

Worship at Home—30 August 2020

The Scripture Readings are taken from:

**Romans 12: 1-18
and
Matthew 16: 24-28**

Call to Worship

St Paul tells us, “this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (*Romans 12:2*)
Let us come before God and worship him. Let us pray.

Opening Prayer

Lord, you are God of the whole universe, and yet You are mindful of us.
You delight in our praise and rejoice in all Your people who find a way to acknowledge
Your presence in our world and in our lives.

We meet you in the everyday, we see You:
In the beauty of a flower
In the smile of a child
In the dedication of a partner
In the selfless giving of those who care for us
And the kindness of friends

You inspire us, challenge us and comfort us.
Yet we confess that often our eyes are so downcast that we fail to discern Your presence.
Even, when Your presence is startling, we can be so wrapped up in ourselves that we fail to notice.
We have missed opportunities to witness to Your presence at work in our lives
and in the lives of others, by grasping too tightly all that we have or by excluding others from our tightly drawn
circle.

Forgive us, O God. Draw us out of ourselves.
Lift up our eyes to see You everywhere.
Release us from the boundaries we set ourselves, freeing us to love and welcome others in Your name.

May our worship bring increase our awareness of Your beating heart at the centre of life, calming our fears and
restoring our souls, knowing ourselves beloved of God, united with all Your children in heaven and on earth.

Hear us as we share the Prayer Jesus taught us . . .

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.
And 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, for ever.
AMEN

Scripture Readings:

Romans 12: 1-18—A Living Sacrifice

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Humble Service in the Body of Christ

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love in Action

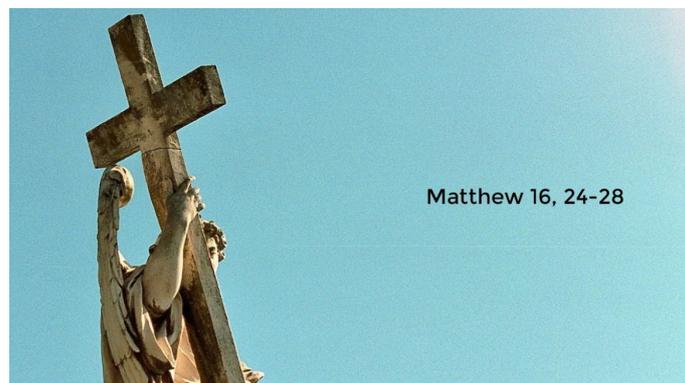
Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone

Matthew 16: 24-28

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”





It is with great sadness that we have to intimate the deaths of:

Mr Alexander (Alex) Ramsay Hunter, 7 Muir Wood Drive, Currie

Mr Alexander Leishman, 57 Muir Wood Crescent

Please pray for the families

Sermon in Lockdown

We have all heard the expression, “You are what you eat!” Our bodies respond to nutrients we have in our diet. I heard about a woman who said she was trying to get healthier during lockdown. Her friend asked her what do you eat for breakfast. Eggs she answered. Fried eggs? Boiled eggs asked her friend. No she said, Chocolate eggs.

Obviously what we eat impacts our health and lots of people spent lockdown trying detox regimes while others maybe had a little extra food or wine. Our son Gabe who spent ages lifting weights and working—he says that after lockdown most men will be one of three things; a hunk, a chunk or a drunk.

I’m joking of course—although we are lucky in Britain to be able to have so many choices of foods to eat and we are aware of those who even now are relying on food banks . . . but there is something that shapes our lives far more than food. And that is how we think. Radio 4 played a programme with Brian Cox and Conan O’Brian this week about the brain and the life of the mind. There is so much about the brain that we cannot yet understand and yet within the life of the mind is where we develop our consciousness, our patterns of thinking that shapes us and our life far more than anything we might eat or drink.

St Paul, when he was writing his letter to the Romans was ever aware of this fact. He knew that being a Christian in the early days of the Church under the Roman Empire was far from easy. He wanted to encourage people not to be swayed by the powers and pressures of the day but encouraged them to ask God to shape their hearts and minds and lives. And so in Romans 12 he says, *“this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and uphold what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

When St Paul encourages Jesus’ followers to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, he knew that what goes on in our minds shapes us and impacts our life.

This point was explained in a scientific way by Brian Cox when he explained that our brains are always adapting and changing. From the time we are born, our brains are absorbing information and all the neurons, neurotransmitters and hormones work in response to the world around us . . . he described it as the brain’s plasticity or flexibility. We can literally train the brain . . . our minds are the product of our environment and activities, or communities and thoughts.

And yet so often it can feel as if we are living on autopilot, going through the motions, unthinking, unaware of how the world is influencing us. For example we need only think about people who get brain washed into cults, or groomed into gangs—or the pervasive and powerful ideologies that have distorted the Faith of young Muslims who get radicalised into a mentality of murder.

We are all troubled by the events in the United States . . . the tragic shooting so soon after the death of George Floyd and yet these events and the way leaders respond is just polarising people, entrenching them more on their side of the matter. I was reading about the culture of brutality in the US police. They have the strongest most powerful Unions in the land. They have money, and like the NRA they lobby the government and politicians. If a policeman commits a wrongdoing, the unions demand a 72 hour cooling off period. This allows them to get their story together and in this way, the system is set up in a way to protect its bad eggs than those who are innocently hurt. Give a badge and a gun to some, and they literally think they are above the law. This culture of thinking, with systemic racism allows them to treat anyone who disagrees as the enemy. There is such a thing as Group Think where people as a group get side-tracked by one myopic way of thinking.

What we think shapes us. What we think as individuals or as a community matters and impacts our life, our values, our attitudes to other people, how we see them or think about them. Brian Cox discussed the Human Brain Project which sets about to uncover the workings of the mind but the truth is there is so much yet we do not understand about our consciousness. Cox says that the mind delivers our experience of the world. Wow!



The Brian Cox show made me stop to think about what goes on in my own mind. How often do we go through the motions of the day without actually paying attention to our thinking. Thinking also impacts our feelings. We can develop positive patterns of thinking or negative ones. This was highlighted during lockdown when there was great concern for people's mental health. For many isolation, the inability to see friends or loved ones created deep feelings of anxiety and for some deep depression. This was to be expected, because human beings are naturally relational and we long for loved ones and companionship with one another.

St Paul was writing way before there was any such thing as the "Human Brain Project." And yet he knew that having a faith in God changes how we think and the more we develop and practice our faith, the more our minds are transformed and renewed for good.

You will remember the old classic by Norman Vincent Peale, "The Power of Positive Thinking." You can listen to him narrate the whole book on You Tube. Peale emphasises the practical wisdom of the Christian faith for everyday thinking. He says, "fill your mind to overflowing with faith. Study the scriptures and practice lots of prayer. The bigger your problems the bigger your prayers should be and then you can access powerful, vital faith. When you pray, visualise the affirming presence of God your companion who stands by you and supports you and will help you through every adversity."

He tells a lovely story about a friend who was a travelling salesman who spent hours alone in his car when he had a lot of time to think. He worried all the time. Every business deal that didn't work out made him feel inadequate and anxious. He would dwell on his negative fears so much that he got depressed. He had developed a habitual pattern of fearing the worst. One day he took a bible and he read through it and highlighted every encouraging verse he could find. Verses like, "If the Lord is for me who can be against me." Or "The lord is my guard and shield." Each time he went on a long journey he would write one of the verses on a card and put it on the dashboard of his car to remind him that God was with him. He noticed that the fear and anxiety began to subside. In fact he seemed to radiate positivity and magnetism and that had a great effect on his work and people were drawn to him.

There is much about the brain and much about the Christian Faith that remains a mystery. St Paul inspired so many by preaching of Christ's grace, Christ's hope and forgiveness as well as all the promises of the resurrection. Paul made a passionate appeal to the followers of Jesus to apply the faith as a great way to live. That part isn't rocket science. Christians, by nature are nonconformists because we hold to teachings of Jesus.

Paul encouraged people to break away from their neighbours obsessions with power or wealth or survival, to stop being afraid of what others think . . . and to allow God to renew their minds—to guide their thinking and to put their faith into practice for every day life.

Paul argues that each of us has been given gifts to use by God. He calls these charismata. They can be special gifts like preaching or prophecy or other gifts like kindness, compassion, humility, a willingness to serve, to help, to clean or paint or fix things. But we all have the ability to pray. Someone once said that the desire to please God is already an act of worship because even desiring to please God pleases God. And so Paul tells us to put our minds and our bodies to faith as living sacrifices of praise. When we phone others who are sad or sorry, when we visit someone who is sick, these for Paul are all forms of worship and doing such things builds us up and restores our souls in the process. Christians are not ordinary because Christ calls us to be extraordinary. Through God's daily love, grace and courage our minds are transformed and renewed to prove what is the will of God.

Amen.



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/>



Prayer for Others

God You love all that You have made,
the world and all its creatures.
We praise you for the assurance that You hold us in love,
May we be conscious of Your divine footprint matching ours
bringing moments of joy and calm
as we travel through these uncertain days,

Your love gathers and enfolds all things.
Your heart breaks when any part of Your creation suffers.
We pray for all who live in fear today
and for those whose fears have been realised –
those who mourn loved ones, who see no light of dawn after darkness.
For those who have given up hoping for different or better
May we as your children, hold out faith and hope enough for the world
And may your guiding light open opportunities to help people emerge from any darkness

We pray for world leaders,
that they may be filled with Your wisdom and be committed
to find ways forward to honour and protect creation
to build nations where all are valued,
where each and all matter, regardless of race, religion
background or belonging

Loving God you can unearth the wisdom that you created in us
To heal and help the world
may you inspire us, challenge us and comfort us.
You give us a part to play in bringing about your kingdom of justice and peace
May your love in our lives, the teaching of Jesus
and the power of the Holy Spirit
Be reflected in all our decisions and our collective actions so that we can serve one another and give
hope to the world in your name.

Amen.

A Message from Edinburgh Direct Aid:



We are writing to you as one who has previously expressed interest in, supported or done volunteer work for our charity. If you have donated recently we do not wish you to feel pressured to do so again, but thought that you might appreciate an update on our work in Beirut.

Catastrophe in Lebanon: Explosion, Hyper-inflation, Covid 19

Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Armenian, Muslim, Ottoman, French, British, Syrian, Israeli: all have invaded Beirut, bombarded the city with their catapults, cannon, artillery or missiles; then stayed a few days or many centuries. But none have wreaked the damage that some 2500 tons of fertiliser has lately done.

Taking advantage of our long presence in Aرسال, 100 miles from Beirut, and working together with Green Helmets, a German charity with whom we have formed a partnership in Aرسال, Edinburgh Direct Aid has brought a construction and repair team to Beirut, and started work shoring up, mending and restoring homes in Karentina, one of the poorer areas of the city, which being close to the port suffered terribly in the blast.



Woman and child by the wreckage of their home

Faced with devastation on the scale of Beirut, one small charity cannot do much. But what we can do will make a great difference to those whom we are able to help. Our initial target is to repair doors and windows, and see to the safety of, 100 houses. EDA's contribution in materials, expenses, and small salaries for the team, is costed at just under \$10,000. If there is a good response to this appeal, we will be able to do much more, both as regards the work in Beirut, and our ongoing efforts to help in the hyper-inflation and continuing lockdown in Aرسال. And hopefully, we will soon be joined by many other NGO's.

Maggie Tookey, Edinburgh Direct Aid's international projects director, writes from Beirut:

Beirut is complete chaos. It feels to have lost all its spirit but the strength of the continuing protests seem to belie that. Maybe its the depth of anger that everyone seems to hold, apparent in everyone I speak to about how the explosion and the economic collapse came to pass. The city seems to have no guidance and no authority to control anything. Its almost lawless despite the state of emergency and the presence of the Lebanese army on the streets.

Traffic congestion is the worst I've ever known. It takes me almost 2 hours to get to our work site near the port—a distance of 6 kilometres. I've now measured it. The army closes roads at random. Inside the city, thousands of volunteers are sweeping up glass and masonry and endless streams of small trucks come to take it away, choking up the narrow streets even more. Much of it gets left—swept into big piles in any corner behind houses and kiosks, probably destined to remain there for months/years.

The port area which I pass every day, is a sort of Ground Zero. Nothing is recognisable in the blast area. A desert of twisted metal overlooked by huge and ruined silo towers, still standing but spilling out their contents to form a grain mountain.

People come to stare in the evening when it's cooler. They come from all over Lebanon taking selfies and endless pictures of the disaster. They come in big 4 wheel drive cars, blocking the roads and preventing those of us trying to get to work. It's very hard not to get out and yell at them when stuck at a

chaotic road intersection for 20 minutes unable to move. The police are useless. They do nothing. They've given up.

The blast was terrifying. 50% of the force went out to sea towards Cyprus. The other 50% went deep into the city. God only knows what would have happened had the blast not been on a small peninsula by the sea.

Karantina is an area of roughly 1 sq km, the nearest part being less than 500 meters from the epicentre of the blast. The community is mostly poor Lebanese and a few Syrian families. EDA, along with our partners, the Green Helmets, have set up a carpentry workshop with machinery brought from our base in Arsal and a team of EDA refugees trained in setting up shelters and repairing housing in Arsal. The workshop is on a patch of rough land by several blocks of 3/4 storey flats which have all suffered damage. As with many buildings the explosion blasted out windows and doors. There's also some structural damage: we have an engineer in our team to check possible problems. Many men in these families are port workers; some were killed or injured and most have lost friends in the explosion.



Syrian refugees in the Edinburgh Direct Aid / Green Helmets construction team prepare replacement windows

The team is making window frames, door frames on site in the makeshift workshop and every night, two of the team take turns in sleeping there to guard the valuable, rented machinery. We have a target of 200 windows but of course the need is endless. We will see how the project plays out in terms of funding. Right now it's hot, hard, noisy work but the residents are delighted to get our help.

Meanwhile in Beirut the protests continue; sometimes the army fires off their guns to clear the streets which causes alarm when it's close by.

We take as much care as possible with the Covid threat. Not so easy with a bunch of Syrian Refugees who don't take it seriously and residents who are traumatised by the explosion. But I am watching our team to make sure they use the anti bac and mask up in the houses. I wasn't a teacher for nothing!!

If you can help at all, with any sum, big or small, we would be truly grateful. As will be those whom we help in Beirut.

Denis Rutovitz, Chairman

HOW TO HELP

Click here to donate on line: <https://www.edinburghdirectaid.org/Stripe/Stripe.htm>

Post donations by cheque to: Edinburgh Direct Aid, 29 Starbank Road, Edinburgh EH5 3BY

By Phone: 0131 552 1545

By Bank Transfer: a/c Edinburgh Direct Aid, Bank of Scotland, Sort Code 80-11-05, Account Number 00163278

(please do let us know of your donation, for correct attribution, and for Gift Aid)