

Dear Reader,

Welcome to **Booklet 55** 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.

I had been thinking since last week about moving on to some reflections taken from biblical verses relating to the seashore. However, as I sat down to begin this I was reading the chapter about Jesus being the vine and his followers the branches and suddenly felt God inspiring me to continue on from the flower-related reflections of the last two weeks to God's work as a gardener. I love the way that God opens up these ideas from His word. It is such a rich storehouse of treasures if we only took the time to look into it. I have to say that preparing for these reflections has really blessed me too. I am also pleased to say that I have concluded this week with prayers of intercession submitted by PP Debi Dunn. Ryan in South Africa - on our prayer list - is a member of her family. I hope you also keep faith with the reflection and prayer every Monday - to praise God. If you would like to comment or share a story then please contact me: [christistewart@btinternet.com](mailto:christistewart@btinternet.com) Amen

**Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2021**

This Sunday (2<sup>nd</sup> May), as on previous Sundays, I am pleased to include again the Sunday Prayer recommended by Rev Martin Fair - Moderator of the Church of Scotland. 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.

"Too often, different parts of the Christian Church have allowed themselves to become distant from one another. They've looked at certain doctrinal or liturgical matters in different ways and have allowed those differences to become divisive," Dr Fair said. "But we can, and should, all pray together. And when we do, we find that some of these differences that seemed important begin to diminish in significance.

"Through the pandemic we have prayed each Sunday evening at 7pm and we've done it *together*. We've been united in praying for the country and in praying for the life and mission of the whole Church. "Jesus' final prayer when with his disciples was, 'My prayer for all those who believe in me is that they shall be one.' "We've demonstrated that by our shared prayer. Let it continue to be so." "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 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021 Prayer @ 7pm.**

This week's letter accompanying the prayer:

"We live in a world in which questions of identity are much to the fore. The questions range from that of personal identity to those of communal identity. Such questions are important and from our understanding of who we are there will follow, in large measure, the pattern of how we engage with others.

"In similar fashion, the way in which we understand the nature of God will enable us to better understand the pattern of how God engages with us.

"Scripture speaks of the identity of God when it affirms: 'God is love'. We understand this to be the case because: 'God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His only Son into the world that we might live through Him.' (1 John 4: 7-21)

"We see something of the identity of God revealed in the self-giving of God. In the self-giving of God, we see revealed the truth that: 'God is love'. In the light of our understanding of this truth, there will follow, in large measure, the pattern of how we engage with others."

**We pray:**

God whose name is Love,  
We see your love revealed  
In the giving of your Son.  
May we embrace the offer of your love  
And live in response to your generosity.  
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose name is Love,  
We see your love revealed  
In the One who shares in our humanity and who suffers on our behalf.  
May we live as those who share a common humanity  
And in the suffering of the world.  
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose name is Love,  
We see your love revealed  
In the community of your people and in all who are made in your image.  
May we share in the life of your people  
And recognise your image in the life of others.  
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose name is Love,  
We see your love revealed among us  
In the places where love is known and fear is cast out.  
May fear be cast out and love be known  
In the community we share and in the spaces we shape.  
Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.

God whose name is Love,  
We see your love revealed among us  
In the resurrection of your Son and in the promise of your Spirit.  
May we live as those who share in the hope of the resurrection  
And in the life of your Spirit.  
Lord, in your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

## Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 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 so I am continuing into year two with the same reflection and prayers. May we find new hope:

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

Even as restrictions lift, and more have the vaccine, there is still anxiety so 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 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2021

'Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' Genesis 2:8-9

**Reflection:** Gardens are God's idea. Gardens are part of God's creative perfection and intelligence. They reveal to us how important it is for our welfare to take opportunities to be where there is aesthetic natural beauty. God ordained that in the creation of a garden that was 'pleasing to the eye'- and God placed his first created humans in that garden. As well as that, God's huge natural Garden contains provision for physical nurture - it is good for food. In that garden, in the beginning we have also a picture of our souls being nurtured and an early reference to God's perfect creation being spoiled by sin. In the tree of life, I see a picture of the wood becoming the cross of Jesus to redeem us from sin and to grant us eternal life.

### Let us pray:

- We thank you that you chose to meet with those you created in a garden. May we sense your presence with us today as we look at the beauty and wonder of your creation.
- We pray today for those who are forced to live where it is hard to see a garden and harder to see you - and yet we know that you can reveal your presence in the very air that we breathe and the knowledge that you love us - in all our circumstances. Reveal yourself in Jesus to all who seek you.
- Help us to remain faithful in prayer for all situations, especially your creation caught in a pandemic, for truly the power to heal and restore is yours. In Jesus' name, Amen

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2021**

“I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. ”  
Ecclesiastes 2:5-6

“This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? Ecclesiastes 2:24-25

**Reflection:** The writer of these words is clearly a man of substance, a man of wealth and a man of authority. He is also someone who understands the wonders of being surrounded by beautiful nature. He has the power to shape it around him, but did he have the power to create any of it in the beginning? No! Between these verses is a whole piece of writing in which he expresses a sense of futility of life until he realises that we need to see the glory and greatness of God because true peace and joy only comes when we praise and worship Him. We are extra blessed because between then and now Jesus came into the world and by his sacrificial life and death made it possible for us to find a new and living relationship with God for all eternity.

**Let us pray:**

- Thank you God, for your generous providing. When you created the world you filled it with so many beautiful things as well as those things essential to the sustaining of the universe. Help us not to take so much for granted.
- When we look at beautiful things help us to see your hand at work and give you praise. Also we give thanks for skills and intelligence given to those to find solutions to help us survive this pandemic, recognising the source of all things in You.
- Lord God, many of our days seem difficult and complicated, and many are hurting and grieving. Help us to reach out and care for one another in Jesus' name

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2021**

“Consider how the wild flowers 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. When we choose to worship Him, and serve Him in Jesus' name, the promise is that he provides for us and enables us to fulfil whatever he asks us to do. 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

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2021**

**I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 1 Corinthians 3:6,7**

**Reflection:** Yesterday we touched on God providing for us to serve in whatever he calls us to do. Today's verse reminds us that he is the true gardener, the head gardener. We simply do the basic tasks of preparing the ground, sowing the seed and a bit of nurturing. We have no ability to create the seeds or breathe life into the seeds. Life and growth are in God's hands. If we do not allow God room to work, but push him into the background of our lives, our growth will be stunted. If our growth is stunted, we cannot help others in the way God intends. The apostle Paul illustrates that we only need to play the part that God gives to us. We should not worry about what others are doing because at the end of the day we are only called to be obedient and if we are, God does the rest. Serving in his Kingdom is team work - and no member of the team is greater than any other.

**Let us Pray:**

- As we reflect on the nature of service in your kingdom, we are amazed that you ever consider us worthy of being called to anything. Help us to show our love and worship by offering ourselves anew each day to serve in Jesus' name.
- While we still feel the effects of Covid, we call on you to breathe new healing life into our world. We also thank you for everyone who has risen to the challenge of being your church when buildings have been closed. May we continue to look for ways to worship and serve in Jesus' name.
- The miracle of reproduction and regeneration is astonishing. We thank you for faithful witnesses through generations.

**Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2021**

Prayers this week from PP Debi Dunn. Thank you for sharing: Father God,

As we bring our prayers of intercession to you today, we thank you that your blessing and power are with us, whatever our circumstances.

We pray firstly for her majesty the Queen as she grieves the passing of her beloved husband, Prince Philip. Grief is something so intensely personal, but, as, any of us who have lost loved ones will know, those early days are so raw and the Queen would have had the added sorrow on Wednesday, of her first birthday without Him. We pray that the Queen and her family will feel your spirit of comfort and peace.

Still, COVID dominates our lives and the world over. We pray for countries like Brazil and India who are in the grip of another more virulent and deadly wave. Their health systems are overwhelmed and they are still experiencing thousands of deaths a day. At home we are fortunate to be coming slowly out the other side and we pray that we will be diligent and considerate so that we do not negate the sacrifices made by so many over the multiple lockdowns. May we remember the lessons you have taught us during this time and not be quick to forget and return to our self-indulgent ways.

Father, we pray for our country and the leaders of the different political parties as we edge closer to the Elections on the 6<sup>th</sup> May. With the propensity for further division and disruption at a time when healing and unity is needed, we pray that integrity, humility, duty and a genuine desire to improve things for all Scottish people will take precedence over personal egos, point scoring and political agendas.

Further afield we pray for Capetonians at this tragic time when a needless act of arson has destroyed protected heritage sites, wildlife, buildings, monuments and precious archives. Thousands of students and residents have been evacuated and we thank you for the generosity of the local and regional communities as they come together to support those in need. Please protect the fire fighters as they continue to battle the blaze.

We pray for the American people after the verdict in the trial of Derek Chauvin over the traumatic death of George Floyd. This is a pivotal moment for positive change in American race relations with so much division, anger, pain and hurt felt on both sides. May policy makers be guided by your spirit of truth and justice - putting aside their own prejudices and emotions. For the nation as a whole, may they be led to follow the example set by Your Son, Jesus Christ whom you sent to love, heal and forgive and seek unity and reconciliation amongst all Americans irrespective of colour or race.

Finally, we pray for our church - for our ministers, the elders, the congregational board, the members and all their families as we find our way as a church community post Covid. As a group, may we commit ourselves to prayer, uniting your will with ours so that we can know your purpose for us. May we all together be a church that embraces the values of grace, mercy and humility, always seeking to love, not to judge; seeking to welcome others with open arms; looking to bless all in our parishes, praying that the power of the holy spirit will overcome any powers of poverty hopelessness or addiction that have taken hold.

Whilst we may be hesitant or apprehensive as we move forward, we give you thanks for the encouragement that we can take from the example that Paul sets during his imprisonment - such joy in the midst of trial. We see how You took care of him in such

difficult circumstances and you still were able to use him to further your kingdom. You are indeed a Glorious God, worthy of all praise. And, as the wonderful hymn says, there are indeed "10 000 reasons" and more to worship and praise you - whatever we have gone through and whatever lies ahead may we keep singing and rejoicing in the knowledge of your love for us.

In the loving name of Jesus Christ, we pray this, Amen.

**10000 Reasons** (if you do not know this and can access You Tube you can search for it there. It is a beautiful hymn)

Bless the Lord O my soul  
O my soul  
Worship His Holy name  
Sing like never before  
O my soul  
I'll worship Your Holy name

The sun comes up  
It's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing Your song again  
Whatever may pass  
And whatever lies before me  
Let me be singing  
When the evening comes

You're rich in love  
And You're slow to anger  
Your name is great  
And Your heart is kind  
For all Your goodness  
I will keep on singing

Ten thousand reasons  
For my heart to find

And on that day  
When my strength is failing  
The end draws near  
And my time has come  
Still my soul will  
Sing Your praise unending

Ten thousand years  
And then forevermore

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