



Worship at Home—20 September 2020

Call to Worship

God the faithful listener is waiting to be found and known
God will answer those who are calling
God will always reach out to those who are in need
God is the wellspring of all life
God is present now
Let us bless God's name together
Let us pray

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, all loving and all powerful,
we come to you for renewal and strength
For you are God-with-us and God-in-us
We rejoice that you sent your Son to reveal your love and grace
Towards us, a people of sinners

We thank you that you welcome us
Even when our voices are less than joyful
We thank you that you wait for us
Even when we drag our feet
We thank you that your generosity overflows
Even when we are grudging towards others.

In this sacred time, remind us that you are Lord of all
show us how to honour and glorify you
and help us to surrender our lives to your unfailing love
so that we may truly know the blessings of your peace and joy.

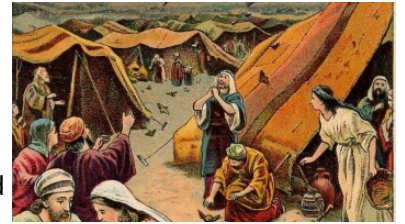
Hear us now as we share our Lord's Prayer

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

The Scripture Readings are taken from: Exodus 16: 1-8 & 13-15 & Philippians 1: 1-9 & 21-26

Exodus 16: 1-8 Manna and Quail

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."



Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."

So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" Moses also said, "You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord."

Exodus 16: 13-15

That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat."

Philippians 1: 1-9 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

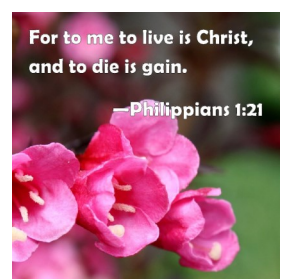
I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

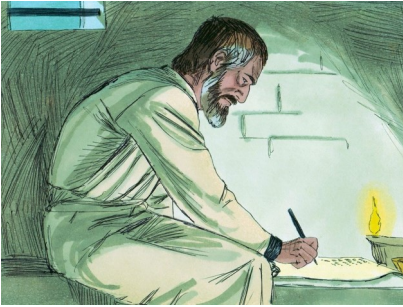
⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

Philippians 1: 21-26

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.



Sermon

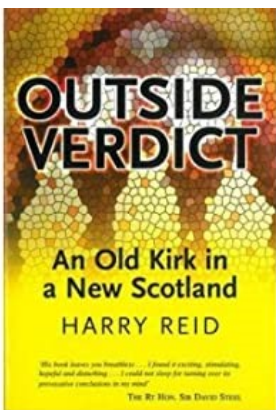


Philippians 1: Paul writes from Prison

Paul's letter to the church in Philippi is often considered to be the loveliest letter ever written by Paul. His deep affection for the people in the Church is very moving. The letter to the Philippians is also known as the Epistle of Joy because in this short personal letter, Paul mentions words like joy, rejoicing and gladness 19 times.

Barbara Brown Taylor once said that joy is one of the unmistakable signs that God is present. In the words of Rowan Williams, "Sometimes people's love of God can make them a little dotty, with an all pervading warmth and delight and incommunicable gladness which is beyond all words." We think of the Psalms of King David in which he is singing, dancing and rejoicing before the Lord. The bible explains that Joy is one of the gifts of the Spirit along with love, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5) Joy was a characteristic associated with Christians in the early Church. In fact a nickname for Christians in the days of the Roman Empire was 'Hilares'- the root of the word hilarious.

It is a shame that the Church in Scotland is not always known for its joy. Robert Louis Stevenson once remarked in his journal, "I went to church today and for once I am not depressed." I confess, as I was writing this, I went on YouTube and I lost an hour looking at old re-runs of Ricky Fulton's Rev I.M. Jolly. He was so funny in his dry, dreary way. For many years the cold Calvinistic attitudes in the Church of Scotland earned a reputation for being sour, sullen and serious.



Around the time of the Millennium, Harry Reid who wrote a book called, Outside Verdict: An Old Kirk in a New Scotland. He went around churches to worship and he was invited to the General Assembly. He described some services as dour. After observing Holy Communion at the General Assembly he said, "I could discern absolutely no joy in the proceedings." His findings prompted the 'Church without Walls' movement. I think that is why it is fun to see some of these Gospel Choirs singing and dancing. It is a sad thing that some Christians frown upon dancing. Someone once said, "A Gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms!"

We are blessed to know the Gospel—which actually means The Good News. Why be gloomy? How we need Good NEWS these days.

Theologians are quick to point out that our spiritual understanding of Joy not the same as contemporary ideas about happiness. Happiness can fluctuate. It can go up and down depending on happenings because the root word hap (in happiness) is an old word for chance. Happiness, by definition depends on the happenstance when by chance things go well. When, by chance things go wrong, we use words like mishap or unhappy. Happiness is haphazard.

In the United States, the Declaration of Independence proclaims the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Some people think that happiness is something we have to pursue by our own efforts; working hard, earning money, having family time or enjoying good holidays—these are often things people equate with the idea of happiness.

But Joy in the faith is not something to pursue or save up for like a holiday. Joy doesn't rely on happenings or chance. Joy in a Christian sense, is a gift that God gives freely when we dwell in God's presence. In fact, the amazing thing about joy is that even in the very worst of times, or the most difficult circumstances, people of faith often experience real joy.

CS Lewis expressed this in his book, "Surprised By Joy" which was made into a film called Shadowlands. He had met the love of his life named Joy. He found that even after his heart was broken when he lost her to cancer, through his experience of love and loss his faith grew and he still found joy. He once said, "Joy is the serious business of heaven."

Saint Paul as he wrote his letter to the church in Philippi was expressing his joy in a time of adversity. When he wrote he was in chains, literally in prison. He was awaiting trial for preaching the Gospel. After he was arrested, he had also endured a long and arduous journey. He was first arrested in Jerusalem and was taken to Caesarea. When he proclaimed that he was a citizen of Rome, it was decreed that he should be sent back to Rome to face the courts of Caesar. If you read through the book of Acts you will remember that on this journey as a prisoner destined for Rome, the boat set sail late in the season and due to terrible storms was shipwrecked. By the time he writes this letter, he has made it to Rome. He has young Timothy with him who is also in chains. Neither of them know what the outcome will be—if they will be released or if they will be incarcerated indefinitely or perhaps sentenced to death. Under Caesar's rule, this is a brutal, and frightening situation.

We hear about how Covid-19 has delayed a lot of court cases, putting strain on people's mental health. Last week on our Guild zoom meeting Ruth Donaldson told us about the sufferings of people in places where even today, people are persecuted for their faith. We would think Paul might be miserable or angry at God. After all his best efforts to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, here he is in chains.

However, Paul says these words to his friends in Philippi, "I thank God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day." Paul didn't want his friends to be concerned about him because he wants them to continue their ministry. Paul had the joy of the Lord and the fellowship of his friends to strengthen him. The joy of the Lord gives strength.

If we remember, Paul was not always a joyful chap. He was not always called Paul. When we first meet him in the bible, he is Saul of Tarsus. He is a devout Jew from the Tribe of Benjamin. In Philippians 3 he confesses that before he met Jesus, he was a legalistic, narrow-minded man who followed the law and persecuted other people. He describes himself as a, "Pharisee with a zeal for persecuting the Church." Saul of Tarsus certainly doesn't sound like a joyful chap. But when he encountered Jesus on the Road to Damascus everything changed, including his name from Saul to Paul. Now he defined himself as Christ's servant—and because of this, nothing can take away his joy. Fred Craddock paraphrases Paul's letter to the Philippians brilliantly like this:

"Dear friends get your mind off me. If you are worried about how I'm doing, well I'm fine. I am prepared. I am prepared if I live, and I am prepared if I die. With everything I have gone through and with this aching body, I would be glad to be free of it. Death is no threat. In fact, if I had my way, I would rather die and be with Christ. But I think God has more work for me to do, so I will probably return to see you someday; in fact, I'm sure of it. Until that time comes, keep loving one another and serving one another. I am the one in prison but Christ is not in prison. The church is built around Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever and so stand together, side by side and love one another deeply so that your joy in Christ will overflow."

Despite the chains and uncertainty, Paul rejoiced because in Christ, his soul was free and he simply wanted the Church in Philippi to continue to be the church and share in that joy.

He knew that joy comes when we live not for ourselves but for God and others. When Paul preached the gospel he radiated joy and people came to him to hear him, to be baptised by him. He founded so many churches because his love for God was captivating and contagious.

I am sure you know people—maybe you are one of those people—who radiate joy, even when things are difficult. I remember Isobel Losada wrote a book about visiting a monastery in Tibet where the monks had been badly persecuted. She was met by an elderly monk who greeted her enthusiastically with a warm smile and twinkling eyes. He was so cheery and as he was showing her around, he laughed and joked. She said, “I wondered how the human spirit can suffer so much and still radiate such cheerful optimism.”

Barbara Brown Taylor says that the only condition for joy is the presence of God. She says:

“Joy happens when God is present and people know and feel it . . . which means it can erupt in a depressed economy, in the middle of a war, even in a cancer ward, or the Intensive Care unit of a hospital.” In fact, she says, *“sometimes joy is more likely to happen when all our own ideas have crashed and burned. It is often in the wilderness, in the empty handed, ‘I give up’ that real joy is most likely to occur, and not when things are going our way. Don’t ask why”,* she says, *“it just does. And such joy is how we know God is here because no one else knows how to make life out of death. No one else knows how to come into dark places and turn the lights on and surprise everyone because it was the last thing they expected.”*



In some ways, Lockdown has been like a form of prison because even, if voluntarily, we were “locked” down. Like Paul, we have felt and continue to feel the ache of being apart from one another and the faith community . . . we have felt the pain of being apart from loved ones through distance too, and many have suffered other losses—losses of health, or job, a loved one, plans for a family celebration. Despite the hardships, let’s make sure Covid-19 doesn’t steal our joy. God is faithful. God is always inviting us to draw closer to him so that he can love us and when we join with one another even in this virtual way to worship, we know we belong to something far greater than ourselves—a kingdom community which means we are never alone, no matter our circumstance. Paul encourages us to show our care, compassion and comfort with and for one another so that our joy in Jesus Christ may overflow.





Louise Lamont

Heavenly Father,

As our precious time with you draws to a close, we turn our hearts and minds to those around us whether they be close by or on the other side of the world. We are living in strange times when it is frequently difficult to know what we can and can do from one day to the next. Help our leaders at national and international level to guide us safely along this path we are treading at present.

We are eternally grateful to those who have worked throughout these times—NHS workers, care staff, shop assistants, those in transport and deliveries. They have been at the forefront and we call your blessing down upon them. But let us not forget the quiet, unassuming army who have also been getting on with things. The neighbour checking to see if any shopping is needed or who hands in some home baking, those making scrubs and masks for keyworkers and others and those behind the scenes who have ensured that we still have power and wifi—so essential in today's world. Let them know that we appreciate them and that you are looking after them when they return home tired and weary.

Sadly, even in the midst of a global pandemic, wars and famines still continue. The refugee crisis grows ever more desperate with it becoming more difficult for the aid that they badly need to reach them. Help those on the ground to access the people most in need. Whisper into the ears and hearts of the warlords to encourage them to mend their ways.

For those who are sick and lonely, who are far away from loved ones with no hope of seeing them in person, come to them and comfort them letting them know that you are always with them. Help us to help them when we can. Even a phone call can make such a difference.

You have created a wonderful world for us. Let us not destroy it with petty squabbles. Help us all to work together by walking in the steps of Jesus to build a world of which we can be proud.

In a moment of silence, look into our hearts and hear our prayers for those that we hold especially dear. We pray all this in the name of our blessed saviour and your beloved son, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Guild Update

The Guild has resumed albeit in a totally different way due to covid restrictions. Little did I realise when I became president, that it would be under these extraordinary circumstances. However, the Guild will not be daunted even by a global pandemic and we have taken to Zoom with a vengeance.

On 1 September we held our AGM which had been cancelled in April with an online attendance of about 17. On Tuesday, 15 September, I hosted my first official meeting as president and we had an attendance of 20 including a speaker. Ruth Donaldson gave an extremely interesting talk on "The Taste of Freedom—Christian Solidarity". This was to have been our final meeting in April so we are very grateful to Ruth for agreeing to speak to us via zoom.

Our next meeting will be on 6 October at 10am when we are hoping to have Peter McDougall on "The Saughton Park Restoration Project". At present we are waiting to hear if he is prepared to do it on zoom. Shona is busy checking with potential speakers to see if they are happy to speak to us online. Watch this space to see what is coming up next.

All of you who are busy knitting hats, please be aware that we are still collecting them and they can be left in the foyer of GCH which will be open on a Tuesday morning. Hopefully EDA will be able to send them to Bosnia as many of the other routes are closed at present.

Finally I hope that you are all keeping well and managing to adapt to the latest restrictions placed upon us.

Stay safe,

Louise Lamont Currie Kirk Guild President

God provides

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Loving God,
Today we want to come and praise you.
Thank you that you go before us
and are with us in whatever we face.
You are our provider and protector.
Help us to learn to trust you more.
Amen



Question...

Would you rather...
Have one amazing friend or lots of people you are quite friendly with?
Eat cabbage at every meal for a week or eat raw fish once?
Play outside or inside?
Sneeze cheese or cry chocolate tears?
Eat your favourite food for every meal for the rest of your life or never be able to eat it again?

Praise together...



God provides (Tamela Mann) : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8BwydIR-r0>

Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in Exodus 16:1-15, 31-35. You can read them in a Bible or find them here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2016&version=GNT>

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage.



Talk together...



What's the best meal you've ever eaten?
What is something you've complained about in the last week? Does complaining ever really help us?
Why do you think the Israelites complained so much and didn't follow God's instructions?
How did God respond to the Israelites' grumbling?
Why do you think God gave them rules about collecting the manna and quail?
What's the difference between wanting something and needing something? Create a list of things that we need and things that we want. Try to include more than simply physical things, eg. forgiveness, love, safety, encouragement... Where can we see God's provision in our lives for all of those needs?
Can you think of a time when God provided something you needed in a miraculous way?
Can you think of any other stories from the Bible where God provided for people?

Play together...

Set up a sensory walk inside or outside. If outside this could also include messy elements such as soil or slime! If inside use textures like cardboard, cloth, smooth floorboards, bubblewrap etc. could be used.

Take off your shoes and socks and walk along the path, experiencing the different sensations of the surfaces being walked over.

When everyone has finished talk about the different sensations. Which were the best bits? Which were their worst?

On the path of our lives we have good, easy times as well as some bumpy, difficult times. Whatever stage we're going through it's reassuring to know that God, and other people, are walking with us.

Pray together...

Lord, this week help us to see your provision for us, to thank you for it, and help us to bless others everywhere we go.

Amen

Do something...

While we know and trust that God provides, often he invites us to be part of the story and share what we have. What could you do this week to help provide for others?

Here's some ideas:

Buy items for a local food bank

Donate clothes/toys to a charity shop

Buy Fairtrade items

Sponsor/donate money to a charity

Offer to help someone using the skills you've been given by God

Challenge together...

You'll need: a variety of different foods, blindfolds.

Give everyone a blindfold and pass them samples of different foods to taste. Can you work out what you're eating?

News from the Kirk

Currie's very own Peter Sawkins will be taking part in Channel 4's Bake Off on 22 September—be sure to tune in—we have all had the pleasure of tasting Peter's cakes—we wish him well.

The office is now open on Tuesday mornings from 9.30—12.30 (Tuesdays only) which will allow you to collect wool and bring along your knitting, milk bottle tops or stamps. Also any items you may have for Fresh Start.

The electronic doors will be open and boxes will be placed on a table in front of the swing doors to accommodate any deliveries. Hand Gels will be available. You must wear masks when entering and exiting the Hall. Entry beyond the swing doors is not allowed.

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/>

You can also find the sermon on YouTube—search Currie Kirk.

