

Dear Reader,

Welcome to **Booklet 48** of reflection and thoughts for prayer from the Presbytery Prayer Promoters' Group. As usual, let me graciously remind you that we understand that for some of you, you will have your own prayer notes and ways of approaching God, but we hope that many readers will enjoy these reflections and use them to help guide their thoughts in prayer. Please share these notes as widely as possible; hopefully they will accomplish two things. a) Help us to build our relationship with God, in Christ Jesus and b) lead us into prayer for others, and for situations that seem impossible to us - but not impossible to God.

In the last few weeks we have visited some of the people who had the joy of meeting Jesus, either because they looked for him, or because he noticed them. We saw how he responded with loving-kindness as he walked among the people. We know that ultimate loving-kindness was seen in his crucifixion which was God's chosen plan to redeem people from sin and bring them into his righteous family. This week let us change the focus to how we can serve Him in love as we progress through Lent.

I also trust that you find beginning Monday each week in the same way really helpful as we focus again on thanking and praising God. Surely it is good to stop and reflect on those things... and good to make this a habit. (I wonder how many of you have kept a prayer journal and noted from Monday's reflections all that you praise God for... just a thought.) If you would like to comment or share a story then please contact me: [christistewart@btinternet.com](mailto:christistewart@btinternet.com) Amen

**Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

**N.B. Apologies - I had forgotten to change dates in this feature...**

I am pleased to include again the Sunday Prayer recommended by Rev Martin Fair - Moderator of the Church of Scotland. This Sunday (14<sup>th</sup> March), **as more than 1.8 million people in Scotland have received their first dose of the Covid vaccine**, Christians across the country - and further afield - will once again join together in prayer and reflection at 7pm in response to the pandemic.

As with previous weeks during lockdown, 15 Christian churches and organisations across the country, including the Church of Scotland, have co-signed the letter calling for prayer. Scottish Christians have been continuing to answer the call to pray at the same time each week, and Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, has been taking part alongside them.

"There are some things which make sense for a certain period of time but which come to a natural conclusion - such as clapping for carers during the spring lockdown. Prayer isn't one of them," Dr Fair said. "The Apostle Paul encourages us to 'pray without ceasing' and Jesus himself offers parables where persistence in prayer is lauded." It can be hard to keep going when there's no end in sight; much easier when the finishing line comes into view. In the case of the pandemic, it still feels as if there's no light at the end of the tunnel. "All the more reason then for God's people to continue faithfully in prayer." And even better when we can pray across the whole of the Church, unrestricted by denominational divides. **"If Sunday at 7pm is in your diary, keep it there. Thank you. If it hadn't been, it would be great to have you involved. It matters that we pray."**

**Call to Prayer: Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021 Prayer @ 7pm.**

"We have endured much during these past months. Personally and communally, we have endured challenges which we could not have anticipated, or imagined, even a year ago. We have endured much and undoubtedly there have been times when the limits of our endurance have been tested.

"Woven into this has been the recollection of that which has also endured, the steadfast love of God. The Psalmist recalls the people of God to a remembrance of the 'steadfast love' of the Lord which 'endures for ever'. (Psalm 107: 1)

"As we remember and recall, we bear witness to the truth that the love of God spans the whole breadth of our lives and embraces all that we experience and endure. This is given supreme expression in the self-giving of God in Jesus Christ: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son'. (John 3: 16)

"In all we have endured and will endure, the 'steadfast love' of the Lord 'endures for ever' in the God whose love is revealed in Jesus Christ."

**We pray:**

God whose love endures  
And is revealed in Jesus Christ,  
May we hear the words of the Psalmist  
Who calls us to remember:  
The steadfast love of the Lord endures for ever.  
Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose love endures  
And is revealed in Jesus Christ,  
Be with us in all we endure at this time.

Grant that we may know Your love  
In days of light and in days of shadow.  
Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose love endures  
And is revealed in Jesus Christ,  
Be with all who find themselves  
At the limit of their endurance  
And embrace them in the depths of Your enduring love.  
Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose love endures  
And is revealed in Jesus Christ,  
As a mother comforts her child  
May You comfort all who call upon You.  
Hear us, as we give thanks for all who have nurtured us in this  
life.  
Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose love endures  
And is revealed in Jesus Christ,  
Grant to us a vision of a community and society  
That will endure in times to come  
And hear us as we pray: Thy Kingdom Come.  
Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose love endures  
And is revealed in Jesus Christ,  
May we live our lives  
In response to the gift of the life of Your Son

In whose life is love embodied.  
Lord, in Your mercy, Hear our prayer.

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

I promised in the first booklet that we would begin each new one offering this reflection and prayer of **praise and hope** from Paula Lennox, a member of both the Mission Committee and the Prayer Promoters' Group. It is so important to put God first and praise Him before everything else. May we find new hope:

**As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more** (Psalm 71:14)

In this time of anxiety and uncertainty, let us remember there is always someone we can rely on. May we start each day thanking him for all he has done for us and holding this gratitude before us as a beacon of hope.

**Prayer**

Father, we thank you for your promise to always be with us no matter our circumstances and we hold on to that promise now, as we feel anxious and uncertain as each day goes by. May we remember that through you all things were created, that you have supremacy over everything and nothing is impossible for you. You are our hope and we praise you. Amen

**Prayer points are all about praising God:**

Praise Him for the little things, we previously took for granted  
Praise Him for nature that continues to flourish  
Praise Him for more time to spend in His Word  
Praise Him that whatever happens he is our hope

Praise Him for...

**Now just talk to God** about whatever is on your heart...he wants to bless you and give you peace as you trust in him. Amen

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

"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." **Romans 12:1**

**Reflection:** There are two things I would like to suggest to you today.

The first is to consider what comes before this verse which made Paul use the word 'therefore'. He has been talking about how we have received the mercy of God first and our desire to serve him in true worship springs from that mercy.

The second thing is to look at The Message translation of this verse which expands it in a modern context and reads as follows: *"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him."* I really can't express this any better and leave you to think about it. My belief is that God has something each one of us can do - if we only ask him to show us.

**Let us pray:**

- Merciful and gracious God, we thank you for all the many blessings which come from you - most especially our redemption from sin through Christ Jesus.
- Loving God, we know we have nothing to give to you except ourselves. Lead us into the kind of service that is true worship in response to the sacrificial love of Jesus.

- Open our eyes, Father God, to notice those around us who need to see an expression of loving care and show us what we can do to reach out in Jesus' name.
- Help us to remain faithful in prayer for all situations, for truly the power to heal is yours. In Jesus' name, Amen

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

"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." **Romans 12:2**

**Reflection:** When we are unsure of how we should serve the Lord as part of our thankful worship, we only need to ask him to show us what we can do. The more we spend time in prayer and reading the teachings of Jesus, the easier it becomes to see and know what he expects of us. It will always be something he has equipped us to do, and something he knows we can manage.

Once again I will give you this verse in the Message translation: *"Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you."* Sometimes we have difficulty in responding to the call to serve others in Jesus' name because we find it hard to give God first place in our lives - more tomorrow...

**Let us Pray:**

- Thank you, Lord, for your gracious response to us when we call out to you. You will always hear us and respond when we earnestly desire to meet with you, and receive your love.

- May we live with thankful hearts and a desire to worship and praise you. May we choose to serve others in your name.
- Lord God, help us to understand that prayer is a work for you that we can all engage in, and to understand that you love to communicate with your children in this way. Thank you that even as he journeyed to the cross, Jesus prayed for us. Amen

**Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

"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."<sup>[1]</sup> **Matthew 22:37-39**

**Reflection:** There is an old saying which is used to describe ostentatiously pious people - 'So and so is too heavenly minded to be any earthly good.' Although there is some truth in this, it should never be an excuse for not putting God firmly as the centre of our lives. However, we should do this humbly and appropriately and it will naturally lead us to be his servants to those around us. If we love God from within ourselves, his grace will naturally flow outwards so that we become his servants amongst those around us - whatever our situation. Listen again to the Message translation of the first and greatest commandment of Jesus. Love is easier to say than to do: "Jesus said, *"Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence."* It is good for us all to test our love for God in Christ Jesus by reflecting on these words.

**Let us pray:**

- Lord God, we thank you that you love us and have called us to be your family. We thank you for all that Jesus has done for us. Help us to worship you in Spirit and in Truth.

- We thank you for all the 'good neighbours' in our lives, for all those who touch us with kindness and grace, and we ask you to bless them
- Sometimes we are saddened by 'neighbours' who are inconsiderate and hurtful - help us to be gracious where we can and teach us how to respond when it is difficult. Help us to show love where we can, and teach us how to pray when it is awkward and uncomfortable, in Jesus' name Amen

**Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

**"The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40**

**Reflection:** When Jesus speaks in this story, he is illustrating that God only puts value on those things we do naturally out of a full heart in response to the way Jesus loves us. Do we take opportunities as they come to us to show love for others? Do we remember we are all part of the human race or do we judge who we think might be worthy of our attention and notice our goodness - perhaps even repay it? Jesus makes it clear that what counts for us when we come face to face with God is how we have demonstrated our faith in relation to those who are truly in need. If we miss this, we have missed the essential nature of our new relationship with God through Jesus his son. We shouldn't agonise over this. Jesus doesn't expect each of us to do exactly the same thing. Only last week we saw how he noticed the small gifts from a widow and showed how he valued it above larger gifts from those who have more. He sees our hearts and that's what counts.

**Let us pray:**

- Lord God, we thank you for the suffering of Jesus in sacrificial love for us to bring us back into a relationship with you - our righteous and holy God.
- Lord God, we thank you for the peace and freedom given to us when we trust Jesus to forgive us for all our sins.
- Help us to look on others with your heart of compassion and teach us how to respond and how to be faithful in prayer for those we know and love - especially those who have not yet found their peace and joy in trusting you.
- Help us to know your presence with us. In Jesus' name, Amen

**Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2021**

**'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'** Matthew 11:28-30

I have chosen to end the week with this verse, because although it has been a week challenging us to respond to the love of Christ, we must never forget that He only asks us to do what we are able to do. **Hymn:**

**Father, I place into Your hands**  
the things I can't do.

Father, I place into Your hands  
the times that I've been through.

Father, I place into Your hands  
the way that I should go,  
for I know I always can trust You.

Father, I place into Your hands  
my friends and family.

Father, I place into Your hands  
the things that trouble me.

Father, I place into Your hands  
the person I would be,  
for I know I always can trust You.

Father, we love to seek Your face,  
we love to hear Your voice.

Father, we love to sing Your praise  
and in Your name rejoice.  
Father, we love to walk with You  
and in Your presence rest,  
for we know we always can trust You.

Father, I want to be with You  
and do the things You do.  
Father, I want to speak the words  
That You are speaking too.  
Father, I want to love the ones  
that You will draw to You,  
for I know that I am one with You. (Words and music – Jenny Hewer)

### **Some prayer points:**

I am pleased to enclose the following prayers for this week from  
**Pray for Scotland:**

The resurrection of Jesus points to a powerful God who brings love, hope and redemption. A God of mercy who heals our brokenness.

### **Cry for Mercy:**

- for young people who find themselves in a state of hopelessness, that they would find purpose and be able to look forward to their future again;
- for young people for whom home is not a safe place, that they would find peace and security in the Father's arms;
- for school staff and other professionals as pupils return to school, for their protection, but also that they would have the wisdom, strength and love to be the trusted adult that some pupils need;
- for the church, that we would respond to the needs of our young people right now.

How we need to cry to God, with fasting as appropriate, for repentance and new spiritual life in our nation.

### **Cry for Mercy.....**

- for the Holy Spirit to be at work convicting people of their need of God and drawing them to Jesus, not least in these days when Covid-19 has shown the emptiness of life without God;
- for the church in Scotland to be spiritually renewed with a new love for Jesus and a new-found confidence in the gospel;
- for revival and reformation throughout our nation.

And from The Guild (Posted on 8<sup>th</sup> March but still relevant today and every day... And let us thank God for all the faithful work of the **Guild:**

### **Pray this week**

**Monday:** We give thanks for all the brave, inspiring women who shaped and directed us. Today we pray for girls and women who struggle because of violence, injustice and discrimination. Encourage us to speak up with them and for them.

**Tuesday:** giving thanks for hospital chaplains who are supporting patients and staff in difficult and challenging circumstances in very different ways.

**Wednesday:** thinking especially of all who are facing uncertainty and changing circumstances. That they will know God walking with them.

**Thursday:** praising God for the many ways in which he has blessed you this week.

**Friday:** for the work of prison chaplains, as they support prisoners who are not allowed visitors and who may be afraid.

**Saturday:** for children who live in family situations where a parent

struggles with an addiction. That they will have someone that they can talk to or even meet to go for a walk and have some safe space.

**Sunday:** for Christians across the world as they come together in worship.

Now Lord, we pray for our **Queen, and all those in government** - especially where there is bitterness and conflict. Bring truthful resolution. Pour out your blessings of wisdom and grace. Amen