

Call to Worship

As we begin our worship these words are for thinking: 'God calls, we answer, 'yes Lord!' God cleanses, and we are liberated. God directs us, and we travel forwards in God's work. Jesus calls and we follow as his disciples. He redeems, and we are set free from our sin. He is risen and we go in his name to give hope to the world. The Holy Spirit gives us her breath of life. The Holy Spirit shares fuel, and we are never empty. By the Spirit, we held as one humanity, united in the bonds of love. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we worship you today, tomorrow, and forever.'

Hymn – Holy, Holy, Holy,

Prayer of Adoration & Praise

We clear our heads, we still our hearts and we come before God in prayer, let us pray.

Holy One, we gather in this sacred place, whether it be our home or a sanctuary, we come humbly before you and offer you this time of worship.

Your creative works in the heavens above and the earth below continue to amaze us and allow us space to wonder at the beauty and mystery of it all.

Your son, Jesus, came among us and experienced it all for himself; he helped us to savour it all and encouraged us to look after all life.

Like Isaiah and Nicodemus, you call us to follow you, to take up our cross and step forward to where you lead.

Forgive us, Lord, for the times we have failed to follow you; we regret that we have let you down and we long to be reconciled to you, cleansed and renewed, so that we may walk once more in your way.

Lord, give us courage to respond to your call each day, and wisdom to discern where you are leading us so that we might follow faithfully and guide others to

you. Gracious and merciful God, we long to respond to your call and to bring your kingdom here and now.

For all this we ask in Jesus' name, who taught us when we pray together to say; Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive others that sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Reading: Isaiah 6: 1 – 8

God Calls Isaiah to Be a Prophet

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple. ²Around him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying. ³They were calling out to each other:

“Holy, holy, holy!
The Lord Almighty is holy!
His glory fills the world.”

⁴The sound of their voices made the foundation of the Temple shake, and the Temple itself became filled with smoke.

⁵I said, “There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”

⁶Then one of the creatures flew down to me, carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷He touched my lips with the burning coal and said, “This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven.”

⁸Then I heard the Lord say, “Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?”
I answered, “I will go! Send me!”

Hymn – In the name of God the Father

Sermon – ‘Who will go for us?’

So, they often say that confession is good for the soul. When I sat down to prepare for this service, I looked at the suggested theme title for the week from the resource we use called Spill the Beans and it said: “Who will go for us?”

Who will go for us? Instantly points to thoughts about mission and service. About reaching out as individuals and I suppose that is where a preacher would normally turn in their sermon for this day. So, I sat down and truthfully nothing came to mind. Blank computer screen. Left sermon writing for a while and came back 90 minutes later ... nothing. Then as I sat at my desk, I struck me that in a speech to the General Assembly last Saturday, the Very Rev. Dr Martin Fair, said something that is applicable to us today. Let me show you his speech just now: *(what follows is the text of what Martin said)*

“For as long as I’m a part of the Church of Scotland and have a voice within it, I’ll call on it to announce - and to be - ‘good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind’ - to be present with the downtrodden and the marginalised and the oppressed and, as scripture has it, ‘the least of these.’

Why? Because that’s what Jesus was about and I’ve no interest in being part of anything which isn’t primarily focussed on making real today that which Jesus set in motion.

And what will all of that look like in practice?

It will be what we call the mission of the Church - and might I say, the much talked - about five marks of that mission?

Here are the last three of these marks:

- *To respond to human need by loving service*
- *To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation*
- *To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth*

And so... Until the last food bank in Scotland is closed - because there is no longer any need - we've got work to do.

For as long as there are children growing up in Scotland whose life chances are at best 'compromised' and at worse 'ruined' because of their postcode - we've got work to do.

Until we can find more productive and humane and effective ways of dealing with those who break our laws - but who in truth are usually victims themselves - we've got work to do.

And it goes on.

For as long as there is planning for the retention of - even the increase in numbers of - nuclear warheads on OUR shores - there is work for us to do.

For as long as many of our impoverished communities continue to be awash with drugs - and we Scots continue to have the worst drugs deaths stats in Europe - there is work for us to do.

For as long as there are despairing people, struggling with poor mental health, having to wait months and years for suitable treatment - there is work for us to do.

And among them, for as long as there are ANY who sense that 'darkness is their only friend' - to quote the Psalmist - and who resort to ending their lives - there is work for us to do.

I know that both His Grace, the Lord High Commissioner, and the First Minister, are with me on that.

And for as long as we continue to pollute our rivers, poison our air and fill holes in the ground with our waste - there is work for us to do.

For as long as anti-Catholic, anti-Irish bile is spewed onto our streets by so-called football fans - there is work for us to do.

Until every person in Scotland - and in all those places where the Church of Scotland is present - is treated according to who they are and not by the colour of their skin and not by the place where they worship and not by the language they speak - there is work for us to do.

For as long as people - predominately young women - are trafficked into Scotland to work as sex slaves and in the off-the-books economy - there is work for us to do.

And for as long as women - of any age and from anywhere - don't feel safe walking home at night - there's work for us to do.

For as long as it's possible for someone seeking asylum - someone like Mercy Baguma - to die while supposedly in our care - there is work for us to do.

For as long as there are lost souls sleeping rough in shop doorways or families in damp, substandard bread & breakfast style accommodation - there is work for us to do.

And yes, though it be far-off and 'over there,' for as long as the skies over the Holy Lands are ripped open by another barrage of rockets and mortars and the overwhelming superiority of attacks from the air - in some small way, there is work for us to do.

That's what it will look like - all of that and more - for us to give ourselves to the ways of the Kingdom as set out by Jesus in his 'here's why I'm here' manifesto.

And so it's for us too.

But here's the problem. Unless we get our act together - and rapidly! - there's hardly going to be any church left to do it!

I've heard it so many times that, for the Church, it's not about numbers. It absolutely will be about numbers if the numbers are so low that the Church can no longer run Crossreach or local caring services because the local church isn't there any more!

So I long for the Church to be about that Kingdom work but, oh boy, how we need the Church to be refreshed, renewed, revitalised, remade and, yes, reformed that it might do it more effectively.

I long for an alive, vibrant church - a Church that has traded in the lukewarm... and instead is passionate in its love of Jesus in such a way that others will want a piece of that action.

I long for a Church empowered as it worships - a Church shaped by the Word, alive in the Spirit - a Church that knows itself called AND sent - a Church that is confident in the Gospel in the face of both hostility and indifference - a Church that teaches and baptises and nurtures new believers in Christ.

In other words, ALL of the five marks of mission - we better see to 1 and 2 if we're going to be any good at 3,4 and 5!! It's all got to hang together.

So even as we let go of some of what, sadly, has passed its sell-by date, let's commit ourselves to planting new Christian communities - that are low on maintenance, high on impact. And let's be better at identifying, equipping and commissioning pioneers - ordinary folk working on the margins.

And let's commit to every part of Scotland but at the same time, crack on with well-equipped spaces in the right places and so deal once and for all with an over-dependence on abundance of buildings.

And, yes, mission to the whole of Scotland, as per the Third Article, but maybe in new and creative ways - ecumenically, for sure, and with an emphasis on Christian community and evangelical endeavour in every place rather than, necessarily, all of what we used to mean by the 'ordinances of religion...' and everything that went with that.

And let's get on with the reorganisation that we've started out on - that the sooner we sort the structures, the sooner we can get to what really matters... proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom!

Tomorrow is Pentecost. A day of fire. I believe the Holy Spirit is still in the business of starting fires; it's time for the Church to start fanning those flames and to put away those fire extinguishers.

*The Good News of Jesus Christ is not subject to a health and safety committee!
Let the fire burn.*

That kind of Church - signed up to ALL that is meant by mission.

I'm absolutely up for that."

I wonder are we 'truly up' for that at Eastwood? The reorganising of the Church of Scotland has begun at all levels. Yet, our core mission has not changed. It is our collective calling to share the Good News with the communities which surround us.

God is calling today, just as He did when He called on the Prophet Isaiah: *"Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?"* May we have the belief, courage and the conviction to respond: 'We will go! Send us!'

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn – There is a Redeemer,

Prayer for Ourselves and Others

We unite our hearts again in prayer, let us pray.

Compassionate one, we thank you for sending your Son among us, for washing us clean of our sin and guilt and offering us a new way ahead.

Holy Spirit, you guide us to where we need to be and to do the work that needs to be done.

We stand before you anxious and afraid of what you will ask of us but willing to take a risk and ready to serve.

For children, women and men in need of a safe place to stay, for food on the table, books to read, medicine to heal and money to pay bills we pray, O Lord, send us to help them.

For men, women and children burdened by guilt and feelings of worthlessness we pray, O Lord, send us to help them.

For women, children and men longing to know you and discover your love and call on their lives we pray, O Lord, send us to help them.

For all who have already answered the call and who serve you faithfully using their gifts to help others, we thank you, O Lord.

Whenever you ask, "Whom shall I send?" may we be ready to respond, "Here I am, Lord, send me." So be it. Amen.

Hymn – Glory be to God the Father,

Benediction

May the God of majesty and mystery, fill you with awe and wonder; may the God whom even seraphs worshipped, guide you in the ways of holiness; may the God who asks, "who will go?", inspire you to cry, like the prophet: "Here am I;

send me!” May the Blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Spirit rest upon you and all whom you love this day and always. Amen.

Closing Song – Send us out