

Sunday 29th August 2021 E100 Promise fulfilled

WELCOME

God welcomes us to worship today as we welcome one another both here in church and through Youtube. Perhaps you'd like to give a wave to one another. It is a very special service, the first of our joint 5th Sundays of the month ones in our new linking. Today we mark formally the linking though we began on the 4th May 2021. Already we have seen benefits to our working together. The Apostle *John 1:16* tells us that, *Out of the fullness of God's grace He has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another.* Today we celebrate that and in the first instance we remind ourselves of the joy that came into the world when Jesus God's Son came to camp among us for a while. A birth the prophets foretold and then over 400 years later John the Baptist took up the message calling for Jews to come be sorry for their sin, acknowledging the forgiveness offered by being baptised and telling of the One who was greater than he who was coming into the world to make all things new. What excitement there was back then, what joy in our hearts today as we worship our gracious ever loving ever giving God together.

HYMN 320 Joy to the world

Joy to the world the Lord has come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and nature sing
And heaven and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the earth the Saviour reigns
Your sweetest songs employ
While fields and streams and hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
The wonders of His love
The wonders of His love
The wonders, the wonders of His love

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PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

You are the Lord God Almighty, the One who was and is and will be. You are the God of Your chosen people Israel and You are our God. You are our Provider and bring a harvest in due season. Your ways are greater than our ways. Our understanding is limited, but You have provided us with the things which we need to know. You have given us a glimpse of the things to come and a glimpse of the eternal. When we see the frailty, injustice and ungodliness of the world we realise that our hope is in You alone.

You are our Heavenly Father, gracious and just. Today we are linked together in this church building, not as separate congregations but as members of your family.

We have to confess, Lord, that in the complexities and perceived comfort of the way in which we live, it is so easy to lose track, be distracted, misled, ignorant or forgetful of Your truths. We can so easily become like children who forget the giver and take the gift for granted. Every one of us falls short.

You are a God who does not disregard our sins, but who is gracious to forgive us when we turn from them, turn to You, repent and seek that forgiveness. We are encouraged by one another and You have made a way to receive that forgiveness through the suffering, death and resurrection to life of Your Son Jesus. It is through Jesus that we bring our prayers. We say together the prayer which He taught us:

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.

READING *John 1:1-14*

Read by Robert Turnbull. Presbytery Representative

1 In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 From the very beginning the Word was with God. 3 Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. 4 The Word was the source of life,^[a] and this life brought light to people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

6 God sent his messenger, a man named John, 7 who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message and believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. 9 This was the real light—the light that comes into the world and shines on all people.

10 The Word was in the world, and though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him. 12 Some, however, did receive him and believed in him; so he gave them the right to become God's children. 13 They did not become God's children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; God himself was their Father.

¹⁴ The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father's only Son.

REFLECTION Part 1 Promise fulfilled

783,137 - Any ideas as to what that number represents? What about if it is divided into two: 602,585 and 180? then down to 1. Yes the words in the whole Bible divided into Old and New Testaments then distilled down to the Living Word Jesus.

At last! We've made it through creation, the Fall, the story of Abraham's family, Joseph, Moses and the Exodus, the promise of the Law and the Land, the Judges, Israel coming into being and then its fall.

We've thought about the worship and wisdom through the Psalms and Proverbs and finally the prophets. Throughout this whole story has been the message from God, words from God, that one day there would be a Saviour, sent by God to His people. He is – the Son of God, the Son of Man, Jesus himself, described as the LIVING WORD.

We've had a lot of words and many thoughts, so what is so special about this word. We're told that He is the Word for ALL people, the LIVING WORD for all people.

As *The* Word we find that Jesus brings

LIGHT – In the spring time we look in our gardens to see the new growth that's occurs – a result in part of the sunlight. Sunlight helps us see – helps us find our way. It is much easier to find the right path in the light of day rather than the dark of night. After all, the Psalmist tells us that that *the word of God is a light to our path and a lamp for our feet (Ps 119:105.)* The LIVING WORD as seen in Jesus shows us the way to live our lives, living in the light of his love. Light does something else though. When the sun streams in the window what often happens? We see dust! I'm sure those of us in charge of dusting our houses have all had the "oh no," moment – the moment when we discover the dust where we thought there was none – all because the sun was shining. The Light of the LIVING WORD allows us to see the wrong things that are hidden in our lives and invites us to ask for His help to change them.

The LIVING WORD is for all people and for all people He was **INCARNATE**. It is such an amazing story, it is almost too unbelievable that God himself would come to earth to show us the way back to Heaven and to a renewed and restored relationship with Himself. We think about it every Christmas but familiarity with the story should not bring contempt. At baptism I say the words it was for you that Jesus God's Son, Immanuel - God with us, came, for you He lived, for you He suffered, for you He died and for you He rose. No other religion has a god who comes into the world to come alongside his followers. No other god offers a help which is invaluable because he has gone through what his followers go through. No other god offers a new life out of death. Our God is unique. Jesus as the LIVING WORD brings

VITALITY – the power of life, the breath of life. Here he is the Saviour of the World, the one, we're told, who was part of creating creation, bringing light and life to our world, now coming to bring light and new life. New life from death, his death. As the song says Crucified laid behind a stone You lived to die rejected and alone Like a rose trampled on the ground You took the fall and thought of me Above all.

Jesus as the **LIVING WORD** brings **INSTRUCTION** for our lives. The way He lived challenges us to live our lives in a particular way, a way which brings glory to God, a way which brings salvation, renewal, restoration to ourselves. The things He taught, challenge us to the very core of our being. They are so counter cultural – He turned things upside down. As His life informs or instructs our own we have a choice to make, one which will affect all those with whom we come in contact. What a challenge that is.

Jesus; Son of God, son of man, the **LIVING WORD** is the **NUB** of our story told by the words in the Bible. From beginning to end, the story of the Old Testament and the New Testament has at its centre the story of salvation, the story of the saving of the people of God, those who put their trust in Him and in His death.

What does that mean for you today? How does that affect the way you live your life today? Jesus wants to be the nub, the centre, of your faith, of your life, of your witness. The **LIVING WORD** wants to affect your way of living so that others might be brought into the light, might be given the vital power of life.

Finally the **LIVING WORD** brings us **GENEROSITY**. Utter generosity. Generosity, as seen in Jesus' total self giving. Coming to earth He gave up all the glory which He had, He gave up His relationship of love with the Father and the Spirit – that one moment on the cross when He was totally alone – *“my God my God why have you forsaken me.”* Willingly for you and for me He became helpless in order to help us. Help us back into our Father God's presence where there is safety security, and new life. What an amazing God.

HYMN You're the Word of God the Father

“You're the Word of God the Father

From before the world began.

Ev'ry star and ev'ry planet

Has been fashioned by Your hand.

All creation holds together

By the power of Your voice.

Let the skies declare Your glory;

Let the land and seas rejoice!

CHORUS

*You're the Author of creation;
You're the Lord of ev'ry man;
And Your cry of love rings out across the lands.*

Yet You left the gaze of angels,
Came to seek and save the lost,
And exchanged the joy of heaven
For the anguish of a cross.
With a prayer You fed the hungry;
With a word You calmed the sea;
Yet how silently You suffered
That the guilty may go free! *You're the Author*

With a shout You rose victorious,
Wresting vict'ry from the grave,
And ascended into heaven,
Leading captives in Your way.
Now You stand before the Father,
Interceding for Your own;
From each tribe and tongue and nation,
You are leading sinners home!" *You're the Author*

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REFLECTION Part 2 Harvest of Blessings

John 1:16 Out of the fullness of His grace He has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another.

Pictures on the screen showing (see pictures at the end of sheet)

a) the linking of Ashkirk, Ettrick & Yarrow and Selkirk – the blessing of God's Presence throughout all our deliberations, guiding us one step at a time, the God who we are told is the ***same yesterday, today and forever***, the One who promises ***to be with us always till the end of time.*** (*Hebrews 13:8, Matthew 28:20*)

b) beautiful agathanpus in an Ashkirk Bee Friendly Garden, snowdrops brightening up the winter at the bottom of the brae to the Ashkirk Church, the beauty and intricacy of the patchwork using God given skills and for the jam too.

b) harvested fields, healthy cows and sheep a blessing from God to the Ettrick & Yarrow farming communities

c) new shops in Selkirk showing the way in which people's gifts and talents are being used for the benefit of others

d) the contribution to the Foodbank which we can make as our Harvest Offering. Usually at each of our Harvest Festivals we encourage folk to bring gifts which often go to the Foodbank. We cannot do this in these Covid times but there are opportunities in our local shops to donate food individually. If you want to make a donation of money that can also be arranged.

HYMN 233 Come you thankful people come

1 Come, you thankful people, come,
 raise the song of harvest-home:
 all is safely gathered in,
 ere the winter storms begin;
 God, our Maker, will provide
 for our needs to be supplied:
 come to God's own temple, come;
 raise the song of harvest-home.

2 All this world is God's own field,
 bearing fruit his praise to yield;
 wheat and tares together sown,
 are to joy or sorrow grown;
 first the blade and then the ear,
 then the full corn shall appear:
 Lord of harvest, grant that we
 wholesome grain and pure may be.

3 For the Lord our God shall come,
 and shall take his harvest home;
 from his field shall in that day
 all offences purge away;

give his angels charge at last
in the fire the tares to cast,
but the fruitful ears to store
in his storehouse evermore.

4 Even so, Lord, quickly, come;
bring your final harvest home:
gather all your people in,
free from sorrow, free from sin;
there, for ever purified,
in your presence to abide:
come, with all your angels come,
raise the glorious harvest-home!

Henry Alford (1810–1871) (alt.)

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PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Lord God out of Your grace and goodness You have given so many blessings to Your world and to us in particular.

From Your love showered over us, to creation mirroring Your rhythm of life and living, to the gifts and talents You have provided for us to use and to the ways so many in our towns, villages and communities have used those talents for the benefit of others we bring you our adoration, our praise and our thanks.

We know that so many people in our world have so little, so many have lives blighted by the decisions and actions of others. You invite us to be partners in sharing Your love with the world and in particular You invite us to pray for it which we do now in humility and wonder at this privilege which You offer.

Lord God Almighty our hearts break as we see the turmoil round the world, in particular in Afghanistan and Haiti, yet they are but a fraction of places where people are mistreated by those in charge, where people are subject to the vagaries of nature, much of which is caused by our selfishness, greed, insensitivity, our callous indifference or wilful disregard to the consequences of our actions. As our hearts break we recognise that Your heart O God breaks too. Please come alongside those who need to experience the tender touch of your healing love today. Come be with those who are providing help, bring them strength and courage in the face of such adversity.

We pray for our different communities, where everyday life goes on regardless of what happens on the world's stage yet where much hurt, pain, despair can be hidden behind a facade of the use of the word "fine" as the answer to how are you? Help us be people who don't take fine for an answer, but are willing to provide listening ears, helping hands and our silent, calming, peace - making presence.

For our Governments we pray that the wisdom you provided for Solomon would be the wisdom which they would covet and would be willing to accept. In all the decisions that require to be made, may You help them know which is the best course of action to take for the good of all people.

Each of us has people and causes which are close to our hearts. In the silence we name them before You now in confidence that You hear and will answer the prayers we make. In Jesus' name we pray Amen

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

For the blessing of working together, bound together in love through Your Holy Spirit we bring you our thanks O God.

We recognise that You have been at work throughout the whole process of seeking the way forward for our congregations in Ashkirk Ettrick & Yarrow and Selkirk.

For all that has gone before, for the way in which we have individually shared Your love with those we met in our communities over the many years past we bring You our thanks and praise.

We recognise though that there are things which now we can do better together and so in this regard, at this time on our respective individual and corporate faith journeys we offer You our heartfelt devotion to You and each other, our willingness to partner one another while remaining distinctive as individual congregations and people. Come Father God Almighty bind us together with cords of love which can never be broken, cords of love which will strengthen us all, come bring us the gift of Your Holy Spirit to guide our daily journeys into the future recognising that Jesus Your Son, our brother's life, death and resurrection is what heals all brokenness and binds all together in the unity of love which You offer.

We therefore in Your Presence commit ourselves to one another in the words which are on the screen, "We will nurture one another in faith, uphold one another in prayer and encourage one another in service." To the glory of Your Holy Name and for the furtherance of Your Kingdom here on earth. In Jesus' name we pray Amen.

HYMN 154 How great Thou Art

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder

Consider all the works Thy hand hath made

I see the stars I hear the mighty thunder

Thy power throughout the universe displayed

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee

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How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze
Then sings my soul . . .

And when I think that God His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin
Then sings my soul . . .

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home what joy shall fill my heart
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim my God how great Thou art.
Then sings my soul . . .

Stuart K. Hine (1899–1989) vv. 1,2,4 based on O store Gud 1885 by Carl Gustaf Boberg (1859–1940) Reproduced from CH4 CD-ROM edition, number 154
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BENEDICTION

The love of God be in your heart,

The peace of God be in your mind

The grace of God be in your dealings

**Go knowing the blessing of the Presence of Almighty God Father Son and Spirit at work in and
through your lives today and everyday. Amen**

