

## WELCOME

God welcomes us today as we welcome one another. We invite God through His Holy Spirit to be present in our worship, to bring us a new experience of His Presence deep within us as individuals and an experience which binds us together as His church here in the building and online. Let us remind ourselves of the fruit the Holy Spirit offers to bring to our lives as we invite Him in. Found in ***Galatians 5:22 -23 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.***

## HYMN 197 As we are gathered Jesus is here

As we are gathered Jesus is here  
One with each other Jesus is here  
Joined by the Spirit washed in the blood  
Part of the body the church of God  
As we are gathered Jesus is here  
One with each other Jesus is here

*Music by John Daniels arranged Richard Hey Lloyd (b.1933)*

## HYMN 189 Be still for the Presence of the Lord

Be still for the presence of the Lord the holy One is here  
Come bow before Him now with reverence and fear  
In Him no sin is found, we stand on holy ground  
Be still for the presence of the Lord the holy One is here

Be still for the glory of the Lord is shining all around  
He burns with holy fire with splendour He is crowned  
How awesome is the sight our radiant king of light  
Be still for the glory of the Lord is shining all around

Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place  
He comes to cleanse and heal to minister His grace  
No work to hard for Him in faith receive from Him  
Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

*David J. Evans (b.1957)*

## **PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION**

Triumphant praise and joy, these we bring as we enter Your court with praise and thanksgiving  
Bowing our heads and joining in prayer, for You O God are gracious and Your mercy everlasting  
This is the day You have made for worship and we thank You for it, we thank You for each other,  
for the people we are and the places we have come from, for all that we shall become as we walk with  
You.

**For all You have given**, *we praise and worship You.*

Thank You for the love of Christ encircling us, Your Spirit guiding us, so that we might bring our lives  
before You, in praise and worship. Loving God, You are ever at work in our lives, striving to help and  
strengthen our world, heal and comfort, forgive and restore, undo wrongs and establish right. You.

**For all are doing**, *we praise and worship You.*

Merciful God, we have not been humble. We have discouraged others from seeking You.

We have not sought Your wisdom. We have been rude and selfish in our own wants and actions.

We have hurt others by intended words spoken and actions not done – some known to us and other  
unknowns to us.

We know what we have done please forgive our faults. While we deserve only judgement You offer us  
grace, and the hope of life renewed. Merciful Father we praise You that through Jesus Christ  
we are forgiven, we are renewed and through Him we are taught how to live and serve **For all your  
forgiveness**, *we praise and worship You.*

God of restoration, in our blindness and ignorance, You open our eyes and lead us to truth;  
in our arrogance and defiance, You still our souls and teach us humility; in our weakness and  
displacement, You protect us and lead us home. We praise You and thank You, with all our hearts.  
Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us when we pray 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.

## **READING**

**Philippians 4:2-9**

**Read by Marjory Dooley**

<sup>2</sup>Euodia and Syntyche, please, I beg you, try to agree as sisters in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>And you too, my faithful  
partner, I want you to help these women; for they have worked hard with me to spread the gospel,  
together with Clement and all my other fellow workers, whose names are in God's book of the living.

<sup>4</sup>May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!

<sup>5</sup> Show a gentle attitude toward everyone. The Lord is coming soon. <sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. <sup>7</sup> And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable. <sup>9</sup> Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.

## REFLECTION

Living as God's people - Instructions for living!

The Bible is our instruction manual. From Genesis through to Revelation we find instructions – not always detailed ones - but instructions nevertheless, to guide us both in our walk with God and our walk with other people.

Paul's letters are not written in a vacuum. They are addressed to churches that he knows and loves. Most are written to combat erroneous teaching, encourage the young Christians in their faith or correct problems in behaviour or relationships. We'll be reading chapters from some of his letters this week and it seems to me that throughout each of his letters he has two strands.

He wants to encourage his readers to **STAND FIRM** and He wants them to **LIVE WELL**.

I wonder if you've heard the words responsible citizens, effective contributors, confident individuals, successful learners from your grandchildren. These come from the Curriculum for Excellence - the programme for teaching 3-18 year olds. These four categories are the type of child Curriculum for Excellence is supposed to produce. I'd suggest good models for Christian living. Here in this passage in Philippians we are called to be **responsible citizens**. Paul is calling us to be responsible citizens of heaven while living on earth and that means being an **effective contributor**, to the place where we are, being **confident as an individual** in our faith with the help of the church family around us, at the same time remembering that to be those three we need to continue to continue to **learn successfully** from God and from one another.

Paul is very clear about what our faith in Jesus should lead us to do. Faith and works go hand in hand – we read that too in the book of James.

Paul tells us of the need to **stand firm** in the faith – that can be so difficult can't it. Faith by necessity means not knowing for certain but taking all the available knowledge, making a decision that what Jesus says is true and following that. There are times though when our faith fails us – when suffering comes, disease, broken relationships, when our relationship with God seems non-existent – when it appears that He is not with us. Paul calls us to **stand firm** in those times and gives us directions as to how we do that. Remember the past, he says, continue to believe that one day God will be there for us again. I'm always

amazed, humbled at Christians living in abject poverty across the world - no matter what, their faith remains firm - such an example to us I'd suggest.

Standing firm in the church says Paul means agreeing. It's kind of tantalising - don't you wish you knew what Euodia and Syntyche were arguing about? Was it something trivial that had got blown out of all proportion, or was it some deeply held view that caused the problem?

There are times when total agreement is unfeasible in our broken world and church – but in all discussions and deliberations there needs to be the willingness to acknowledge that the different sides of an argument come from deeply held beliefs. Agreement can mean that we acknowledge the truth of that and find ways of being able to work together despite our differences. That is what I think Euodia and Syntyche were being asked to do. That is far easier said than done as we live in an imperfect world where we don't get it right all the time.

**Be joyful** says Paul – joyful in ALL circumstances. That is such a tall order for there are many circumstances in our lives that would lead us to despair, hopelessness. And yet do you see why we can remain joyful – look at the phrase after the instruction – we are to remain joyful in all circumstances *because of our union with the Lord*. That is what allows us to be joyful – the knowledge of God's presence with us in every situation – even when we think he's not there.

Professor William Barclay says this, “Christian joy has as its source the continual presence of Christ. That is why the Christian can never lose his joy, because he can never lose Jesus Christ.” Joshua in the Old Testament talks about the joy of the Lord being our strength – strength to remain standing firm throughout all the trials of life. We all know folk who have tremendous problems yet remain quietly joyful deep within for they know the security of being in God's arms – surrounded by His love. As we remain joyful then others will notice this and wonder why.

**Be gentle** says Paul. Patient, modest, forbearing. It's so easy in today's world of hustle and bustle, of the instant society to become impatient when things don't go right, go the way we want them too, when folk hassle us. Just think of all the different types of rage there are now – from road rage to supermarket trolley rage! We are an impatient society and an impatient society leads to rudeness and self-centredness. We are the ones who are important, I am, ME. Not so says Jesus – love your neighbour – be gentle, patient, kind – help them by your gentleness. What an example we have in Jesus – who patiently suffered so that we might have new life. Who is He calling you to be gentle with today?

**Be prayerful** How do we communicate with one another? We speak, we listen, we remain with people in silence. When we love someone, sometimes it's enough just to be in their presence – to enjoy their company. Jesus continually reminds us that we are to ask for what we need. His promise is to give us enough for each day providing for our physical, mental, spiritual needs but He asks us to ask for it and to keep on asking. I don't know about you but I find that hard. Perhaps that's because I was told to stop deaving as a child! I know there are many of you who will have prayed for specific things, people for

CCLI: (A) 600239, (E&Y) 634212, (S) 27185 One License hymns reprinted with permission under: (A) A738334, (E&Y) A 738278. (S)

years who have not received what you've asked for. Our timing is not God's timing and I firmly believe that until we get an answer from God – and that answer might be NO - then we should keep praying. What situation are you involved in right now that you are finding difficult – what is it that you are asking God for – keep on, keeping on praying.

**Be thankful** If there's one all consuming problem it's so easy to become so focussed on that that everything else is crowded out. But God has given us many good things and it is good to be able to thank Him for those. Take time today to remind yourself of some of the things that God has done for you and say thank you!

Finally Paul says

**Be peaceful** God's peace – far beyond human understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe. What does your mind stray to when you're not really thinking about anything much? There is so much negativity around us. Because we live in a fallen world our thoughts tend to the negative. Paul tells us that God's peace in our hearts will help us to focus on His positive love and being. Fill your minds he says, with those things that are noble, true, right, pure, lovely and honourable. That is hard work, really hard work, He encourages us to become conscious of what we are thinking and where necessary to stop and to consciously change gear. I find it helps to have a Bible verse which I bring to mind when needed – something I can then meditate on. Each of us will have a different verse – perhaps many different ones but it is good to cultivate at least one so that when we find ourselves straying we can bring it to mind.

I wonder if you've noticed that while I've been speaking many if not all of the fruit of the Spirit have been mentioned – the verses I read at the beginning of the service. Three to do with our relationship with God: love, joy, peace. Three to do with our relationships with others: patience, kindness, goodness and three to do with our relationship with our own lives: faithfulness, gentleness and self control

New ways of living take time to get used to, sometimes training is required. Every athlete knows the benefit of regular training, the difference and the benefit that's gained from it. We don't talk about Spiritual Exercises much in the Church of Scotland but they are good to do. I'd like to leave you with one which can take as much or as little time as you have and can be done anywhere at any time.

Take a moment to notice the way that you are breathing. Breathe in, breathe out – and then when you are breathing in, think these words, **Holy Spirit come flood my soul** and then as you are breathing out think the words, **and cast out the wrong that's within me.** Finish as you are breathing in so that you are consciously asking the Holy Spirit to flood your soul.

Today let us take heart from the knowledge that He is with us in all situations that we face, that He encourages us to be joyful, prayerful, gentle, thankful, mindful of His goodness so that we might enjoy His peace - the peace that will then go with us out into the world wherever we are and so influence all whom we meet. Amen.

## **HYMN 536 May the mind of Christ my Saviour**

May the mind of Christ my Saviour  
Live in me from day to day,  
By his love and power controlling  
All I do and say.

May the word of God dwell richly  
In my heart from hour to hour,  
So that all my see I triumph  
Only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father  
Rule my life in everything,  
That I may be calm to comfort  
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,  
As the waters fill the sea;  
Him exalting, self abasing,  
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,  
Strong and brave to face the foe,  
Looking only unto Jesus  
As I onward go.

*Katie Barclay Wilkinson (1859- 1928)*

### **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

**Read by Glynis Wilkie**

Lord God Almighty, we bow before You, in wonder, awe and praise. You who are so great want us as Your children. You do everything within Your power to show us that Your way is the only way. Help us to open ourselves to You, to experience Your Presence within us; to know the touch of Your hand upon our lives, guiding our thoughts and our actions. Lead us in Your way, O Lord, guide us by Your Spirit;

change us into new people, ready and willing to serve You and love You for the rest of our days here on this earth. Lord make us one in Your Spirit, that the church may bear Your fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit is love. We bring you a world corrupted by injustice, indifference and hatred, Lord God. A world in need of your love.

The fruit of the Spirit is joy. We bring before you a sorrowing world, full of despair and suffering. A world in need of joy.

The fruit of the Spirit is peace. We bring before you Lord God a world torn apart by warfare and inner conflict, a world in need of your peace.

The fruit of the Spirit is patience and kindness. Our world Lord God is damaged by our human, short term perspective, marred by our insensitivity and our violence. It is a world in need of discovering your patience, your kindness.

The fruit of the Spirit is goodness and faithfulness. We bring before you God a world which has been made cynical by the wrongs of humanity, a world which is empty of meaning for so many people because of lack of purpose and belief. Show us your goodness, Lord, provide us with faith.

The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness and self control. Our world is so harsh in its judgement of others, so harsh in its dealings with people. It is a world enslaved by greed and lust and violence. Bring to it Lord God your gentleness, your self control.

May your church be equipped by the power of Your Spirit to go out into this world for which we have prayed. Send us out in your name, make us willing to give all that we have to you and your work. May your church stand out in our society proclaiming your love, your way of living. May it be prepared to battle and stand up to the challenge.

We pray for our own community, the people we know and love. In the silence we bring you the week that has just passed, we bring you the week that is to come, the things which have and will happen, the people we have and will meet.

We give you thanks for all the people who have helped us in our walk of faith, and for those who are now with you. We join our prayers and our praise to the great company of angels who are praising you in Heaven. In Jesus Name, Amen

## **HYMN 202            Stand up and bless the Lord**

Stand up and bless the Lord

Ye people of His choice

Stand up and bless the Lord your God

With heart and soul and voice

Though high above all praise  
Above all blessing high  
Who would not fear His Holy Name  
And laud and magnify

O for the living flame  
From His own altar brought  
To touch our lips our minds inspire  
And wing to heaven our thought

God is our strength and song  
And His salvation ours  
Then be His love in Christ proclaimed  
With all our ransomed powers

Stand up and bless the Lord  
The Lord your God adore  
Stand up and bless His glorious Name  
Henceforth for evermore.

*James Montgomery (1771 – 1854)*

## **BENEDICTION**

The Holy Spirit fill your whole being that you may walk the way of love, joy, peace, glorifying God in the beauty of His holiness. The blessing of God Father Son and Spirit be yours today and every day.  
Amen