

LANGBANK PARISH CHURCH

Sunday 20 September 2020

*After six months of enforced closure due to Covid-19, Langbank Church opens its doors for worship this morning. With one or two minor omissions, this is the same service and you will find the week's Intimations before the last hymn.*



**CALL TO PRAYER**

**Every morning I will sing of your steadfast love  
for you have been a fortress to me  
and a refuge on the day of my distress**

*Let us worship God in the words of our first hymn....*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-n\\_BPn5BxH4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-n_BPn5BxH4)

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,  
to his feet your tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
evermore his praises sing.  
Praise him, praise him!  
Praise him, praise him!  
Praise the everlasting King!

Fatherlike he tends and spares us,  
well our feeble frame he knows.  
In his hand he gently bears us,  
rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him, praise him!  
Praise him, praise him!  
Widely yet his mercy flows!

Angels, help us to adore him;  
you behold him face to face.

Sun and moon, bow down before him,  
dwellers all in time and space.  
Praise him, praise him!  
Praise him, praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace!

*Let us pray*

We come to you, O God,  
recognising that only you can quench our thirst  
and calm our minds in times of trouble.

We come gladly to this peaceful sanctuary  
a place of prayer and community,  
beloved of us all.

Yet, we know there are many places  
we can meet you, God,  
For you have many homes...  
tent and desert,  
hospital and hostel,  
house and heart.

You choose unlikely people  
to share your dream;  
old men and women;  
nations and enemies,  
the reluctant and the bemused...

And you choose us.

Forgive us, Lord,  
for our sins this week  
for our casual disregard of others  
and our lack of trust in you.

Teach us to look for you in all life  
to see you in every ripening berry  
and hear you in every seed

that falls to the ground.

Help us to know your words of comfort

that they may come to mind

when we need them most.

Help us to rest in your strength

and know your peace

for you are our fortress

and our refuge in our time of need.

We ask these things

in the Name of your Son, Jesus Christ,

who taught us to pray together, saying,

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.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom, the power,

and the glory, for ever. *Amen*

## **READING: Philippians 4:4-9 : Final Exhortations**

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 every situation, 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 and sisters, 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. Amen

## REFLECTION

Depending on your age, the Word 'Happiness' may evoke visions of unwrapping Christmas presents, or strolling hand in hand with the one you love, or being re-united with family or good friends.

We all want to be happy.... but if happiness depends on our circumstances, then what happens when our circumstances change?

- when the toy breaks
- when the relationship ends
- or a get-together is impossible, as has been the case for us?

At my school we seemed to spend a lot of time learning by heart.

A fair amount of the material we learned was from the Bible.

One day we were asking our RE teacher

- what earthly use was this in the 1960s –
- and I've never forgotten her reply.

She said,

*You learn scripture off by heart now,  
so that it will be with you when you need it most.*

What she didn't say, but what I have learned myself since

- is that the full meaning of scripture doesn't come to you at all until that moment that you need it.

The words come alive ONLY when they fuse with your own reality.

For instance, the words of our Call to Worship this morning come from Psalm 59.

I first consciously heard them 10 years ago when I returned to church after an illness.

As part of the Old Testament Reading, they were the first words of scripture I'd heard for months, and they were still with me when I got home,

*“Every morning I will sing aloud of your steadfast love  
For you have been a fortress for me  
and a refuge on the day of my distress.”*

I typed them out and they have sat in a wee frame beside my screen ever since.

They say it all for me, about the strength that I quietly received from God during a tough time, and they express the thanks I will always, always feel.

Today's Reading is short and stands alone. It's not really because I'm worried about the timing, having promised a very short service.

It's really because today, we all return to church after six months, and I wanted our first scripture to be memorable and useful.

Paul's message is certainly one for our times.... because we are not exactly returning to normal as we hoped in March might be the case.

Instead, we have moved on to a different kind of normal.

The schools are back; workplaces are open; we can shop, go to the pub, eat out with our friends and go on holiday. Sports and leisure facilities are open ..... a good enough reason to feel happy.

Yet, behind the façade of the new normality, there is growing uncertainty.

We know, we keep being told, that the pandemic is not over.

Here in church, the masks, bare pews, the deliberate draughts..... these are nothing in themselves....it is what they protect that is precious and vulnerable – OURSELVES.

Back to a new normal, then, but not entirely happy in the new circumstances, for it is a temporary compromise and we cannot say for certain how it will be even a month, let alone three months from now.

But, while HAPPINESS depends on circumstances, JOY is an eternal gift from God that is ours to tap into.

And That's why we are encouraged to 'Rejoice in the Lord, ALWAYS..... even in the hard times.'

Running deeper and stronger than Happiness, JOY wells up from the quiet confidence we have when the God's Spirit lifts us up beyond our circumstances and despite them.... and leaves us a peace that is above and beyond what we would expect, given the circumstances.

*"The Lord is near!"* God is always there to listen.

*'Draw near to God and he will draw near to you'*, wrote James, the brother of Jesus.....

And the way we do that, says Paul, is to speak to God often..... to bring him our problems and desires, our hopes and fears.... to turn to him, like a child.

So, yes, ask God for the Big things - but also for things that are NOT life-threatening

- like more time to finish a piece of work,
- like a fine day for a picnic, or a wedding,
- things like a good night's sleep.....
- or that a special friend will ring tomorrow.

Sharing our everyday concerns with God every day proves that you believe he is there every day.....and is the first step in trusting that he is there for you.

As to the rest, Paul offers advice as relevant today as it was 2000 years ago. The command to focus on the best things life runs opposite to the media's intention to constantly shock and disturb us.....

So, let's look for the good stories, of courage and faith. Let's see the kindness and gentleness of neighbours and fasten on these as a pattern to follow...

**'Remember all I taught you about Jesus Christ,' Paul says, and practise, in word and deed all I preached to you in Jesus' name, and the peace of God that passes all understanding will be with you.**

Where else would the peace of God come from, if not from the GOD of Peace?

**Get to know one, and you'll have the other!**

Something yo take away with you today, and remember always, so that,

**the peace of God, which passes all understanding may fill YOUR hearts and minds this week, and in the weeks to come. *Amen***

## **PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION & DEDICATION**

*Let us pray*

Loving God

Thank you for the precious things of life

- for love & friendship

health & security

food, shelter and neighbours who care.

And in this place of peace

we thank you for absent friends

especially any who have passed

since we last prayed together.

Long may their lives inspire us

and our memories of them warm our hearts...

And, may the peace that passes all understanding

be ours to know and cherish.

O God,  
We pray for a world smitten...  
A world suffering from disease, and fake news...  
    a world confused over priorities  
    in which the vulnerable suffer.

We pray for the homeless,  
- victims of fire or flood,  
- those fleeing for their lives  
- and those who are simply poor.

We pray now for your Church in Langbank.  
We praise you for the work of the Church  
    that has gone on behind the scenes this year.  
We thank you for Stuart, and George and Neill,  
    who have carried the responsibility  
and we thank Elspeth, Janet, Elders and others  
    who have planned and practised and grafted  
    to make this service possible.

We praise you for every act of kindness  
    between neighbours  
    – for the cards and visits  
    and phone calls that have meant so much.  
And we thank you for the faithfulness  
    of the Wednesday Zoom Group  
    who have met to discuss their faith in you  
    and to pray for the people of Langbank.

And it is that community  
    which we ask you to bless now, Lord  
We pray for our School,  
    for the children and all who works there.  
We pray for teenagers and young adults  
    as they try to flourish in difficult circumstances.  
We pray for the working population,  
    knowing the problems they face.  
And we pray for all who are based at home.  
Keep them safe, Lord.

Bless Alex and Cathie, as they leave  
for their new home in Skelmorlie.  
Bless the bereaved, and the anxious,  
Rona, as she recuperates in the IRH  
and Margaret and others  
who are recovering at home ....  
Help them to trust in your healing Spirit  
and give them your peace,

Lord, we remember now quietly  
any whom we know  
who need our prayers today.....

*silence    silence    silence*

Lord,  
You are the source of all that is precious...  
And we have gladly brought to you our money  
that others may also come to know your love.  
And, as we ask your blessing on it  
we dedicate ourselves to your service  
in the week ahead.  
Use all of us -  
Yes - use our arms and legs  
– but also our hearts, minds and voices  
that we may be channels of your peace  
in our time and place. *Amen*

## INTIMATIONS

1 Harvest Thanksgiving will be held on Sunday 4 October. Harvest gifts of non-perishable food, toiletries, etc will be taken later to Glasgow City Mission. If this is difficult to arrange, please bring money in an envelope and Graham will buy supplies on behalf of the church.

2 The Wednesday Zoom Group have now finished studying the Book of James – which gave us lots to discuss. We will take a break now for a few weeks while



we settle in to our new Sunday regime and re-starting in mid-October, when we will base our discussions on The Lord's Prayer.

2 The Social and Fund Raising Group have been busy over the summer compiling a Church Recipe Book. These will be on sale after the service, price £7.50 each, or 2 for £14.

3 Please remember to fill in the slips you were given on entering, as part of the necessary process of trace and protect.

*As this service draws to a close, we listen to an old hymn for new times:*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41Gr\\_6-2YRQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41Gr_6-2YRQ)

Courage, brother, do not stumble,  
Though thy path be dark as night;  
There's a star to guide the humble:  
Trust in God and do the right.  
Let the road be rough and dreary,  
And its end far out of sight,  
Foot it bravely; strong or weary,  
*Trust in God, trust in God,  
Trust in God and do the right.*

Perish policy and cunning,  
Perish all that fears the light!  
Whether losing, whether winning,  
Trust in God and do the right.  
Trust no party, sect, or faction;  
Trust no leaders in the fight;  
Put in every word or action,  
*Trust in God, trust in God,  
Trust in God and do the right.*

Some will hate you, some will love you,  
Some will flatter, some will slight;  
Cease from man, and look above you:  
Trust in God and do the right.  
Simple rule, and safest guiding,  
Inward peace and inward might,  
Star upon our path abiding,  
*Trust in God, trust in God,  
Trust in God and do the right.*

BENEDICTION

God bless you with hope and wonder  
God bless you with faith and questions  
God bless you with strength and courage  
and the Spirit's guiding  
And the blessing of God Almighty  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
be with you all  
and with all whom you love  
now and evermore  
*Amen*