

Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch Parish Church

Sunday 28th June 2020

To be able to access the links, go to the bottom of this page and left click on the date. This will download the pdf in a new window, then simply click on the links as indicated.

Welcome

Today is the forth Sunday after Pentecost. May we hear God's word and be filled with his Holy Spirit.

Call to Worship: Psalm 13: 5-6

O Lord, we trust your love,
and feel like celebrating
because you saved us.
You have been good to us, Lord,
and we will sing about you.

Song: [Glory to God](#) *Click on the link*



Prayer of Praise, Confession, Assurance of Forgiveness and Lord's Prayer

Glory to in the highest. Your love embraces us, your Spirit fills us,
we praise your holy name.

God of welcome, you greet us in your sunrise at the start of every new day,
we praise your holy name.

God of welcome, your love for us sustains us, and your power upholds us,
we praise your holy name.

God of welcome you break down barriers, and all that divides and bring peace
we praise your holy name.

God of welcome you walk with us now and have made provision for us when our earthly walk is
over, so that we can be together for ever.



Forgive us when we fail to live lives that reflect your love, when we have failed to be welcoming to others. Jesus, once ran to a foreign land for safety, forgive us when we have failed to greet the refugee. Jesus shared bread and fish with the multitude, forgive us when we have failed to share our food with those who are hungry as. Jesus welcomed Jairus, Legion and the leper, forgive us when we have failed to welcome people sad or lonely, distressed or anxious. Jesus welcomed the Samaritan woman at the well, forgive us when we have failed to welcome those

who are not like us. Loving God you welcome us home like the prodigal son, forgive us when we take for granted all you have done for us.

We thank you for sending Jesus to die for our forgiveness and rise again to new life opening the gates of heaven. Fill us with your Holy Spirit to transform us, and empower us to serve you, today and everyday.

God of welcome, you accept us as we are, you forgive and renew us, heal us and make us whole, we praise your holy name.

We pray in the name of Jesus who gave us the great family prayer of the church. Unite us with the family of faithful believers across the globe, and unite us with you are we pray;

Our Father, in heaven, holy is your name. Your Kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sin as we forgive those who sin against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom the power and the glory for ever. Amen

A Prayer for this time of Coronavirus

Loving God, go with all for whom each day starts with anxiety as they, or those they love, leave the security of their home worrying about the risk of infection; keep them close and safe. Guide all who tasks today include caring for people with COVID-19 and those frail, elderly and sheltered people who must be kept safe.



Lord, be alongside to guide virologists working on a vaccination, researchers analysing data, governments and health authorities making decisions. Lord we thank you for their dedication and commitment.

We give thanks for supermarket workers, delivery drivers, postal services, hygiene and sanitation providers, and people making face masks.

We thank you for stories of recovery, of fund-raising challenges, for people singing from balconies and for the recognition that isolation doesn't need to mean loneliness.

We thank you for the internet and telephones and all that connects us.

We thank you that the situation in this country is easing. Help us all to continue to make sensible decisions not just for ourselves but for everyone.

In the name of Jesus we pray Amen.

Song: [Let there be love shared among us](#) *Click on the link*



Bible Passages

Both our Bible passages today follow on from last week.

Romans 6:12-23 (GNT)

¹² Sin must no longer rule in your mortal bodies, so that you obey the desires of your natural self. ¹³ Nor must you surrender any part of yourselves to sin to be used for wicked purposes. Instead, give yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and surrender your whole being to him to be used for righteous purposes. ¹⁴ Sin must not be your master; for you do not live under law but under God's grace.

¹⁵ What, then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law but under God's grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Surely you know that when you surrender yourselves as slaves to obey someone, you are in fact the slaves of the master you obey—either of sin, which results in death, or of obedience, which results in being put right with God. ¹⁷ But thanks be to God! For though at one time you were slaves to sin, you have obeyed with all your heart the truths found in the teaching you received. ¹⁸ You were set free from sin and became the slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ (I use everyday language because of the weakness of your natural selves.) At one time you surrendered yourselves entirely as slaves to impurity and wickedness for wicked purposes. In the same way you must now surrender yourselves entirely as slaves of righteousness for holy purposes.

²⁰ When you were the slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. ²¹ What did you gain from doing the things that you are now ashamed of? The result of those things is death! ²² But now you have been set free from sin and are the slaves of God. Your gain is a life fully dedicated to him, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For sin pays its wage—death; but God's free gift is eternal life in union with Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 10:40-42 (ESV)

⁴⁰ “Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. ⁴¹ The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.”

Welcome, hospitality, acceptance

About five years ago I was beginning to look for a parish that would have me as their Minister. One of the Parish Profiles I read stated; “We would like a Minister who ... “ and there was a list of 6 items. One of these was, “We would like a Minister who is willing to offer a ‘Ministry of Hospitality’”.

Some of you may recognise that. Those words were in the Profile for the parish of Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch. I’ll leave you to make the judgment as to whether the new Minister fulfilled that particular requirement! It’s an interesting request, possibly unique. In all the Profiles I read I never again came across this particular attribute sought from a Minister by a parish.

Rightly we value the welcome and hospitality we show others. I am proud to hear that when visitors come to our churches they often comment on the welcome they have received.

Hospitality and welcome in the context of mission and discipleship is hugely important.

Today’s Gospel reading is just four verses at the end of a whole chapter focusing on mission. It began with Jesus asking the disciples to pray for workers for the harvest field. They found that they were the answer to their prayer. Jesus warned the disciples that the missionary work they were to undertake would not be welcomed everywhere, nor by everyone. They would experience the same hostility Jesus himself received. They even needed to be prepared for division within their own families. They must be willing to put Jesus' mission above all this. For risking abuse and experiencing rejection and suffering, Jesus promises, "those who lose their life for my sake will find it" (10:39).

When Matthew wrote his account of the Gospel, about 20 years or so after Jesus’ resurrection, he wasn’t simply writing a record of Jesus' teaching and actions. Matthew was

writing a Gospel, the message of God's Good News, that spoke to his own community of faithful people who knew Jesus as the Lord and Saviour. It continues to speak to us today. There is still a need to send out labourers into the harvest field, and take the message of Good News, the message of God's love and salvation to the towns and villages. There is a continuing need for us to be missionary, fishers of men and women. That mission may be close to home or further afield. In these modern times, those sent may not be quite so dependent on others for their food and lodging as were the disciples, but they will be dependent upon a welcoming hospitable reception. The words of Jesus main true, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" (10:40).

In the ancient world identity was tied to family and community. To welcome someone into your home implied not only welcoming that person but the community who sent the person and all that they represent. So, welcoming a disciple of Jesus would mean welcoming Jesus himself and the one who sent him, God the Father. That's true even today. When a Minister or Elder is welcomed into someone's home, Jesus himself is being welcomed.

There are many examples of people receiving blessings because they welcomed Jesus and offered him hospitality; the woman who wiped Jesus' feet with her hair, the Samaritan woman at the well who indeed gave Jesus a cup of cold water, and Zacchaeus who welcomed Jesus into his home.

Jesus gracefully accepted the welcome and hospitality he was offered. Notice, hospitality is a two-way process, to be offered but also accepted.

Today's Gospel passage reminds us of the privilege and responsibility of representing Jesus and introducing him to others.

Jesus assures us that he himself is present in our lives when we welcome others. Yet, Jesus tells us the opposite is also true, he is also present when others do the same for us. When the disciples entered a home in Jesus' name, Jesus himself was received. We are told that those who offer this kind of hospitality receive the reward of the righteous. In other words, those who receive God's people receive God himself, and those who receive God receive God's reward.

Of course, not all are sent to such a high-profile ministry that the disciples had. The Holy Spirit gifts us for different tasks in the mission and ministry of the Kingdom. However, each one of God's faithful people is sent into the world to tell and embody the good news of Jesus Christ. We are sent to offer Christ to others with humility and vulnerability.

At Christmas we celebrate God being born into the world. "The Word was with God and the Word was God. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us " as John puts it in the opening verses of his Gospel. One of the names Jesus has was 'Emanuel' meaning God with us. Theologians speak of the 'incarnation', meaning God taking the human form, born into the world as a human child and living on earth as a human being. They also speak of an 'incarnational ministry' to describe our representing or embodying God in our

relationships with others. God is not remote, somewhere “up there” but with us, close, sharing our lives with us.

What would happen if we were truly conscious of bearing the presence of Christ to everyone we meet, in every home, workplace, shop or village hall we enter? What would happen if we saw every conversation as an opportunity to speak words of peace and grace, of welcome and acceptance? What could happen if we saw every interaction as an opportunity to embody Christ's love?

When Jesus came into the world some received him and others rejected him. John also wrote in those opening verses to his Gospel, “to all who received him [Jesus] and believed in his name he gave the right to be called children of God.”

What might happen if we always recognised God’s blessing on those who offer us welcome and hospitality? What could happen if we did our best to be conscious that we offer and receive Jesus when we offer and receive hospitality from one another, how transforming that would be?

Paul writes about the kind of transformation we each experience when we have faith in Jesus. He uses the language of slavery, language his Roman readers would have readily understood. He says that “once we were slaves to sin” and goes on to say that “the wages of sin is death”. It seems odd that slaves get a wage. Paul uses the word ‘wages’ in an attempt to express a contract – do this, you get that. By contrast, serving God results not in a contractually agreed recompense for labour, we cannot earn our salvation, but a free gift due to the graciousness of God, and that gift is eternal life.

Hospitality means acceptance and welcome. We provide hospitality not as a contractual requirement, not because we seek a reward, not even because we seek the good will of those to whom it is offered. We offer the cup of kindness as a free gift, true hospitality expects nothing in return.

Welcome and hospitality was hugely important to Jesus, for it is at the very heart of being God, and it didn’t make any difference to him, for whom, or where or when hospitality took place. Jesus gave and received it.

We take turns being the host and being the guest. Sometimes we are the ones who need the hug or cup of water; at other time we provide it. Either way compassion flows. We should never forget that as God’s faithful people we are the body of Christ on earth. Just as like Jesus, when we accept or offer welcome and hospitality we have the opportunity to bring others unto a relationship with God. We have the opportunity to show others God’s love by showing them our love, the power to bring them face to face with God when we see the face of God in them.

As host Jesus offers us eternal life and he promised, around the table of hospitality at his Last Supper, that he was going to prepare a place for us and that he would come back and take us there so we can be with him forever (John 14:1-3). Will you accept his hospitality and will you offer it to others?

Pray:

Loving God, through our offering a greeting, smile, helping hand or supportive word, may others see your love reach out and touch them. Loving God, through our returning a greeting, smile, accepting a helping hand or listening to a supportive word may we see your love reach out and touch us. Amen



Prayers of the People for the People

Loving God, we thank you that whoever we are and whatever we have done you never turn us away but welcome us home and you embrace us in your loving care, offering us the fattened calf of your hospitality.

We thank you for the friendship we find within our church family, for the love and support we are offered and the care and concern we are shown. Pour out your blessing upon your church, gift and guide each person by your Holy Spirit and show us your vision. Help us to be a church accepting of all, welcoming all, encouraging all. Help us to be a church wanting to grow in our relationship with you and working fruitfully so others will come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Loving God, with the restrictions upon our daily lives that cause frustration and annoyance, help us not to forget the many people for whom this is their normality and has been for years;

people affected by long-term drought where getting water is a major daily challenge;
people affected by destructive storms; struggling in poverty, or through war, conflict or oppression forced to adopt the life of refugee;
people who have no place to call home and live temporarily in one place and then another.

We thank you for all we have, food, clothing, shelter, health care, education and all that makes our lives comparatively easy.

All of us are wonderfully made; young and old, strong and weak. We are each able to give and receive love. Help us work together selflessly and collaboratively for all who need our help. Help us to put aside preconceptions about other people. Help us welcome and accept one another for each person is precious to you.

Loving God place before you the unrest in our towns and cities. We offer to you people abused or exploited. We are sad when those from outside our communities are treated badly simply because they come from outside. Help us welcome them and accept what they can offer to us. May each person be treated with dignity, respect and hospitality, for we may entertain angels without knowing it.

Loving God, we ask your comfort and support for all who mourn. In your love for us you offer the free gift of eternal life. We thank you that Jesus has open the gates of heaven that all may go in and live in that place he has gone to prepare for us.

Loving God, accept these prayers for the sake of you Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

[Benediction](#) *Click on the link*



One of the consequences of us not being able to worship together is that the church anticipates a fall in income. However, we will continue to incur costs, of insurance etc. There will be little financial saving to our not meeting, yet revenues could be severely hit. Please prayerfully reflect on this and, if you are able, continue to put aside your financial offering so that you can make your contribution for the work of the church when we next meet together. Thank you.

Thank you too if you already give by standing order or by bank transfer, that is much appreciated.