



The Church of Scotland

Weekly Worship 9th May 2021

Taking part in today's service is

The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly
Rev Heather Stewart, OLM & Presbytery Clerk, Caithness
Ellie, Temple Anniesland, Glasgow
Philipe Teixeira, Youth Worker, Sandyford Henderson, Glasgow
Rev Fiona Gardner, Temple Anniesland, Glasgow
Rev Andrew Barrie, Pultneytown & Thrumster, Wick

With music Ellon Parish Church, Fischy Music and Dunblane Cathedral Choir

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

Hi everybody and welcome to worship.

As I'm recording this, last Sunday, I was in a church in person and it was wonderful to be back physically with others as we worshipped. But the church in question that was the first Sunday they had been open since the middle of March last year throughout all of that pandemic period. And I spoke to a woman that I met after the service and she said to me how much she had appreciated these digital services, that had been her lifeline to worship. And she spoke so appreciatively of the different folks that have taken part in the service, folks from all across the church and from all across Scotland.

So let me say today, as we begin a big thank you to those who are contributing to today service and to those who throughout all this period have given of themselves to make these services possible. And as I've said, week in and week out a real thank you to the tech team behind the scenes. Their job is a very important one though you never get to see them, without them, we would be nowhere at all.

So this is the day the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it as we worship God together.

Song 1 – I will offer up my life - Ellon Parish Church

I will offer up my life
In spirit and truth
Pouring out the oil of love
As my worship to You
In surrender I must give my every part
Lord receive the sacrifice
Of a broken heart

*Jesus what can I give what can I bring
To so faithful a friend to so loving a King*



*Saviour what can be said what can be sung
As a praise of Your name
For the things You have done
Oh my words could not tell not even in part
Of the debt of love that is owed
By this thankful heart*

You deserve my every breath
For You've paid the great cost
Giving up Your life to death
Even death on a cross
You took all my shame away
There defeated my sin
Opened up the gates of heaven
And have beckoned me in

Prayer of Approach – Rev Heather Stewart, OLM & Presbytery Clerk, Caithness

Lord of all being, throned a far, your glory flames from sun and star centre and soul of every sphere yet to each loving heart how near, let us pray.

Lord, we come today from all walks of life and different backgrounds and ages to worship our God who is Lord of creation. And we are amazed at your handiwork, the majesty of towering mountains and lowly valleys, of raging seas and trickling burns, of the delicate flowers and the mighty trees. We are amazed at the teeming life that occupies our planet earth, a place for every creature of land, air, and sea and yet out of all creation you chose human beings to have an intimate relationship with you.

Lord God, through your son, Jesus Christ and his death on the cross, you made known to us the greatness of your love, a love that is utterly reliable and encompasses everyone. That love understands that while some of us are full of joy this morning and eager to worship, that some are burdened down with the stresses of daily living. Some are wearied from tasks of serving and caring for others. Some of us are worried about what the future holds.

Thank you that you understand this Lord and you long for us to know that Jesus wants to take our burdens and set us free so we may experience the fullness of life that he promises. Such love frees us from the mistakes of the past, strengthens us in the present and enables us to look forward in hope.

So God in this time of worship today help us to respond to your call, to be followers of Jesus and to demonstrate that selfless love within the church and in our communities so that others will come to know the love of God for themselves.

And now we join together in saying the words that Jesus taught his disciples to say.

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 forever, amen.



Scripture Reading – Ellie, Temple Anniesland, Glasgow

John 15:9-17

“As the father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love just as I kept my father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

My command is this, love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead I have called you friends for everything I've learned from my father, I've made known to you. You

did not choose me but I have chosen you and appointed you so that you may go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. And so, whatever you ask in my name my father will give you.

This is my command, love each other.”

All Age Talk – Philippe Teixeira, Youth Worker, Sandyford Henderson, Glasgow

Hello, hello, boys and girls. I hope you're all well.

Today, we're going to do something really exciting. We're going to learn something really important, a commandment from Jesus himself.

The word of God, the Bible in the book of John 15:12-13 say this. "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." When Jesus revealed his commandment to us to love one another, Jesus also gave us the solution to fulfil this commandment which is to give our lives for our friends.

But to give our lives for our friends does not mean only to die for our friends but to experience the love of God at all times, in all circumstances in spite of regrets in health, in illness, in joy or in sadness. Giving life is also not being mean with your school friends, not bullying your friends, giving attention, affection, comfort, good advice, assistance, and protection. It's giving and not asking for it back. It's helping and not looking for a reward for what we do. It's truly loving one another as Jesus commanded.

You know, God's love is an eternal love and the model of eternal love is Jesus who gave his life for us on the cross. This gospel, the gospel of John, Jesus tells us that his friends are those who keep his commandment. So to make sure that we are friends of Jesus, we need to love one another, we need to love our friends. The commandment of Jesus is love. And if we are living this love, the book of John say that we are no longer servants of Jesus, but friends. How amazing is that?

If we are obedient to Jesus we become his friend, wow. And a friend of Jesus is one who is very close to him in prayer, in intimacy, but above all, the one who act according to his word, the Bible. So boys and girls do you want to be called a friend of Jesus?

If you want to be called a friend of Jesus you need to be obedient to his commandment and love one another as he loved us.



Song 2 – Love, love, love – Fischy Music

Even when you fail the test
Even when you make a mess
Even when you're tried your best
It's always gonna be here

Every time you're feeling strong
Every time you sing a song
Every time you play along
It's always gonna be here

Love, love, love It's always gonna be here
Love, love, love It's always gonna be here
Love, love, love It's always gonna be here
Love, love, love It's always gonna be here

Even when it's such a pain
Even when it's down the drain.
Even when you feel the strain
It's always gonna be here

Every time you feel the beat
Every time you move your feet
Every time you're on the streets
It's always gonna be here

Love, love, love It's always gonna be here
Love, love, love It's always gonna be here
Love, love, love It's always gonna be here
Love, love, love It's always gonna be here

Nothing in the world, hey
Nothing in the world, hey
Nothing in the world's quite like it
Nothing in the world, hey
Nothing in the world, hey
Nothing in the world's quite like it

Always gonna be, always gonna be
Always gonna be, always gonna be
Always gonna be, always gonna be
Always gonna be here
Love, love, love It's always gonna be here



Sermon – Rev Fiona Gardner, Temple Anniesland, Glasgow

John chapter 15:9-17, the inspiration and joy of loving one another. Poets and philosophers have long since tried to define the nature of love. But I think words can seem so small when trying to define such a big concept.

Sometimes the words of hymns and praise songs can help like the words of hymn 622. We sing a love that sets all people free. Such a powerful hymn, talking of the love that is a living love that serves without counting the costs, that is unafraid to be itself, that is radiant and brings to our wounds healing grace and the prayer here is for that living love of Christ to live in our hearts today and it is just so beautiful.

Perhaps the most amazing description of love of course, is from 1 Corinthians 13 and this is from the message paraphrase. Love never gives up, love cares more for others than for self, love doesn't want what it doesn't have, love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others. Isn't not always me first. Doesn't fly off the handle. Doesn't keep score of the sins of others. Doesn't revel when others grovel, but takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything. Trust God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end. Love never dies. Another gorgeous description that gives us just an inkling into the power of love. And we're thinking of these things because we're thinking of verse nine of our passage where we are confronted with the words of Jesus. I have loved you even as my father has loved you, remain in my love. Jesus loved his disciples as the father has loved him. An extraordinary statement about the nature of love.

When we think of the father's love for Jesus, so powerful and tender, profound and far-reaching. Even though the father knew that Jesus was going to suffer on the cross to take away the sins of the world, he was willing to allow this so that his love may cascade out through time and space and that same love flows out to us today and touches each of us through his Holy Spirit.

As a parent, it can be so tough watching our children suffer when they have lost their job or when they're hurting. We want to make everything better for them. But often all we can do is watch and pray to support them as they try and find their own way through to healing. Love is such a strange thing because it's often not extravagant gestures, but often just small acts of grace or sometimes even refraining from doing something. God had this kind of perfect parental love for his son. And it's the same quality of love that Jesus had for his disciples. So he calls his disciples his friends to remain in his love and obey his commandments. Commandments summed up in loving God with all your heart and your soul and your mind and your strength and loving your neighbour as yourself. And we're told that if we do this we can even be filled with joy.

These can be difficult words to hear because many people are not feeling very joyful just now. Even though the virus numbers are down in this country and the restrictions are lessening, there are so many choices and changes, so many worries and pressures, so much suffering and bereavement where people have not had the time and the space to be able to process their grief. So many people are talking of feeling isolated, worrying that they've been forgotten by the world and even forgotten by God. And you know, whether we are in a peaceful place today or a more precarious place, we need to be reminded of God's love and to be able to receive it. We are all wired differently. Many people connect with God through his words, through reading it and finding challenge and comfort in different passages.



Maybe through the struggles of the Psalmist or the promises of our Lord. Sometimes we also receive God's love by going for a walk, the beauty of creation or listening to a beautiful piece of praise music, or just having space to be still, or we might reflect on how Jesus showed love. Whether it was stopping to speak to a small man up a tree or showing acceptance to the marginalised, or bringing healing to the people with leprosy or the women who were unwell. Maybe we might engage with some Lectio Divina to relish a word that really speaks to us in our specific situation. Or maybe to imagine what it would have been like if we'd been in an encounter with Jesus, what would he have said to us?

You know, God is so generous in his love. There are abundant ways that he has of attracting our attention and reminding us of his incredible and transformational love for each one of us. Being loved by God in Christ is the best thing ever. It brings forgiveness and peace and comfort and identity. And Jesus wants us to know this love and to remain in it, what a wonderful privilege. And if we remain in the father's love then we can find joy for even when things go wrong we know we are still loved by the father and so we are strengthened and encouraged. We receive that love. And then Jesus tells us to love one another for we are now his friends if we do what he has commanded. So having received God's love, found ways to remain in that love how do we show it to others? How do we bear lasting fruits?

Loving others with the radical love of Jesus is so beautiful and all encompassing, often costly but it's so essential to our core, to love in such a way as to be willing to lay down your love for your friends. Think what that might look like. It could be the person caring for a loved one where they give of themselves to make sure that other person is okay. It is a person imprisoned for their faith in China or Cuba, the person working in the care home long hours to seek to show love to others, or someone working for racial justice in America.

I'm sure like many of you I have met amazing people showing love for others. People caring for their foster kids, trying to give them the best start in life. Those looking after people with disabilities or difficult mental illnesses. I am so humbled by people who care deeply for others to spend their lives looking after them. So many Christian people doing amazing things. And wouldn't it be so wonderful if churches were known for their radical love, rather than at times for their small mindedness and judgmentalism. Jesus is such a wonderful saviour. We need to approach him with reverence. But I also have a wonderful drawing of Jesus in my study and he's lifting up a child in his arms and both of them are laughing with mutual enjoyment. That picture reminds us that love heals us when we are burned out and exhausted but it also inspires us and gives us joy when we abide in the extraordinary love of Christ we find acceptance and freedom and it brings the rest of our lives into perspective.

At times, I forget, I get bogged down in churchiness in meetings and minutes. And I know that they're necessary but at times they sap my energy. And so I continually need to go back to spending time with Jesus abiding in his love, knowing that he calls me to freedom and to loving others. That's not telling them what to do, but trying to model it, trying to love with abundance, to care for others wellbeing so that God can restore their souls.

I love being a spiritual accompanier. And the idea here is that you don't get in other's way but you just facilitate God working and watching a soul rediscovering how much they are loved by God, seeing his love shining in their faces is so incredible even on Zoom. Mother Teresa talks of how so many people feel unloved, uncared for, unwanted. She talks of a poverty of loneliness and spirituality, a hunger for love and a hunger for God. That's what we see around us just now in the



midst of this pandemic. And we have this amazing opportunity of sharing the restorative and joyful love of Jesus Christ with others. So even in the midst of the restrictions and frustration of these days, even in the midst of the turmoil in our lives and the changes in the church, Jesus calls us to remain in his love, to enjoy his love and then go out and share it with others. Maybe not be distracted by everyday frustrations but find new ways of creatively sharing his beautiful and transformative love with all.

May we pray. Gracious God we were lost, but now we're found. And we seek to remain in your love, to love others with that same life-giving and transformative love that you have shown us. Holy Spirit inspire us we pray to do justice, to offer our lives for your anointing for we ask this for your glory sake and in Jesus name, amen.

Prayer of Intercession - Rev Andrew Barrie, Pultneytown & Thrumster, Wick

Let's turn to God together and pray again once more in our prayers of intercession.

Lord God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God who is love, we turn to you together now to seek your strengthening and empowering that we would be built in love together as your people. Not only are you love but it is you who has shown us what love is that while we were still sinners Christ died for us, that costly sacrificial determined love which is for the other, that love which we know and it's the very joy of our hearts and the foundation of all of our life in him. That love which has changed us and welcomed us in the gospel and is always bearing fruit.

Help us by the Holy Spirit we ask to grow in that fruit of love as we continue to abide in Christ.

Prune us, that we may grow in obedience to Christ, bearing fruit that will last, the fruit of righteousness and holiness putting off the old self and old loves to grow and mature in Christ.

Renew us that we would show love to our brothers and sisters in Christ, that we might fulfil the command we've heard today, love one another.

We ask this obedient growing love would be seen more throughout our denomination that we would be patient and kind not envying or proud. Oh God we pray for this within our congregations, we pray for this between our congregations and in our presbyteries.

As the next general assembly approaches, we pray that our love for you and for one another would lead us to dishonour others or seek ourselves but to honour you. We ask that during the general assembly we would not delight in evil, but rejoice with the truth in full obedience of Christ.

Our father, we also ask that you would help each of us in the week to come. We ask that the love that you have given us and that your working in us would shine out in word, in deed, in attitude, in action that your love might shine through us. Whatever you place before us in this week to come help us to show the same love as Jesus to the least, the lowest and the lost.

In this week after the elections, we ask that as Christians we would be known most of all for this and we would model your love in a counter cultural way especially in a world where there's such division, frustration and pain. We pray for all those who have been elected to the new Scottish Parliament session, thanking you for them. We ask that you would help them to rule in a way which is wise, just, and good for the whole of the country.

We pray these things in Jesus name, amen.



Song 3 – We sing a love – Dunblane Cathedral Choir

We sing a love that sets all people free
That blows like wind that burns like scorching flame
Enfolds like earth springs up like water clear
Come living love live in our hearts today

We sing a love that seeks another's good
That longs to serve and not to count the cost
A love that yielding finds itself made new
Come caring love live in our hearts today

We sing a love unflinching unafraid
To be itself despite another's wrath
A love that stands alone and undismayed
Come strength'ning love live in our hearts today

We sing a love that wand'ring will not rest
Until it finds its way its home its source
Through joy and sadness pressing on refreshed
Come pilgrim love live in our hearts today

We sing a burning fiery Holy Ghost
That seeks out shades of ancient bitterness
Transfiguring these as Christ in ev'ry heart
Come joyful love live in our hearts today

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

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 forever more, amen.