

Sunday 25 October 2020 on Zoom
with Ruth Wilde, National Coordinator for Inclusive Church

Time of arrival 9.45am – time for arriving and greeting. If possible, please wave or write a greeting in the 'chat' function so that the service can start promptly at **10.00am**

As with our Zoom service in August, I am using some liturgy from the Seekers Church, Washington D.C. as it lends itself well to the Zoom format. One person will speak out loud for the 'people' – everyone can join in the responses and singing at home, but 'muted'. When it comes to the time for Questions and Discussion, please try to raise your hand before speaking, so we don't have people talking over each other.

Call to Worship (Seekers)

NAOMI: God of mercy and justice, you call us to embrace our life here on earth.

IAN on behalf of the **People: You ask us to give you our pain, to open our hearts to the mystery of life.**

NAOMI: God of compassion and truth, you invite us to welcome the mind of Christ in us.

IAN/People: You ask us to give ourselves to others, to forgive and accept forgiveness.

NAOMI: God of faith and fortitude, you lead us toward an unknown future through turbulent times.

IAN/People: Today, we begin again, living in this new moment, learning to let your mind flow out from deep within.

HYMN – Bless the Lord oh my Soul (led by Sandy) the words will appear on the screen

Opening Prayer - Naomi (Thom Shurman)

Every generation has found its home in you, God our provider,
and discovered that every moment spent in your holy presence
lasts beyond all imaginable time.

You watch over us in the night, cradling us in your arms as tenderly as a nurse
cares for her children, and her neighbour's.

Full of wisdom, Imagination of Creation, you humbled yourself
that we might learn to love those who have been swept aside by a callous and cruel world.
Witness to God's grace, you call us to act in ways of love of peace to all we meet in this life.

In the fresh breeze on a summer's day;
in the leaves dancing across autumn's lawns;
in the crisp, new snowfall crunching beneath our feet;
in the new life flowering in the spring:
from everlasting to everlasting you proclaim God's grace to us, Spirit of Life.

God in Community, Holy in One, continue to be the dwelling place of
our minds, our hearts, our souls. Amen

Prayer of Confession (Seekers)

NAOMI: The mind of Christ in us tells us to give away what we receive.

SUE/People: **We think we don't have enough, so we keep what we have.**

NAOMI: The mind of Christ in us tells us to believe in each other.

SUE/People: **We think some are better than others, so we judge each other.**

NAOMI: The mind of Christ in us tells us to forgive and to love.

SUE/People: **We think that our imperfect love is no good. Forgive us for our self-centeredness and lack of faith.**

NAOMI: The mind of Christ is also in us. We are forgiven. **AMEN**

Lighting of the Peace Candle:

Jean will light and hold up a candle, for peace in the world, for solidarity with the oppressed and in memory of those who cannot share in today's service. It will remain lit throughout the service.

Commitment (Seekers) Said by all on 'mute', led by Naomi

O Holy One, we come today to claim our relationship with you.

We pray for the commitment to grow together,

sharing the gifts you give us with others here and in the wider world.

Forgive us for the hurt we have inflicted and help us forgive those who have hurt us.

Give us strength and discipline to nurture our relationship with you;

to care for every part of your creation;

to foster justice and be in solidarity with those in need;

to work to end all war, and violence, and discord;

and to respond joyfully when you call, freely giving ourselves as you have shown the way.

We open our hearts to you and your creation in the name of Jesus, who is the Christ.

Amen.

Bible reading: Matthew 22: 34-40, 1 Colossians 2:1-8 - Robert

Reflection - Naomi

They say God moves in mysterious ways – 1 Colossians 2 was not the lectionary reading set for today, but when I was looking up the readings, by mistake I went to 1 Colossians 2:1-8 instead of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8. But the reading from Colossians seemed so right on two counts that I decided to stick with it!

Paul talks about how much he is 'struggling' for those who have not seen him face to face, saying he wants their hearts to be encouraged. I am by no means comparing myself to the Apostle Paul, and I wouldn't use the word struggling, but it does feel a bit like for the last eight months, most of my ministry, I have been working a bit in a vacuum – home alone sending out emails and newsletters and speaking to a camera rather than taking services in church; trying to keep positive and sending out encouraging ideas. Despite having recently opened up the church building for a small number who are able to attend within the social distancing restrictions, I haven't seen most of you 'face to face' for months – most of my first year of ministry here! In fact, there are still members who I have not met. So I feel for Paul and for the church, that they cannot see each other and be together and have to rely only

on the letters he sends, which would have probably taken weeks to arrive and would have had to have been read out to the congregation because most of them could not read. We know that at least some of the letters Paul wrote, like the letter to the Corinthians, were in response to letters he received from congregations, often with quite specific questions, but we don't get to see any of those letters. I can imagine that for the most part, Paul was the one having to do the letter writing and the encouraging, without much feedback from his far-flung churches.

The second thing that struck me was that the house group topic for this week was around questions such as where we get our news from, and whether as Christians we have a responsibility to keep ourselves informed about the big issues of the day so that we can respond appropriately to them and whether we have a responsibility to 'check our facts' so to speak and find out if the news we receive is reliable. Verse 8 says, 'see to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human traditions'. The background to that is that like the community in Corinth, the church was listening to teachers other than Paul who were telling them things Paul doesn't think are part of the gospel.

Paul is saying that Christ is the perfect revelation of God and the single source of wisdom about how to live rightly. All our thoughts and actions should be determined through the prism of our faith in Christ, not by what we might hear and see from human sources. As with the story of the rich man asking how to achieve eternal life and Jesus telling him to sell everything, give the money to the poor and follow Christ which some of us reflected on in this week's Bible study, the important aspect is not how much money you give to charity, but your way of life should be governed by Christ, not by money or possessions. In a similar way, our reading and passing on of news should be done in the light of our relationship in and with Christ. We should not be passing on salacious gossip, or acting on hearsay. We are changed, just as the Colossians were changed, by Christ. Our focus is not the ways of the world, but how by living the way of Jesus we can change the world for the better and bring about the kingdom of God.

You 'have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith'. Do not be taken in by empty deceit and human ways of being, stay true to Christ 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'

Which leads us to a reading which was actually set for today – Matthew 22 – Love the Lord your God with all your heart...and love your neighbour as yourself. 'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' Who is our neighbour? Everyone. Which is why we will later be exploring registering as an Inclusive Church, so that those outside the church will know that we accept and love all regardless of any labels or identities humans put on other humans, for in Christ we are all equal; all created in the image of God. Amen.

HYMN A new commandment – R&S 745 Sung twice (led by Jean) the words here:

A new commandment I give unto you,
that you love one another as I have loved you:
that you love one another as I have loved you.
By this shall all know you are my disciples:
if you have love one for another;
by this shall all know you are my disciples:
If you have love one for another.

Prayers of Intercession (Rev Iain MacDonald, Church of Scotland) **Naomi**

Our prayer today is for all who are victims of cruel laws and petty laws,
those who're subjected to prejudice denied opportunities, excluded, pushed to margins.
The Lord our God is one:

We will love with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

Our prayer today is for all those who feel betrayed,
who don't know loyalty, who fear to trust, or to love,
and who don't realise that they're already loved by you.

The Lord our God is one:

We will love with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

Our prayer today is for the landless and homeless, the refugee and evicted,
those who find themselves stuck in foreign places and strange places.

The Lord our God is one:

We will love with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

Our prayer today is for the overworked and the underpaid,
for those in dangerous work and those in compassionate work,
for those who long to work but are denied the opportunity

The Lord our God is one:

We will love with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

Our prayer today is for the creation gifts,
this earth in all its mighty wonder, yet tender fragility,
the gifts of life and resources to treasure.

The Lord our God is one:

We will love with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength.

Our prayer today is for those who lie close to our hearts
those whom we worry about, those whom we miss,
those who carry disproportionate burdens at this time ...
those who do not have the technology or skills to join our service today,
those who again will be more alone, missing the visits of family and friends,
those who are ill and those who care for them.

The Lord our God is one:

We will love with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength. Amen

All (muted): The Lord's Prayer

Q&A with Ruth and discussion about Inclusive Church

Blessing – Naomi (Seekers)

With the mind of Christ in us in each moment of our lives, let us remember to give away
what we have received, believe in one another, forgive and be forgiven, love, however
imperfectly, and greet everyone with peace and grace.

**ALL: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit be with us now and remain with us always. Amen**