

Worship at Home—25 October 2020

Opening Prayer—Krys Hume
Sermon—Heather Merriman
Closing Prayer—Louise Lamont



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

Jenette Fraser at Colinton Care Home on 13 October.
(ex Pentland View)

Please pray for the family

Heather: Good morning. Today the clocks went back an hour meaning we all had an extra hour in bed, or perhaps you were simply awake an hour earlier than usual and now have an extra hour to fill during today!

Notices: This week is the final week to hand in your shoeboxes. So far we have 27 boxes and 9 shoebags which is great, but if you still have one to finish then the cut off date is Friday 30 October. The hall will be open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings this week for you to drop off boxes, but if you would prefer someone to collect your box from your home then get in touch with Gordon Clephane (449 2313), Viola MacPhail (449 4664) or myself (familyworker_jvp@outlook.com) and we'll arrange to pick it up from you. We have also received five completed Smartie tubes which we will send to the Toilet Twinning charity.

You may or may not be aware that last week the Messy Church team put out Messy Church at home bags again for families and others to collect from outside the Gibson Craig Hall. Inside of these we provided an outline for a Messy Church session they could do at home, some crafts and activities, a Bible story book, craft materials and extra little goodies. We made up 70 bags and put 55 of them out at 10.45am on Friday morning and by 1.45pm that same day I had emails to say that all the bags had gone. On Friday evening I topped up the boxes with the remaining 15 bags and by late Saturday morning they had gone as well. We are so encouraged that so many children wanted the bags, we pray now that they will be used well and that families will utilise the story and the Messy Church outline to connect with God at home as well as enjoying the crafts. A huge thank you goes to the Messy church team for making this happen. Planning begins for more bags which we aim to put out for Advent/Christmas.

Call to worship

Psalm 90: 1-2 says: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." We come this morning to focus on God, conscious that the only way we can come before him is because of his great love and through Jesus' blood. Krys is going to lead us now in our opening prayer.



Krys Hume

Lord, we thank you for all of your creation; the sun, without which we could not live; the moon and stars which add to the beauty of creation, and this planet which is our earthly home. We thank you for the people of this planet; those who are near to us, our family and friends who mean so much to us in our daily lives, and those who are far away and unknown to us but who matter just as much to you. Be especially close to all those around the world whose lives have been disrupted by Coronavirus; show them your compassion and strength. And in particular, put your loving arms around Easter and her family at this difficult time of grief.

We live in a place where we can raise our eyes to the hills at any time and be uplifted from the valley. May these ever-present hills act as a daily reminder of your wonder and glory, and your constant presence with us. You shower countless blessings on us, many of which we take for granted, or claim as our right. In the silence let us think of some of these blessings, and be thankful.

SILENCE

Whenever we look to the hills, Lord, let us remember the good things in our lives and be thankful.

Lord, we are sometimes too busy or too lazy to make time for you in our lives; at other times we may deliberately shut you out; yet we know that you will not turn your back on us as we have done to you. We do not always do what we know to be right; we do not always treat others with respect and love. We make hurtful comments or indulge in harmful gossip; we have uncharitable thoughts. We often fall far short of how we should behave as your people.

Forgive us Lord for all our failings. Help us to live our lives in such a way that what we say and think and do marks us out as your followers, and reflects the love and goodness you show us daily.

Grant us the strength to follow you and not to count the cost. Help us to put our trust in you and to know that you will be our safe stronghold no matter what—you neither slumber nor sleep but watch over us every moment of the day and night; you are the keeper of our souls.

And now Lord, we ask you to open our hearts and minds in this time of worship. Banish all extraneous thoughts so that we can be totally focussed on you. Hear us as we pray to you in the words you gave 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

Bible Readings

Our Bible readings this morning comes from Deuteronomy chapter 34, verses 1-12

and from Matthew 22:34-40.

Deuteronomy 34: 1-12—The Death of Moses

Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea, the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.”

And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.

Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

Matthew 22: 34-40—The Greatest Commandment

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your Neighbour as yourself’. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Sermon—Heather

We can sense all around us, can't we, that the seasons are changing. We are rapidly moving out of summer, into autumn and towards winter. And while that means darker evenings, colder weather and more dampness around, there is also such beauty in the changing seasons and the colours of the leaves around us.



I mentioned earlier that we put out Messy Church bags, and one of the activities inside was an autumn scavenger hunt. My niece loves a scavenger hunt so I did it with her last Friday and it made me so much more aware of the beauty all around. Searching for different coloured leaves, various tree nuts, and wildlife I was more present and consciously aware of what was surrounding us. Even this past week, when working from home, I've been more aware of the rowan tree in the neighbours garden that whenever I look out the window I can see it with it's green and golden leaves and bright red berries that the birds enjoy so much.

Perhaps you're starting to prepare for winter—digging out warmer clothes, turning on the heating, making large pots of soup, battening down the hatches as they say! Yet as some things change it perhaps feels like other things are the same as they have been for months; we're still in lockdown, we still can't see friends or family as freely as we'd like, we're still doing church online. But around us nature and its author are continuing to work as normal. For them not much has changed it seems. So what does the eternal God have to say to us in this time? What will last and what will fade? That is really the focus for this morning.

We have seen many changes in our world over the past seven months, but surely as Christians there is something or someone of permanence to hold on to? God, of course, is our answer to that and our relationship with God and with others is a key feature of today's Bible passages. Our relationship with God and his presence in our life day by day is the constant that we can hold onto.

In the verses from Deuteronomy we read of the final moments of Moses' life and then of his death. And there are some remarkable things about this event.

Moses was 120 years old and he climbs a mountain. Granted he's not the oldest person mentioned in the Bible, and I'm not a scholar or expert to know whether or not they measured years differently to how we do, but nonetheless 120 years is not young. Yet here we read of Moses climbing a mountain! I looked it up and Mount Nebo is 2,680 feet high or 817 metres if you prefer. Compared to a building that's 13 times higher than the Scot's monument and almost the same height as the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, which is the tallest building in the world. That's not small, especially if you're 120 years old! But verse 7 says that although Moses was 120 years old when he died, his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. Incredible! But perhaps also necessary. God sustained Moses so he could see the vast expanse of the Promised Land. God showed him 130 miles in each direction to see all that would be given to his people. Moses was privileged to see God's promise fulfilled, he saw the land with his own eyes, even if he never had the opportunity to enter it.

The second strange thing is that no-one knows Moses' exact burial place. In verse 6 it says that to this day no-one knows the exact location. For someone as famous as Moses, that seems odd. In the present day important and notable people are buried in marked locations. Even for Moses' own ancestors such as Joseph, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives it is recorded where their final resting places are. So why not Moses? Unfortunately, I don't have an answer to that.

Thirdly, why doesn't Moses get to enter the Promised Land? He's the one that has performed incredible miracles of God in front of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, in front of God's own people. He has led the Israelites out of slavery, across the Red Sea, through the wilderness for 40 years. He has been God's voice to the people through it all and yet he doesn't get to make the final journey into the Promised land they've waited so long to reach. He is fit and healthy and has perfect eyesight, yet he is taken from this world. Moses is the great leader of the people, perhaps the most faithful to God and here his life ends without having reached what seems to be the ultimate goal.

Fourthly, there are only two main participants in this passage—Moses and God. Yes, the Israelites are mentioned, and Joshua is there as Moses' successor, but the most active are God and Moses. There is no tribute from Joshua or elders, there was only God present when Moses was buried. The funeral of this great leader is a mountain-top encounter between God and Moses himself.

Intriguing thoughts.

But what is more important and perhaps the most remarkable thing in this passage is not actually Moses' death but instead the strength of his relationship with God.

Throughout Moses' life a lot of things faded or changed for him. To begin with his home with his biological family was taken away and he was raised by Egyptian parents, the Pharaoh's family no less. But in time that faded as well, and Moses fled from his home country to a foreign land. He seemed to settle there—got married, had children, but little did he know that before long God would call him out of that place too, back to Egypt and then into the desert.

Moses' life was full of change and at times uncertainty, but the one thing that remained the same was God's faithfulness and presence in his life. For us, this year many things have changed, faded, been taken from us. For

some it feels as though our freedom has been taken as restrictions are imposed on all of us. Some have lost jobs, homes, loved ones and not only to coronavirus. Others have missed celebrations, occasions, time and precious moments with those they care about. Some have ultimately lost hope. But as Christians we should never lose hope, because our hope is not based on the things of this world, but instead on our eternal God and his unending gifts for us.

The Israelites relied on Moses, to lead them, to advocate for them. They complained to him, they blamed him when times were hard, they looked to him as their intercessor with God, but God was really their leader and it should be Him the people were reliant upon. As great as Moses was as a leader for God's people, he was just a man, and only God is eternal. While the Israelites relationship with God was through Moses, Moses had a direct and personal relationship with God himself.

Who are you relying on at the moment? Are you looking to those nearby—family, friends, neighbours all caring for each other? Are you looking to our country's leaders and those in power, waiting for them to proclaim the day when this challenge will be over? Or are you looking to God, relying on Him as your provider and protector, your strength and comfort, your rock and your salvation, in good times and in difficult times? Yes, God gives us people in our lives to have fellowship with, but ultimately he wants a personal relationship with us. I love that verse that says the Lord knew Moses face to face. Through Jesus we can know God face to face, we have a direct link to God because of Jesus' sacrifice and his resurrection.

One thing that really struck me when reading today's passage, was that Moses did not complain, grumble, get angry, or moan at God (that we know of!) when God speaks to him atop the mountain. Instead he accepts God's timing and plan. Moses does not withhold blessing because it's not what he wanted to happen, because he wanted to stick around a bit longer. We don't hear of Moses asking to first say goodbye to his family, he doesn't want to leave final instructions for Joshua or the elders, he knows being with God is more important. He enjoys the view, is content in God's presence and passes the baton of leadership onto the next person. His relationship with God is top priority.

In the words from Matthew we see that Jesus confirms that fact—the greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The second is to love others, to demonstrate God's love to them. Not to be concerned with the things of this world but to centre our attention on God's work of salvation and his kingdom.

So the challenge I want to leave all of us with, is how can we be more like that? Let's be honest—we don't know when this pandemic will be over, we don't know what restrictions will be placed on us in the coming weeks or months, we don't know when God will decide to call us into glory. But what we do know is that God is with us, walking beside us in every moment. His desire and longing is to be with his people, dwelling with them. Moses' relationship with God was strong. He was not afraid or surprised when God said his time was up, it was peaceful. Whilst the Israelites were longing to be in the Promised Land, that was their main goal, Moses knew that even there, peace and security was not certain. Moses knew the best place to be was with God and I imagine that that mountaintop encounter was not one of anger or sadness or fear, but instead of joy and peace and contentment of knowing he was going to be free of the difficulties of this world and rest eternally with God in heaven.

Now whilst our next encounter with God will hopefully not be our final moments, every encounter with God should be one that brings peace and comfort and contentment; that brings hope. Not because our circumstances have necessarily changed, but simply because we are in the presence of the living, almighty, everlasting God who loves us deeply.

Whilst on earth Moses lived each day with God, in God's presence, his focus and attention always fixed on God and his plans. What a challenge for us as we live in these days. There are so many distractions, yet we are called to be followers of Jesus, focused on God, seeking His face day by day, moment by moment, relying on Him, walking with Him and trusting in His plan and timing. We do not know what will fade next or what changes will come, but we do know that what will last, what will remain steadfast is God. His promises and his love and all his many attributes will never fade or diminish. So focus on them.

Let me finish by reading some verses from Philippians 4:1, 4-9.

“Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

In a moment Louise is going to lead us in our prayer for others, but below I've included a link to two songs, “Cornerstone” and “God, the uncreated one”. You might want to listen to those first before continuing on. Or you might want to continue with the final prayer and blessing then listen to the songs afterwards. But I would encourage you to spend some time responding to God, spend some time worshipping and praising him, take a few moments to be in God's presence without distractions.

Song links

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rswH9CSyWHk> God the Uncreated One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvLxZEU02uI> Cornerstone

Prayers for others (Louise)

Heavenly Father,

In these uncertain times we once again turn to you for help and comfort. Our world is facing another winter of this dreadful pandemic which is affecting each and everyone of us in some form of another.

We pray for those who are sick whether in hospital or not. Give strength to the medical staff charged with their care. For the families not allowed to visit or hold their hands, let them know that you are with them. Embrace the bereaved and hold them safe in your arms.

We ask you to assist our leaders to come to the correct conclusions when dealing with the measures which have to be put in place to help those who are suffering financially as well as emotionally.

Sadly wars still continue in the midst of all this and there are many refugees fleeing their countries. May they find safety and peace and be made welcome.

Closer to home we turn our hearts and minds to those in our community who have lost loved ones. We pray for the friends and family of Jenette Fraser. Also for Easter and her family who are mourning the loss of Rosemary. Hold them in your heart and give them the strength and comfort that they need at this difficult time.

Finally we send up our prayers for those who are dearest to us. Keep them safe and well.

We pray all this in the name of your beloved son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Blessing

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”



Rosemary Smart—1940-2020

Currie Kirk Updates

Easter

The funeral of Easter's Mum took place on Wednesday 21 October in Maryland, USA. The service has been recorded and it will be shown on You Tube within the next few days. A suitable link will be advised as and when known.

Easter, Darren, Gabe, Breanna and Sam were all there. Easter sends her love and thanks for the many expressions of support, emails, cards and particularly prayers she has received over this difficult and emotional time.

Please continue to support Easter, her sister Nicola and Dad, Ernest, prayerfully in the coming days.

Currie Kirk

While Easter grieves with her sister and father in the US, I am indebted to Heather and the Worship team for providing the Service on Sunday 25 October, and Grant Gordon for Sunday 1 November. I am also indebted to Rev Jim Dewar and Rev Dr Andre Groenewald for providing pastoral cover during this period.

At present the Remembrance Service is still a Work in Progress.

Gordon Clephane
Session Clerk

Update on Re opening Church Buildings

The last service we had in the Kirk was back in March of this year—seems like an eternity. The Kirk Session were due to meet this past Monday to discuss the Checklists and Risk Assessments that have now been completed to allow us hopefully to conduct worship in the Gibson Craig Halls and Prayer meetings in the Church. This meeting has temporarily been postponed until Easter arrives back from the United States.

Subject to Session approval of our documents and subsequent approval by Edinburgh Presbytery, a date will be agreed to open the Buildings for Worship and Prayer. Your patience and understanding would be appreciated.

The document, set out below, gives the guidelines we have to comply with prior to opening our buildings, which I encourage you to read. They are not exhaustive and will be updated as the situation dictates.

Gordon Clephane
449 2313

Currie Kirk Re Opening of our buildings for worship

Please do take your time to read this carefully before you come to any of our buildings.

If you have any symptoms of Covid-19 (A high Temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss of taste/smell) please do not come. Stay at home and contact NHS 111.

To comply with Scottish Government guidelines, we must follow the procedures below. If you do not feel able to follow these procedures, we would ask that you do not attend until the restrictions ease. Whilst it will be different, we are very pleased to be able to meet together for worship.

To attend a service at the Gibson Craig Hall you must:

Ensure you are fit and well, displaying no symptoms of Coronavirus.

1. Book a place at one of the services. The service will last approximately 30 minutes. It is essential you book a place at the service as we need to ensure numbers are within the capacity of the building. Under the current social distancing guidelines, we are restricted to 28 people.

2./ See over

2. To book a place at the service either email—currie_kirk@btconnect.com or call Nina in the Kirk office and leave a message with your name and number on 0131 451 5141. **This must be done by 5 pm on the Friday before the service.** Visitors are very welcome to come to our services. All we would ask is that you book a place as well. Keeping a note of those attending a service is a requirement to aid the Track and Trace system if necessary.
3. You will receive confirmation of your place by Saturday afternoon. When you come to the service please ensure that you have your own face mask. **This must always be worn when you are in a church building.** *Unless you are exempt from wearing a mask.
4. When you arrive at the Gibson Craig Hall please queue up in your household group (this is the group of people you will be seated with) keeping 2m distance from those outside the group. Duty elders will be on hand to assist you. The doors of the Gibson Craig Hall will open 30 minutes before the service starts.
5. You will be brought in individually to sanitise your hands and be checked into the Hall. Please be patient as this will take some time.
6. Once in the building, unless there is an emergency, please remain in your seat throughout the service. Unfortunately, we cannot permit folk to wander around chatting etc. We also cannot offer any refreshments, barring water if needed. If you do need the bathroom please let one of the duty elders know as we need to control numbers in our toilets.
7. During the service please follow instructions from the duty elders and person leading worship. We are not at this time allowed to engage in communal singing.
8. After the service is over, we will ask you to leave person or family group one at a time. Please wait in your seats and follow the instructions. Regrettably, we cannot allow you to hang around and chat within the building.

This will seem strange to us all, but it is necessary. We do it to protect each other and our community. If you have any questions or concerns please do get in touch using the contact details above.

Kind regards

Gordon Clephane
Session Clerk



Currie Kirk Guild

We had another successful zoom meeting on Tuesday when we were entertained by Ruth Boreham speaking on “The History of the Usher Hall”. I’m sure most, if not all, of you have been there at some point. Maybe we will manage again one day but certainly not in the “gods”!!! Our next meeting is Tuesday 4 November when our speaker will be telling us about “Old Trades of Edinburgh”.

Meanwhile we are starting to collect chocolate Advent Calendars and selection boxes for the Wester Hailes Foodbank. Please leave any donations in GCH for collection by end of November. If you would like me to collect them, please email elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk and I will be happy to do so.

Louise Lamont
Guild President

