

WELCOME

We come to worship the God who transforms our lives by His Spirit within us as we meet here in the church and online. The Church of Scotland stems from the Reformation so sits within the reformed tradition yet has as one of its strap lines "reformed and always reforming" (*reformata semper reformanda*).

We live in a world which was once perfect and in no need of any reformation, transformation yet, through our own waywardness and sin, God's beautiful creation in all its different facets has been marred, disfigured not just physically, but mentally, emotionally and spiritually too. Instead of God being at the centre, we, the people He created, have made ourselves centre. That has led to unjust systems of government and selfish actions throughout the centuries. God in His mercy seeks our help in transforming our world back into a fair and just one. From the Old Testament prophet Amos we hear God say, (*Amos 5*) *Amos 5* ¹⁴*Seek good and not evil, that you may live and the Lord the God of hosts, will be with you as you have said..* ¹⁵*Hate what is evil, love what is right, and see that justice prevails.* God's love will endure forever whether we follow His way or not, yet this God of history, this God who comes into our lives, personally calls us to love His world as He does. We think of that as we sing

HYMN 6 God shall endure for aye

1. God shall endure for aye; he has
 For judgement set his throne
 To rule the nations equally,
 Justice to give each one.

2. God also will a refuge be
 For those who are oppressed;
 A refuge he will be in times
 Of trouble to distressed.

3. And they who know your name, in you
 Their confidence will place:
 For you have forsaken them
 Who truly seek your face.

4. Sing, then, sing praises to the Lord

On Zion's sacred hill;
Let all the earth be made aware
Of God's work and God's will.

Psalm 9, verse 7-11
The Scottish Psalter, 1929

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION **from Weekly Worship CofS**

Let us pray. As the hymn writer puts it, *"God of wonders beyond our galaxy you are Holy, holy. The universe declares your majesty, you are Holy, holy"*

Holy God, we come to declare that You are our Creator. Holy God, we come to proclaim Your greatness. Holy God, we come to lift Your name in the words that we say and in the songs that we sing to You today.

We acknowledge You as the Almighty, we acknowledge all that You have blessed us with; You care for each one of us, You are our strength when we feel weak, You know us all individually, and You created us uniquely and perfectly.

We acknowledge that although You know us inside and out, You still love us eternally. That love was shown so powerfully by sending us Your son Jesus.

Jesus, thank You for all You mean to us and all You have done for us. Thank You that You call each of us by name and that with Your disciples of old, we too are called to serve You and Your people.

We confess that sometimes we know we are not ready to serve, we are too caught up with ourselves and our own selfish desires, we seek Your forgiveness.

We confess that sometimes we know we don't have the ability to serve, we are too angry at ourselves for what we have said that we know we shouldn't have, or what we have done that we know we shouldn't have. We seek your forgiveness.

We confess that sometimes we know we can't serve You, we are too annoyed at ourselves for what we should have said that we failed to say, or what we should have done that we failed to do. We seek Your forgiveness.

Lord, we know that You are slow to anger and abounding in love, so may we rest in that love knowing that we can have a fresh start, that today is the beginning of a new journey with You.

So Holy Spirit, encourage us to hear Your calling now. Holy Spirit, enable us and teach us to fulfil our calling. Holy Spirit, empower and sustain us in our service. Thank you, Lord God. We are ready to serve, so hear our praise this day and as a token of our readiness we give you our money our time and our talents. Through Christ our Lord we pray saying together the words He taught, Our Father who art in Heaven Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done On earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever. Amen

⁶“The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. ⁷Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.

⁸“Then my favor will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed. I will always be with you to save you; my presence will protect you on every side. ⁹When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond.

“If you put an end to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word; ¹⁰if you give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need, then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon. ¹¹And I will always guide you and satisfy you with good things. I will keep you strong and well. You will be like a garden that has plenty of water, like a spring of water that never goes dry.

REFLECTION Part 1 Marks of Mission 4 Transform

A couple of weeks ago we thought about the 3rd Mark of Mission – tend to human need in loving service. That is a very general statement. The final two Marks of Mission flesh out the third for particular contexts. This week we consider how we as individuals and we as churches **seek to transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.**

From the time sin, ego, entered our world there have been those who oppress in order to get their own way and those who are oppressed. That breaks God’s heart for as the Psalmist says, *Psalm 89:14* **“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.”**

According to one dictionary the *meaning* of **RIGHTEOUS** is morally good: following religious or moral laws. God is holy, pure, righteous and we and our world are not. Yet in His love He came into the world in order to do two things. To restore a right living relationship between individuals and Himself and to invite us, as restored people, to help restore ours and His world.

We are unable to gain this way of right living on our own. God in His mercy has given us **the way**, Jesus Himself who says, **“I am the way the truth and the life.” (John 14:6)** Paul in Romans 3 puts it this way, **²¹ God's way of putting people right with himself has been revealed... ²² God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: ²³ everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence. ²⁴ But by the free gift of God's grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free.**

Free to live with the Spirit of God working in and through believers; you and me. Free to challenge the way our society lives. Free to transform the unjust structures of our society, free to challenge violence of

any description, free to pursue peace and reconciliation. For the right living of God is one which pursues reconciliation rather than retribution. The gospels tell of Jesus' own witness to God's love, a witness that centres on problems of violence, brokenness, conflict, and alienation. The justice which Jesus calls his followers to thirst for in the beatitudes (*Matthew 5*) speaks of life, of reconciliation, the restoration of relationships with God and one another.

Jesus' presence in our lives transforms us so that we might transform society. As lights in our family, among our friends, within our communities and globally, we are to show up and call out the wrong that is happening and we are to offer the opportunity to live in a more just, fairer way using a standard which is outside ourselves – God's way.

All of this is easy to say, to think but how do we go about putting it into practice?

There are some who say religion and politics should not mix but that is to promote the sacred/secular divide which is a human construct. Our God is a God who cares passionately about those treated unjustly and calls us to do the same, caring enough to act.

As individuals, in which groups in our community are you involved?

How can you show God's right way of living within them?

Invite God to show you if there are other groups He would want you to be in.

As churches, which groups in our community are we already involved with?

How can we show God's right way of living there?

Where else is God calling us to be?

At a global level what groups are you involved in as an individual?

How can you encourage others to be part of those groups?

As churches we are involved in Christian Aid, Traidcraft, Tearfund, Open Doors, Barnabas Fund, Compassion all of which seek to challenge individuals, society and governments to promote just and fair living.

How best can we support these? Are there other groups and actions to which God is calling us?

It is so easy to be overwhelmed by the news we see on our TV's and read in our newspapers. It is all too easy to think that I, we, cannot make a difference and so do nothing. We need the story of the star fish to remind us that every little helps.

One day, an old man was walking along a beach that was littered with thousands of starfish that had been washed ashore by the high tide. As he walked he came upon a young boy who was eagerly throwing the starfish back into the ocean, one by one.

Puzzled, the man looked at the boy and asked what he was doing. Without looking up from his task, the boy simply replied, "I'm saving these starfish, Sir".

The old man chuckled aloud, "Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference can you make?"

The boy picked up a starfish, gently tossed it into the water and turning to the man, said, "I made a difference to that one!"

On some sites there is a second part to that story. The boy persisted. Hour after hour, in the hot sun, he gently tossed starfish into the water. By late morning, more people had noticed the boy and several stopped to help him. First it was another child and her mother. Then a second family, and soon a small crowd was spreading across the beach, carefully picking up starfish and returning them to the sea. By midday, the crowd was big enough to attract attention. Someone brought snacks and water for the volunteers. Someone called a friend at a news station, and a reporter arrived with a camera. A short "human interest" story aired that afternoon, and was seen by a local marine biologist and a member of the city council.

The two met at the beach. By then it was late in the day, and they saw dozens of people still saving starfish. The marine biologist had ideas for how they could prevent so many starfish being stranded on the beach in the future. The council member asked him to send a proposal. So the town's "Save the Starfish" program was born.

What difference do you want to make?

Change is not just bottom up or top down. It's both. Without the boy's small act, there is no inspiration to change. Without the involvement of institutions, systems, processes, there is no sustainable change at large.

God calls His people to seek first His kingdom way of living, not just seeking but putting into action His kingdom way of living; the way of justice, steadfast love and faithfulness all of which will lead our world to live rightly.

We will think of this as we sing Seek ye first and then as we listen to a Graham Kendrick hymn, O Lord the clouds are gathering.

HYMN 641 `Seek ye first the Kingdom of God

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

And His righteousness

And all these things shall be added unto you

Allelu, alleluia

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia alleluia

Ask and it shall be given unto you
Seek and ye shall find
Knock and the door shall be opened unto you
Allelu, alleluia
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia alleluia

You shall not live by bread alone
But by every word
That proceeds from the mouth of the Lord
Allelu, alleluia
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia alleluia

Karen Lafferty (b.1949)

REFLECTION Part 2 O Lord the clouds are gathering sung by Graham Kendrick

O Lord, the clouds are gathering, the fire of judgement burns
How we have fallen!
O Lord, you stand appalled to see Your laws of love so scorned
And lives so broken.
Have mercy, Lord, (Have mercy, Lord,)
Forgive us, Lord, (Forgive us, Lord)
Restore us, Lord. Revive your church again
Let justice flow (Let justice flow)
Like rivers (Like rivers)
And righteousness like a never failing stream

O Lord, over the nations now where is the dove of peace?
Her wings are broken
O Lord, while precious children starve the tools of war increase
Their bread is stolen. *Have mercy, Lord,*

O Lord, dark powers are poised to flood our streets with hate and fear
We must awaken!
O Lord, let love reclaim the lives, that sin would sweep away
And let your kingdom come *Have mercy, Lord,*

Yet, O Lord, your glorious cross shall tower triumphant in this land
Evil confounding

Through the fire your suffering church display, the glories of her Christ

Praises resounding! *Have mercy, Lord,*

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PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Ann Blundell (E&Y)

Almighty God, we give thanks for your gentle and enduring love that is with us as we worship You this morning.

We thank you for Your servant, Margaret, who is guiding us through the Five Marks of Mission, reminding us of our promise to You, to do Your will with the skills You have given us.

We are far from perfect, but we have pledged ourselves to be your people in this place and to serve Your great purpose in whatever way we can, big or small.

Hear our prayers, Lord, that whatever the future holds we may sense Your presence in the decisions we make and know that You are by our side always.

We pray that you open everyone's eyes and hearts to see that people matter, no matter their circumstances. Help us to treat everyone with respect and dignity, valuing and appreciating them. Enable us to play our part to help people out of poverty and build a fair and just society.

Lord we lift up to You our World still dealing with the ongoing pandemic.

Father bless those who are grieving. Bless those who are currently unwell. Bless all those who put the needs of others before themselves, choosing to put another's welfare above their own comfort.

We thank You for all whose work continues to ensure: - the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, the homeless are sheltered and the poor are cared for.

Bless those who in their everyday lives show Your work in the world. They like us face the unknown of what lies ahead. Loving God give them and us courage, strength and hope.

Grow in us the desire to be Your kingdom makers, justice builders, challengers of violence of any kind and Your pursuers of peace and reconciliation.

Loving God remind us that the good news of Your word is not for the few but for everyone.

Amen

HYMN 706 For the healing of the nations

For the healing of the nations

Lord we pray with one accord

For a just and equal sharing

Of the things that earth affords

To a life of love in action

Help us rise and pledge our word

Lead us forward into freedom
From despair your world release
That redeemed from war and hatred
All may come and go in peace
Show us how through care and action
Fear will die and hope increase

All that kills abundant living
Let it from the earth be banned
Pride of status race or schooling
Dogmas that obscure Your plan
In our common quest for justice
May we hallow life's brief span

You Creator God have written
Your great Name on humankind
For our growing in Your likeness
Bring the life of Christ to mind
That by our response and service
Earth may find its destiny

Fred Kaan (b. 1929)

BENEDICTION

The goodness of God the Father go with you
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ protect you
The guidance of the Holy Spirit ever lead you.
Go knowing the blessing of the Presence of the Almighty yet Intimate God; Father, Son and Spirit in your
life today and everyday. Amen.