

Kirkgate Parish Church 13-9-2020

Well Hello and welcome all who are listening in at this time to our wee service on this the 13th of September 2020. As always if you listen in at 10.30am you will hear this service live, but abbreviated for there is still no singing in the church hall because of the Covid 19 restrictions. However, once the live feed is over you will revert back to the pre-recorded version with hymns and music to sing along to.

Well what a week! After the service last week you 'voted in' the Reverend Nigel Chikanya as your new minster elect for Kirkgate Parish Church. Isn't that exciting? An answer to our prayers.

Hopefully Nigel can be inducted in the not too distant future and you can embrace each other in the name of Jesus and carry on into mission with the cross going before the Church.

I truly feel all the good things God has for you will come to pass and my heart swells in gratitude and love for you and the kindness you have shown to Deirdre and I as we came with you along your way for a period. We will not become strangers in the future for we left part of our love with you all.

Just a wee word of thanks to the Nominating Committee, as well, that you set up a couple of years ago. Can I thank them on your behalf for the perseverance shown and the prayerful approach to seeking a new minster for you? Thank you.

In this months Kirkgate messenger there are articles from the Reverend James McNay, your Interim Moderator, who helped you all tirelessly along the way and who brought much stability for you over the last few years. Indeed he was instrumental in bringing me to Kirkgate as your locum. There is a lovely letter from Nigel, too, with a pictures of his family.

So for today, I felt I should encourage you once more for this is a good day is it not? A good day for dreaming and hoping and praising God in His goodness and mercy.

To that end let us calm our hearts and minds before the Throne of Grace and hear the words of the call to worship. It comes from Colossians

Colossians 3:16

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Our opening hymn for today finds us in a state of praise -

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CH4 807 Praise God from whom all blessings flow, it is usually used as a doxology, but I think it fitting for our opening today.

It is sung by Heidi Nadine

<https://youtu.be/RBz7vuJ2b1A>

Our Prayer of Approach and Confession
partly inspired by St Augustine of Hippo who lived in the 4th century AD

Loving Lord God we seek more of You today. You are a good God who hears the prayers of Your children and who brought forth all of creation that we might delight in it.

Father we openly confess that we love you, and if our love is too weak a thing, grant us to love you more strongly for we cannot measure our love to know how much it falls short of being sufficient, but let our souls hasten to your embrace and never be turned away until it is hidden in the secret shelter of your presence. We know, that it is not good for us when you are not with us, when you are only outside us and so we gather in Your presence once more to know You within us working through us and keeping us in the way of joy.

Abba Father for the times we always forget that You desire to be with us - forgive us

and for the times we know we should be with You and we ignore You - forgive us.

As we worship today together and virtually we pray that You will bless us and be close by us as we glorify Your name and give You all the honour and praise that we can muster. For there is no one like You and no one who can give the breath of life You give.

And so Lord God in all we do and say to establish Your Kingdom in the hearts of those around us let us begin by preparing our own hearts by repeating that prayer Jesus taught when we say together.

Our Father.....

Our Bible Reading is taken from Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, the 11th book in the New Testament. One word to sum up this epistle is 'Encouragement' and we will use that as our theme in our worship today.

Deirdre

Philippians 2 2-23 NIV

2 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6

Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7

rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

8

And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

9

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,

10

that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11

and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Do Everything Without Grumbling

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to

boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me.

**Let us sing once more from
CH4 562 Through the love of God, our Saviour, all will be well.**

My reflection today is entitled - The ways of encouragement in the faith.

What encouraging news we received last Sunday was it not? Kirkgate has a new minister.

Now Nigel and his young family will come and carry on the journey with you. He will develop ministry and mission, become the shepherd you so needed. I won't say anymore on that score at the moment for Nigel will have his own thoughts on what shape his ministry will be and how you will all live harmoniously together as a tight knit Christian community guided by God and encouraging each other on.

Encouragement is always needed when we talk of perseverance in the faith. -
- Perseverance to follow in the footsteps of Jesus personally and as a church.
- Perseverance when all seems dark and uncertain.
- Perseverance when we are feeling tired even exhausted physically and mentally with the challenges we face.

Why is encouragement so important for us according to the Bible and where will we see that manifest itself in our daily lives as Christians? How can we encourage those who are questioning the faith or wanting to know more about it? Or how can we even encourage our brothers and sisters in the church who are weary and flagging? Can we come along behind and lift them to carry on?

“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness,” Hebrews 3:13 tells us.

First Thessalonians 5:11 says, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

Throughout Scripture we see instructions to encourage one another and verses that are meant to encourage us. Why is encouragement emphasised in Scripture?

Primarily because encouragement is necessary to our walk of faith, isn't it? Perhaps you can remember a person who was a great encourager for you.

How can we find encouragement or be encouragers for others?

Paul writes to the church in Philippi, verse 3-4 from our passage,

'in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.'

So, **1) We are to care more for others than ourselves.** Now that is perhaps one of the most difficult things for you and I to do, no matter what we say we do. At the end of the day we still look out for number 1 if we are honest about it. We do what Paul tells us not to and that might be to grudge and grumble at times don't we? We say to think to ourselves - "Look at me I'm always doing this or that and that person over there does nothing"

So can we **truly** give more to others of our time, our talents and our resources with humility and good cheer? It can be a very difficult thing to do. It means we must trust in God for all things spiritual and temporal. It means being vulnerable - getting involved. We surely must trust in God that His grace is sufficient for us and that we can pour ourselves out just as Jesus did on the cross for all of us.

Yet we try don't we?

There have been many great characters in the Bible that humbled themselves before God and humanity. I cannot help thinking of the disciples in their eventual calling to go and preach the Gospel. The one that comes to my mind, apart from Jesus himself, of course, is the shadow helper Timothy who assisted St Paul as he languished under house arrest then in prison in Rome. Timothy the young man who travelled with him who now was free to take instruction from the prison to others selflessly and at some distance.

Paul praised Timothy for his thoughtfulness to others over his own needs in the 'Prison Epistles of Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians and Philemon.

In them he sends greeting from himself and from brother Timothy who is with him. A young man Paul says in our passage in verse 20 that "he had no one like him".

Paul took the young man under his wing taught him how to follow in the path of humility in Christ's ways. Now he is an equal brother with Paul and he is like no one else. For he cares more for others than himself. He cares for their well being at such a great distance.

Christians are called to walk humbly well beyond the ways of the world, well beyond just being a good person that helps out when needed. Perhaps we should be more proactive, then, and seek out the lost, those in greatest need in this priority area (so entitled) of Ardrossan and Saltcoats Parish where we are to pour out ourselves on others as Christ did for us on the cross.

- - Care more for others than self.

That is the true way of loving ones neighbour is it not? In serving in that way, friends, it give encouragement to others of the faith. For we are talking here about Christians. Paul is writing to Christians.

2) Do we care deeply for God's church or do we throw our hands in the air and desire to walk away?

I know those here Kirkgate will never do that, but I speak figuratively of the nation as a whole.

verse 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Part of the the problem for the 'Church' (people) in general arises when we decide we will stay in a place where God has worked through us in the past. Where we want to do things the way we always did that used to work by tradition.

Where perhaps we should be listening for God's guidance in prayer and through scripture and by keeping one's ear to the ground of how the community around us is moving.

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God's Spirit doesn't always stay where we would like Him to stay, but He beckons us to follow and we must if we want to be encouraged in the faith. To ignore that calling to change and to follow brings the risk of following our own lead and all the futility that might bring when we see no gain for our labour in the Kingdom.

I always say - **care more for the Church**, bless our brothers and sister in Christ with our presence among them willingly and graciously despite some peoples faults and annoyances. It is among Jesus' followers that we come to experience the encouragement in the presence of the Spirit of God, so let us continue to hold the Church of God, the people, in reverence and with praise and worship - Glorifying the one and only creator of all for such a body of Christ. Oh! and sometimes we may want to do that in a building as well!

And that brings me to another thing that we should find encouragement from. Caring much **much** more for the Gospel message.

Paul again in **verse 22**

But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. Paul the apostle to the gentiles tirelessly speaking out the Gospel message of Jesus death and resurrection. The message of salvation and everlasting life in Christ through repentance and belief.

The word of God inerrant and inspired from the pen of many writers and touched by the Spirit of God. None more so than that great apostle Paul who wrote so eloquently and witnessed for Christ despite all his trials and deprivations.

Our message of hope that has been ridiculed for generations.
Our message of love and peace for humanity that has been ignored and called ancient myth and of no relevance in todays 21st century.

Yet we know that Jesus and His teaching -
We know that God's creation story,
God's salvation plan
are the same yesterday today and tomorrow.

So we see great encouragement flowing from those we know love others more than themselves.

We see encouragement for those who uphold the Church that Jesus birthed by His Spirit at Pentecost.

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We see encouragement through the Gospel message that salvation is ours for the asking.

Everlasting life is there for all who reach out to Jesus asking forgiveness and embracing Him to their hearts convinced of His presence even now.

If we can embrace all those qualities - those ways of following Christ then we shall go in the name of the Lord sent out to love and to care for the souls of the many in our community.

I feel that special journey coming once more to Kirkgate when Nigel arrives to lead. When he takes up his post in this mission field with you who follow Jesus.

Take encouragement for because of your grace and patience, perseverance your urgent prayers have been answered by God.

Go then continuing on joyfully and with excitement for what is about to unfold for you.

I am not away yet, but let me just say what joy it was for me to encourage you all and journey some of the way with you as many have done before me. I in turn have been uplifted, instructed and matured in my own faith for being with you.

So remember this.

When we care more for others we prepare our own hearts for Christ.

When we care about church as in the people, we prepare as an army for Christ.

and as we care about the Gospel message we go in the name of Christ.

May God bless you and keep you, may his face shine upon you and bring you peace.

In Jesus name

Amen.

Reflective music for a minute or so - Stuart

Shall we pray our prayers of Intercession - let us pray

Loving Lord God, we bring our prayers for others before You for there are many things that trouble us in the world today.

In this time of Covid restrictions Father we see a rise once more in the infection,

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Lord have mercy on us as we battle with this pandemic and try to save as many lives as we can.

We pray for the most vulnerable among us those with underlying respiratory problems, the elderly and the infirm. Lord God come close to them that they might be free from anxiety and worry about going out. Help them overcome the fear of death and to know that You are with them by Your Holy Spirit bringing peace and comfort for their very souls.

Last Thursday was suicide prevention day where the plight of those with mental illness was highlighted.

We pray for all those young and old who are feeling that sense of hopelessness,
where all seems dark and useless.

Loving Lord God in Your great mercy uplift their minds from such turmoil and save them from themselves. Help those in positions of counselling to know what to do and say for every case that comes before them.

We pray for all those charitable and funded institutions that take it upon themselves to stay at the end of a telephone in case a sufferer in trouble should call for help.

We remember all those suffering post traumatic stress disorder and the devastation that can bring to a family unit.

In all these places of desperation Holy Spirit come close and sooth the weary mind and allow peace to come upon your loved ones and those we know who are suffering mental illness.

Lord we pray for peace for our communities in the wake of the terrible stabbings last week in Birmingham. We know there is great evil stalking our streets at times, but we know also that You protect those who reach out to
you.

We pray that Your Spirit of peace and comfort should travel through our
streets and alley ways into every home
like a soothing balm that calms the violence, the hidden abuse and anger
lurking behind closed doors.

Break those chains of evil Lord
that we might see peace reigning all over our land.

Our hearts sank at the pictures of people arming themselves on the streets of America, in a very volatile atmosphere, and so we pray for wisdom for all leaders, especially in America, that they might know how to defuse these situations before we see flash points arising.

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And for all leader across the world, Lord, there is much for them to do. This modern era is not lacking in the toil of to trying to live in peace and to further the cause of justice.

Father in Your mercy let Heaven come down with power and cleanse our world of the darkness we see in every corner that light and life in Jesus our Lord might reign supreme.

Abba Father, St Augustine once prayed to You thus,

Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep this coming night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ. Rest your weary ones. Bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones. Pity your afflicted ones. Shield your joyous ones. And for all your love's sake.

And so let us bring the names of those we love and those we know who need prayers this day and for the events in this world that trouble us deeply, in our time of personal prayer.....

And so Lord God hears these the prayers of your children as we offer up the silent and spoken prayers of our hearts in Jesus name and for His sake.

Amen

Well thank you once more for tuning in, I hope you have found a blessing in joining in fellowship today and so let us be on our way remembering who we are as disciples of Jesus and what he opens our eyes and ears to around us as His Church commissioned to serve and speak out for justice as we go encouraged and uplifted in the faith. Our closing hymn speaks of these sentiments.

CH4 543 Longing for Light

Let us hear the words of the blessing.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. and the blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with us all now and evermore.

Amen