

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Booklet 95 of reflection and thoughts for prayer from the Presbytery Prayer Promoters' Group.

Last week we focused on scripture verses and reflections encouraging us to praise God. I do hope you enjoyed taking time to think about what it means to God for us to take time to praise Him, and also what it means to us when our spirits are lifted as we worship and praise. Let us keep remembering that God is our Creator so we are precious to Him.

I wonder if you have ever made anything as a creative work. Even if it is not perfect, there is a sense of uniqueness in what we do for ourselves. If we are parents, then we understand much more about the tenderness of feeling that wells up when we hold our new-born baby. I remember a flash of understanding about the depths of my mum's love for me when I had the privilege of holding my own children. It is powerful - even when we struggle to do the right thing as parents, or when our children make 'mistakes' as they explore life, there is a love that is overwhelming.

This week we are going to look at verses that remind us we are all uniquely precious to God.

There are notes for intercessory prayer at the end, to use as and when you wish throughout the week.

If you would like to comment or have a story you would like to share then feel free to contact me:

christistewart@btinternet.com Amen

Sunday, 6th February, 2022

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you..." Isaiah 43:1-2

Reflect and Pray: It seems to me that we can only truly trust God in prayer when we ourselves have found our rest and peace in knowing Him. Knowing about him is never quite enough. But when we experience his love and grace in our lives it transforms us and fills us with joy and hope. What greater reassurance can we have in our preciousness to God than that he knows us by name. Think of the vastness of human population now and in the past, and yet, we are told God calls us by name. Sadly many never seem to hear His voice calling, but when we discover the wonder and truth of this, we rejoice in our spirits as we come to him.

Let us pray:

- Eternal Father, we approach you in the name of Jesus our Redeemer and thank you for your faithfulness to us. We thank you that you care enough to be with us through everything that comes our way - to give us courage and hope.
- Lord God, as we learn to live with this Covid virus, we pray for all those trying to help us live safely and well through these times. Grant them inspiration, knowledge and understanding.
- Father God, We pray for all those desperately needing medical attention and struggling because of long waiting lists. Grant wisdom to everyone planning our medical resources.
- Lord, we pray for those around us who miss so much because they do not know You. Help us to be your light to them. Amen.

Monday, 7th February, 2022

"The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." Zephaniah 3:17

Reflect and pray:

Let me invite you to simply let God love and comfort you today - no matter your circumstances. Be honest before him. Speak aloud to him and tell him your thoughts and your fears. Give him your sorrow and sadness. If you are fortunate today to be feeling strong in your spirit, comfortable in your circumstances, then give Him praise and thanksgiving, and take time to pray for others not so fortunate.

Lord, hear our prayers and thanksgiving as we ponder these truths:

- 'The Lord, your God is with you'. Time and again he has promised in His word that he will never leave us alone. When Jesus went back to heaven the Holy Spirit, the Comforter was sent to be with us day in and day out and in the night.
- 'He is mighty to save': This was proven in the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God who loves us and gave himself for us. (Galatians 2:20)
- 'He will take great delight in you.' Isn't this amazing? Yet if we believe the previous point and the verse this should not surprise us.
- 'He will quiet you with his love.' Just trust him and find peace.
- 'He will rejoice over you with singing.' His word tells us that there is great rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents and is forgiven. Today let us in turn praise him from full and thankful hearts. Amen

Tuesday, 8th February, 2022

"Consider how the wildflowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you - you of little faith!" Luke 12:27-28

Reflection: We know that Jesus often challenged his disciples to do things that took them outside their comfort zone, but these words also demonstrate the comfort and encouragement he provided as he reminded them of God's creative intelligence and provision. I love the images of God as the 'gardener'. Here we see that he is responsible for the beauty of the flowers, the grasses - we may tend them, but he created them and placed them where they would flourish. Likewise, he created and looks after us. When we choose to worship Him, and serve Him in Jesus' name, the promise is that he provides for us. We just need to trust and be confident in Him. **Let us pray:**

- Lord God, we thank you for every evidence around us that you are a faithful God and your word is true.
- Our hearts are overwhelmed when we realise that You, majestic creator, came down into our world to walk with us in a garden, to weep in a garden, to be raised to life and to walk in a garden, so that we could be clothed in 'garments of salvation' (Isaiah 61:10) more beautiful and eternal than the beauty of the lilies.
- Lord God, as we look around we understand how much we need your intervention to restore beauty, peace and order to our lives. We continue to ask you to help us through these days.
- Lord God, we pray that you will continue to give creative genius to those who continue to work against Covid-19. Amen

Wednesday, 9th February, 2022

Shout with joy before the Lord, O earth! Obey him gladly; come before him, singing with joy. Try to realize what this means—the Lord is God! He made us—we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Go through his open gates with great thanksgiving; enter his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is always good. He is always loving and kind, and his faithfulness goes on and on to each succeeding generation. Psalm 100

Reflect: This wonderful Psalm is much loved. It surely speaks clearly of how precious we are to God. This particular translation from 'The Living Bible' displays great excitement because the Psalmist realises how much God cares for His people. It is a Psalm of rejoicing, and the writer has a unique understanding of the eternal nature of God - 'His faithfulness goes on and on to each succeeding generation.' Jesus echoed this in his beautiful prayer recorded in John 17:20 when he prayed for His disciples - not only at the time but for all who would follow afterwards as a result of their faithful mission in Jesus' name. There is no doubt we are precious to God.

Pray: Righteous God, who provided our salvation and surrounds us with so many good things, we thank you that you care about us, when many of us forget you so often. Help us to be aware of your grace which we do not deserve, and which blesses us, even when we forget you. Thank you for your love which does not depend on our goodness. Thank you that as we praise your Holy name, our hearts are lifted and we can find joy to sustain us. Amen

Thursday, 10th February, 2022

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (Repeated from October 2020)

As we kneel down at
the cross of Jesus;
Let us bow our head
in humble adoration.

Lord, we see you there - not for your wrong-doing,
But only because of your heart of compassion for all;
Your obedience to the Father's will is complete, showing
a heart of love for all who long for the peace of God.

We pray for a lost and
broken world still not
knowing you and your
love, light and joy. We
pray for brothers and
sisters in every place
on earth. Unite us in
love for you; for one
another, and for the
planet which is our
home. Grant us mercy

wisdom and grace to be your witnesses in every situation - even
in the continuing pandemic of Covid-19. May we be an example to
others of how to live joyfully, in Jesus' name. Amen!

Friday, 11th February, 2022

“When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour.” Psalm 8:3-5

Reflect: Most people have a tendency to think of the natural world all around us and ourselves as two completely separate entities. However, if you read these words from Psalm 8 carefully, we learn that we are created by the same wonderful God as the universe. I believe the reason we feel separate is because, in his love for humanity, God gave us a special status: ' a little lower than the angels...crowned with glory and honour'. May we always remain humble enough to give God worship - as He has shown his goodness and love for us. May we also take seriously the fact that we are charged with a responsibility to look out for one another and to look after the natural world, in Jesus' name and for his sake..

Pray: Lord God, the world you created in the glory of natural beauty delights us in so many ways. We stand in awe of your majesty and sovereignty, and once again we are humbled and give you grateful thanks. We are all unique, and there is something in nature that delights each of us in a special way. Help us to show our gratitude by caring for the world around us, and by caring for mankind - especially those who live in harsh conditions or who are treated badly by others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, 12th February, 2022

Let's start the weekend by going back to Isaiah 43 in the form of this lovely hymn: Hymn CH4 191

*Chorus: Do not be afraid, For I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name; You are mine.*

When you walk through the waters I'll be with you,
You will never have to sink beneath the waves. **Chorus**

*When the fire is burning all around you,
You will never be consumed by the flames. **Chorus***

When the fear of loneliness is looming,
Then remember I am at your side. **Chorus**

*When you dwell in the exile of a stranger,
Remember you are precious in my eyes. **Chorus***

You are mine, O my child; I am your father,
And I love you with a perfect love. **Chorus**

You Tube Link: <https://youtu.be/v2rOOLhSWJO>

Prayers from the Guild - (Last week's newsletter)

Pray this week

(Remember there is a lot of additional information on the Church of Scotland website)

Monday: remembering the people of Tonga after the recent volcanic eruption and tsunami.

Tuesday: asking for guidance for leaders in local, national and international government in these different times.

Wednesday: giving thanks for Guild and congregational treasurers as they complete their accounts for the year.

Thursday: remembering staff in hospitals, hospices, care homes and in the community who care for people who are unwell, elderly or vulnerable — asking for patience, compassion and a generosity of spirit.

Friday: giving thanks for those who organise and help with food banks and other services that support people in need of food, clothes or a warm place to stay.

Saturday: remembering Church of Scotland mission partners serving in various roles throughout the world supporting those around them.

Sunday: asking God to develop spiritual growth within churches and Guilds and a willingness to serve in whatever way possible as we look to the future.

I have also kept prayers for Malawi and Ukraine in this week.

MALAWI

(From Africa News) Supported by messages from some of our missionary partners in Malawi giving local descriptions of tragedies and horrendous difficulties faced by the people. I am

sharing this so that you might be encouraged to pray that God will comfort the people and send them many blessing through these times of extreme difficulty which they must endure while still struggling with the Covid pandemic:

Tropical storm Ana has caused widespread flooding, power outages and killed at least one person in Malawi, officials said Tuesday.

Cutting a path of wet destruction across southern Africa, the storm has blown from the Indian Ocean island of Madagascar, across Mozambique and into Malawi. In Madagascar the storm and earlier rains are blamed for 34 deaths and making an estimated 55,000 people homeless.

The Zambezi River area in central Mozambique was inundated by the storm's winds and rains.

In southern Malawi, flooding caused many houses to collapse, killing at least one person. Thousands more have been made homeless and have sought refuge in churches and schools. A major road has been cut off by flooding and many people are feared trapped by the surging waters, according to Malawi government officials.

A search and rescue team has been deployed to help people trapped by the flooding, Charles Kalemba, Commissioner for Disaster and Management Affairs told AP. Teams from Malawi's military, police and the Malawi Red Cross Society are part of the effort, he said.

Power has been cut to most parts of the country as torrents of water carry debris that has knocked down power lines, according to statements issued by the Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi and the Electricity Generation Company.

Classes have been suspended for all schools in southern Malawi, Education Minister Chikondano Mussa has announced.

UKRAINE

The following prayer for Ukraine is printed courtesy of the Faith Impact Forum of the Church of Scotland:

Pray for Ukraine

The Faith Impact Forum has been in touch with members of our partner church, the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, Ukraine (Egyházkerület Kárpátaljai Református). Like all of us, they are watching with concern as armed forces assemble at the Russian border and the threat of conflict grows. Lord Wallace, Moderator of the General Assembly, and Very Rev Dr Susan Brown, convener of the Faith Impact Forum, are asking all of us to pray for those who are frightened and at risk in Ukraine.

Prayer for Ukraine:

The news can be difficult to listen to and to read.
When that news relates to faces we know
And to voices familiar to us,
It becomes all the harder to hear.
Lord God,
We ask you to hold the people of Ukraine deep in your heart.

Protect them, we pray;
From violence,
From political gamesmanship,
from being used and abused.
Give, we pray,
the nations of the world the courage
and the wisdom
to stand up for justice
and the courage too,
to dare to care - generously.
Lord in your mercy,
Take from us all,
The tendencies in us
That seek to lord it over others:
Take from us those traits
that see us pursuing our own needs and wants before those
of others.
Teach us how to live in love
And dignity
And respect - following your example.
In your name and for your sake, Amen

The Government of our nation

Sovereign Lord, we are saddened by the disarray of those in power in our land. We pray you will raise up people of integrity; people who honour you with their lives; people who truly care to work out what is right and good for the people. We thank you for every God-honouring member of government and ask you to bless their work. Grant them both grace and courage, Lord. Amen