitude than what we're going through right now. I know it's difficult. I know it's frustrating. I know there have been times where perhaps we've felt like giving up. But this is not beyond us and it certainly isn't beyond our Lord, who calls us, who is with us and equips us to face every situation.

So yes, let us keep going knowing that before too long, all being well, we will be able to open our buildings again, at least for limited numbers and then beyond that, for increasing numbers. We hope and pray for that day, and until then, we continue.

Thank you in advance to all those who are taking part in today's service and as always for those who put it together behind the scenes. So I say again, this is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.



Hymn – Bless the Lord oh my soul (10,000 reasons), performed by National Methodist Choir of Great Britain

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name
Bless You Lord

And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near



And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore
Forevermore

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name
Yes I will worship Your Holy name
I'll worship Your Holy name

Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name
Jesus I will worship Your Holy name
Worship Your Holy name

Prayer of Approach – Mark Evans DCS, Head of Spiritual Care, NHS Fife

Let us pray

In quiet living rooms
and in busy wards – Christ offers his light.

In country walks
and deserted streets – Christ offers his light.

In moments of joy
and in times of tears – Christ offers his light.

When faith is strong
or when our beliefs are shaken – Christ offers his light.



Today in our worship
scattered yet united;
God, in his love, offers the light of Christ.

Loving God,
as we come before you in worship
we give you thanks and praise
that you sent your son
to be a light in the darkness of this world.

We come today as your children,
bringing to you our hopes and our fears
our laughter and our tears
our dreams and our regrets.

Time and space cannot constrain you
for the universe is yours and we are your children.

In the midst of the uncertainty
in the midst of the present time
your love is constant and sure.

In love you continue to reach out to us;
offering light and healing and new life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We worship and adore you Lord
for all that you have given us
and for sending your beloved son to be with us;
showing us the way to new life
showing us the way to a new order
showing us the way to you our God.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us
that through our worship today
we may hear your voice and know your presence
and receive your blessing of light.

Loving God
we are aware that at times we have lived in the shadows
choosing the dark rather than the light.

So now, before the full company of heaven and earth
we confess to you that we have sinned in thought, word and deed
by what we have done and by what we have failed to do.



Lord of life

forgive us when we have forgotten you

forgive us when we have remained quiet or failed to act

forgive us when we should spoken more and done more.

Lord Have Mercy,

Christ have mercy,

Lord, have mercy upon us.

we remember, that God so loved the world

that he gave his only Son,

so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.

For this we give you thank O God.

Hear these prayers

which we offer to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord

who is the light of the world.

Amen

Scripture Reading – Lisa Whyte, Wellesley Parish Church, Methil

The reading from John, chapter 3, verses 14-21.

As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.

Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God's only Son. This is how the judgment works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. Those who do evil things hate the light and will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. But those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God.

Amen.



**All Age Talk – Karen Wallace, Children, Family & Youth Development Co-ordinator,
Presbytery of Glasgow**

I will be with you in a minute....I have lost something and I can't seem to find it. It is something very special to me. While I am searching, why don't you go and grab your something special and I will meet you back here in 2 seconds!

FOUND IT!

Have you ever lost something special to you? This is my special keyring. It might not look much, but means a lot to me. I was quite panicked and sad there for a moment when I thought I had lost it. This keyring has been right around the world with me! It reminds me of my family, my best friend and my favourite Disney character ever – Winnie -the-Pooh! I always keep it in my bag. It's small enough to take on the aeroplane with me, but large enough that I can hold it in my hands when I miss them!

But it's not that I am going anywhere at the moment apart from the supermarket, but I always need to know where it is or I feel sad that it is missing. Is that the same for you when you lose something special to you?

I even had a torch out and was shining the light in the bottom of my bag trying to find it! I have found it now – thank goodness!

Do you know what God's special thing is? Somehow I don't think it is a keyring! I know that God's something special thing is Jesus! His very own Son! But God didn't lose Jesus, he GAVE us his special thing!

There is a verse in the bible – you may have noticed it behind me! It is from John 3 and it can be found at verse 16.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his own Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.'

This is a very special verse in the Bible and you may have seen people with signs, a bit like mine behind me, that say JOHN 3 V16 on it, at football matches or events with lots of people at them because they want the whole world to know!

In verse 20 in John 3 it talks about God a shining a light into the world so we don't need to be in the darkness. We can help God shine his light too all around the world. I don't mean the wee torch I used earlier, I mean we can share the special things God has given us with others. Not our something special, not that anyone would really want my tatty keyring! Instead we can share Gods love for us just like it says in John 3 verse 16. We can send messages or cards to people who are lonely or who you miss from church or school. I can look out for my family and for my neighbours or I might just want to send someone a wee hello! Something we can all do - is pray! Pray for each



other that everyone knows how are special they are and that they can know all Gods light and love!

Some people might not think that God will love them, but God does! God so loved the whole world – the whole world! Do you believe that?

The good, the bad, the rich, the poor, the young, the sick, the healthy, the angry, the joyful – God loves us all! It a bit like my keyring here – I love my keyring, but it is a bit tatty, the bow won't stay tied, it's grubby, it's broken, but I love it very much and I was very sad when I couldn't find it! God loves us all just like that and much, much more!

Raise your hand if you are happy to know that God loves you! I am sorry that I can't see all the hands that are raised just now, but the people who live with you can see them and most importantly so can God!

So my challenge to you today is, I want you to shine that light and love from God with someone else this week. Send a wee hello message to someone who you think needs it, share something positive on your social media or give someone in your family a helping hand!

Lastly, look up John 3 v14 – 21 in your bible and look especially for that special verse (verse 16 if you get stuck!) and see if you can remember it!

God loves you so very, very much!

Let's pray together:

Dear God,

Thank you that you loved us so much you sent us Jesus.

We thank you for Jesus, who helps us, see you better.

Help us to do the same for others.

Amen.

Song – Kindness, Fischy Music

Kindness, kindness, kindness, kindness

Imagine, if every day, every one of us, showed a little kindness
not for reward, not for the rules, not to be seen, but JUST BECAUSE

Kindness, kindness, kindness, kindness

Imagine, if every day, every one of us, showed a little kindness
not for reward, not for the rules, not to be seen, but JUST BECAUSE



what would our homes be like?
what would our schools be like?
what would our towns be like?
what would our world be like?

Imagine, if every day, every one of us, showed a little kindness
not for reward, not for the rules, not to be seen, but JUST BECAUSE

Kindness, kindness, kindness, kindness

Sermon – Rev Gillian Paterson, Wellesley Parish Church, Methil

One of the privileges of parish ministry is listening to people's stories. I can recall sitting in many a living room, church sanctuary and hall, even on a bench on a beach, listening to someone pour out what life had thrown at them. Some of the tales are of loss – loss of a loved one, loss of a job, loss of a relationship that has turned sour, or even gone toxic.

Over the ten years here in Methil, I've also listened as people have told me about the battle with drugs, alcohol, gambling and petty crime. A familiar pattern has emerged in these stories. Comments like "no one ever told me they loved me", "I was left to get on with it myself", "I was told I was useless, worth nothing, would never achieve".

I think we can all understand why someone could end up believing they are worth nothing. Self esteem can be shattered in an instant. Self worth knocked down so easily. Social media is ruthless in its instant comments and those keyboard warriors who claim to know everything cause unending harm and difficulty.

But, it is for the people I have spoken about that John wrote some of the most well known words in the Bible: "For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son". Notice John writes that God so loved the world. The world that He created so perfectly and generously and then handed it over to all of us. Over many generations since the beginning of time, we have failed to keep it the way it should have been kept.

Pollution of rivers and seas with plastic that doesn't break down. Pollution of the air we breathe that is filled with carbon emissions and choking smog. Pollution of minds with hatred being promoted and wars begun over small issues. All of these are not what God intended, so He had to find a way to stop the world in its tracks, to cease the damage and to set the world back on the path of care and concern, compassion and kindness.

For thousands of years the Prophets had been telling the people that the Messiah would come. He would be the answer to all their prayers, and would restore the world that God had created so beautifully. The people were praying and hoping. Hoping just like the individuals I have spoken of who have been criticised, put down, condemned and told they are worthless.



You see, there's only so many times you can be made to feel inferior, stupid, or weak. Being mocked, talked down to, or bullied has an effect – and that effect is to feel unwanted, rejected and unloved. When that happens you either develop the hide of a rhinoceros, or the pain of feeling this way makes you crumble.

When you feel deeply unloved and rejected, you yearn to be loved and accepted, which is why this verse “For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son, has such an impact. The Gospel writer goes on to remind us that God didn't send His Son into the world to condemn and to hurt us, instead He came to save the world, and to show every single person how much they are loved and cared for.

In this season of Lent as we journey with Jesus to the cross, this verse is a strong and clear reminder of why Jesus died. He died because He loves us so much, it is a love that is all encompassing, deep and true, and never fails. God's love is the answer to the difficulties and evils of the world. If we look back over past generations and see what has blighted the world we might think of issues like slavery, torture and persecution, war and conflict, oppression by the rich against the poor, and so much more.

It was for all these situations and countless more that God sent His only, special, wonderful Son. Jesus came with the remedy to the world's problems. He walked and talked and shared with the people how to live, how to act and treat people, it was a road map out of the behaviour that was there in all levels of society. John continues “so that everyone who believes in me shall have eternal life”

There's the answer for the unloved, rejected, oppressed and condemned. Jesus came to tell you that you are loved, you are accepted, you are freed from oppression and you have a life to live. Whatever has happened, however life has worked out, regardless of the mistakes that have been made, You are loved. Loved without measure and loved completely.

That's the message of the cross. Rather than evil getting the upper hand, the authorities winning and silencing Jesus, the cross is a symbol of love. We are on a journey through this Lenten season, preparing to see Jesus lifted up, so that we can escape the condemnation of our detractors, the criticism and the shaming by those who want to bring us down, even escaping the darkness of our own thoughts that invade at times.

The gift of Jesus, God's only Son, is the answer to the darkness. He offers hope, and light and love. There's a beautiful world out there, just ready and waiting to welcome us all with open arms. The arms are full of hope, light and joy for everyone. Friends, this promise is for all of you so for a moment, I want you to hear your name in this verse so I will pause and ask you to say your name out loud instead of the words “the world”. Here's a promise: For God loved so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. Amen!



Prayer of Intercession - Rev Bryan Kerr, Greyfriars Parish Church, Lanark

We pray
and we listen
for the voice
and words of God

You are loved.
Yes you, the outcast;
you, the stranger;
you, the unloved;
you, the oppressed;
you, the rejected;

You are loved.
Yes you who seeks freedom;
you who longs for wholeness;
you who wants to throw in the towel;
you who wanders alone;
you, the life and soul of the party.

You are loved.
Yes you who needs to call the foodbank in order to feed your family today;
you who struggle with keeping your business afloat and supporting others in employment;
you who wrestle with the need to leave behind an abusive relationship;
you who feel you cannot return home because you've shared the fact you're gay with your family;
you who lie awake in hospital or at home after trying to end your life.

You are loved.
yes you who have told those who struggle to feed their family that they just need to learn to budget more carefully;
you who have stood by as people are subjected to racist abuse;
you who have taken to the streets to march against people who have a different understanding of faith from you;
you who have perpetuated the myth that men are better at some things than women;
you who have not been honest with people in your day to day living.

You are loved.
Not because you deserve it
but because of Love
because of Jesus
because of God
born into the world,
died in the world,
rose again into a new world.



You are loved.
as are all the people you think of,
all the people you bring to mind,
all of those we name before God,
and all of those we forget,
or ignore,
or pass-over.

You are loved.
Hear the words;
Believe the words;
Share the words;
Live the words.

You are loved;
Your neighbour is loved;
Your enemy is loved;
because of God.

Amen.

Hymn – To God be the Glory, recorded by the Northern Baptist Association

To God be the glory, great things he hath done:
so loved he the world that he gave us his son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the lifegate that all may go in.

Refrain:

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done.*

Oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God.
The vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. [Refrain]

Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see. [Refrain]



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

Now, all of you, go in peace. And may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore.

Amen.