



Worship at Home—17 May 2020

Dear Friends of Currie Kirk. Please get in touch with the Kirk Office (451 5141) if you need anything. We have friends willing to listen, shop, walk a dog, fix a garden. Website: <https://www.curriekirk.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/>

Call to Worship (Iona Community)

God you summon the new day to dawn, you teach the morning to waken the earth
Great is your name, Great is your love

For you the valleys shall sing for joy, the trees of the field shall clap their hands
Great is your name, Great is your love

Your love and mercy shall last for ever, sure as the new morning, sure as the sunrise
Great is your name, Great is your love

PRAYER

Eternal, ever blessed God
On this new day, we commemorate your creation of the world and all that is in it
Thankyou for the light which wakes us morning by morning
And for that greater Light which shines in Jesus Christ.

We thank You for the family of faith, united in our desire to follow Him.
Thank You for those with whom we have laughed, who make this world a more cheery place.
Thank You for those with whom we have wept and we have shared our sorrows in our times of need.
We bless You for those we have served alongside
sharing together in a common task.

We bless You for those who have shared our dreams as partners in a common purpose
Bless each and all this day with whom we worship alone and together,
for those with whom we pray together,
for those in whose company we listen for Your voice

Even when your people are physically apart
You remind us that we are one in You
You hold us close to You in your Spirit by the immeasurable power of Your love.
And so, Lord Jesus, in this time of uncertainty
Be our Light to guide us
When we are worried
Give us the Light of your peace
When all seems dark or difficult
Give us the Light of your hope.

AMEN

**The Scripture Readings are taken from Isaiah 43:1-3, 16-21—God promises to do a new thing; and
John 14:12-20—Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit**

Meditation

The last time some of us were together in Currie Kirk was the 22nd of March. Schools closed the following day. I've lost count of the weeks. To some of you with jobs or kids to home-school, the weeks have disappeared, but to others, separated from loved ones and activities—days in quarantine can seem like an eternity.

40 DAYS

The word quarantine comes from the French, 'quarante,' meaning 40. From ancient times, 40 was used symbolically to mean a very, very long time. In the Bible Noah built the ark and it rained for 40 days before the rainbow came. The Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years before God led them to the promised land. Jesus' quarantine fast in the wilderness lasted for 40 days. Although 40 was symbolic, these are all stories of God's plan to save his people. Sometimes God's people had to be patient, to pray and be faithful, to wait on God to see how God's plan for their future might unfold. Their times in the wilderness shaped them to be God's people.



I was surprised to learn that Boris made his announcements last Monday because Monday marked the 100th day of lockdown. If we think 40 days is a very very long time, how much longer does 100 days seem? It isn't surprising that some are impatient to know exactly how and when lockdown will end. They want a government plan, a strategy to get the economy going and even the Catholic Church is pushing proposals to re-open.

Whilst some messages are mixed, or confusing, Scotland seems intent on relying on experts. Whatever you think of Nicola Sturgeon, Janey Godley's dub-over of her yelling, "Stay haem, ye've been telt!" put a smile on many faces.

After more than 100 days, people do want to get back to normal and it WILL be great to open the Kirk doors again. But perhaps a bigger question for those of us with faith is to ask ourselves, do we just want to get back to the old normal? It is true, it would be great to get a hair-cut, and to meet up—but there are things that have changed and although the deep suffering and losses caused by Covid-19 are dreadful, some good has come from this crisis.

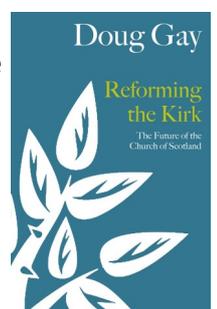
Like neighbours speaking more to one another and doing more to help each-other. And communities having new initiatives, making facemasks and doing deliveries and outsourcing local farm produce, and donations to help the poor or the homeless . . . maybe some of us have slowed down enough to hear the birds sing because we couldn't hear before, for traffic.

There are 'before-and-after' photos showing pollution reduced in cities. In Edinburgh the bees are flourishing because wildflowers haven't been mowed. Animals and marine life have been returning to habitats as never before. Here is a fun video if you can watch it. I love the mountain goats roaming freely around town in Wales.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysGGlxrwuk>

There are many scientists analysing the present time. During these difficult circumstances, it is good for us as people of faith to think more prophetically about what "normal" life will be post-pandemic—here in the UK and elsewhere.

John Bell of the Iona Community was on the radio. He mentioned when the Hebrew people were in their 40 years wilderness they grew weary of uncertainty and so they started moaning. Having been liberated from slavery in Egypt they longed to go back . . . to their old normal lives . . . but they had forgotten that the past was not at all perfect. John Bell hopes that we will not return to the old normal. He doesn't want us to return to a world where enterprises exploit the weak, without conscience, or where unnecessary travel and business practices create pollution. He doesn't want us to return to "normal" where carers in homes are undervalued, underpaid or underappreciated, or where social services and health care providers are underfunded.

This is the week when the General Assembly of the National Church would have taken place. Last year the Church agreed to many reforms influenced by Professor Doug Gay's book, "Reforming the Kirk, the Future of the Church of Scotland." Whilst the shape of those reforms have not been wholly agreed, my hope is that out of the crisis, some areas of the National Church (I do not refer to Currie), but the institution will be shaped by prayer and faithfulness and decisions will be honed in response to the epidemic. My prayer moreso, is that without the GA meeting, people involved in Parish life will still influence decisions and that they will not be made by centralised hierarchy. I am reading Doug Gay's book with interest.



We are Christians. The world is always evolving. Our faith teaches us that the Spirit groans with creation to bring about a new thing. Our God is always creating new life from things that are broken. That is God's gift, even in times of difficulty, uncertainty and lockdown. Jesus promises that in him we are all **new** creations. When he offers his cup of salvation he promises, "this is the **new** covenant sealed by my blood." God is involved in the life of the world and is often doing a new thing. We just need to pay attention.

Here is a wee poem that my predecessor Lezley Stewart wrote recently

A New Normal—Lezley Stewart

Every normal was once new
it did not arrive,
but came to be.

Time and tide,
call and creativity,
all played their part
in where we arrived -
in this life in God
which we called normal.

And what of Christ,
our hope, our strength -
whose normal,
once,
was family life,
learning carpenter's ways?

Did he welcome
his call and challenge,
this change to all he knew?
Did he also feel loss,
longing for the familiar,
even while bringing life?

And one day
our new normal,
(still becoming)
will also bring
new hope -
new ways to be.

Things will change
again and always,
for life and faith
never stand still.
God is making all things new.

Even what is normal....

Lezley Stewart

The story goes that when Christopher Columbus was sailing to the new world his hired sailors were threatening mutiny. The voyage was long and hard and there was no land in sight for weeks. One day Columbus saw an encouraging sign. Floating on the ocean swells was a small tree branch. The branches' leaves were green, indicating that land could not be far away. The green branch gave the sailors enthusiasm and a renewed hope. Soon after its discovery, land was sighted from the sailor in the crow's nest.

When all seems hopeless God has a way of surprising us and being present, even in the loneliest places. It is not God who is absent but we who have ceased to respond and pray and wait and believe and hope. Nelson Mandela said that we should make our decisions out of our hopes, not our fears.

So I think whilst the present is hard and the future is still a little uncertain, I want in this message to ask us all to continue to pray for, and to help shape, whatever normal we will come back to. It might not be an old normal, it may well be a new normal. I hope we won't have to wear facemasks and keep two metres apart and avoid hugs forever. But we have a role to play in shaping our future as communities, as a church and as a world. And so I will just reiterate few of the lines from Lezley Stewart's poem.

And one day
our new normal,
(still becoming)
will also bring
new hope -
new ways to be. God is making all things new.

Pastoral Prayer

Living God who gives life and breath all that we have, we received from You.

Help us to love as you have loved

Help us to live, as you have lived

Help us to be neighbours to our fellow humanity as Christ taught us to do

And so we bring our prayers for those who feel weary or tired, who are bowed down

For you God, are the one who picks up those who are fallen,

Who raises those brought low and understands the burdens we carry.

We pray for those who are crushed by responsibilities at work
and those who feel the pain of our world.

We remember those in care homes, intensive care units,

We pray for ambulance drivers and all front-line workers . . .

Help them to keep on going.

Bring supportive friends alongside them.

Give them tokens of Your grace,

fresh vision and courage and signs of encouragement in their struggle.

God, who binds up the broken-hearted
and comforts those who mourn.

We thank you that we can come to you in times of loss or loneliness

And so, bless those who feel alone in isolation

Or who are uncertain of the unknown; confused by a world that seems

less secure and more frightening than before

Those who face hardship, financial or otherwise.

Bless those whose hearts are sore today
whose family circle has been invaded by illness
or whose joy has been darkened by death.

Bless those for whom the passing years have taken too many friends

We remember to your love all lost loved ones

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Help the Church, we pray,

to be a place of acceptance and belonging,

a place of welcome and inclusion, where all can find a home,

a listening ear, a friendly smile and a helping hand.

Help us to adapt to new ways to share your love in lockdown.

This week without a General Assembly, we think of the National Church

We pray for those carrying the responsibility of office and for concerned trustees.

We pray that your light will guide us to make wise reforms.

Give us this new day, the joy that no-one can take from us,
the life which is Your life and the hope that gives strength to our actions.

Help us to sing of our faith and in that singing we may find our strength to go on,

We give you all the prayers of our hearts,

trusting in Jesus who prays for us today, even as we pray to Him.

Amen