

# St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

30th August 2020

## He restores my soul

Psalm 23:2

Good is good... all the time...

Opening Song; 'You Restore My Soul'  
(feat Lauren Harris & Tom Read)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_sZBueMC0U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_sZBueMC0U)

### Call to worship and opening Prayer

A love that never ceases, a creativity that designed the universe, a hope that cannot be quenched, and a pursuit of reconciliation no matter the cost. These are the things that are of God; the Good Shepherd who restores our souls. We've gathered to thank Him for what is good, for His goodness. We've come to cry out to our God for what is wrong and to ask for His help in our time of need. We've also come with aching hearts – seeking healing, renewal and restoration. We have gathered to worship the Good Shepherd who restores our souls.

### A prayer for restoration of shattered lives

Helper of the helpless, so much of our lives lie shattered and tattered because of this terrible pandemic. Our minds wander through the wreckage of the last brutal months, our hearts are heavy through the havoc wrought by suffering and loss of loved ones. Also, the deficit of distance has been felt in even our closest relationships. Just making ends meet seemed to matter more than it has for a long time. Our souls are shredded by the strain and stress of uncertainty. We are grateful for Your help – but we still need You. The battle rages on. Many are tired, weak or scared. But, we've got You and You've got us. We still need you, our God; We need Your help, we need one another. Oh, restore us, we plead! Restore our souls, our Good Shepherd. Restore us and make Your face shine on us, that we may be saved. Restore our withered hands, sightless eyes and troubled minds. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and grant a willing spirit to sustain us. Let us rejoice like Jacob and be glad like Israel, when you restore us as your people.

God of all grace, who called us to your eternal glory in Christ, after we have suffered this little while, restore us and make us strong, firm and steadfast. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your Kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.*

*Give us today  
our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom,  
the power and the glory  
are yours.  
Now and for ever. Amen*

Psalm 23: 1-3a;

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. **He restores my soul...**

Psalm 19:7

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Hosea 14:4-9

"I will heal their waywardness and love them freely,  
for my anger has turned away from them.  
I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. I will answer him and care for him. I am like a flourishing juniper; your fruitfulness comes from me. Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.

'Wisdom Path' by Jan Richardson

God of the waters,  
help me to know that there will be wilderness,  
but the wilderness will turn to green land  
that there will be desert, but in the desert a spring;  
that in the heart of the rock of my life  
will begin to flow a river washing through the chasm  
of my soul  
and that I will walk wet with memory  
when again I touch dry land

## Reflection: 'HE RESTORES MY SOUL' (PSALM 23:3)

These words speak to me of an unsolicited gift of God, who restores my soul, even in sleep (Psalm 127:2). It is an ongoing gift rooted in the grace and generosity of God, and it applies to all people of all ages.

The Hebrew word for "soul" draws attention to the core of a person's being. It is the essence and seat of your being. I believe it is here we are one with God, a union that is never broken. And, in the words of St Patrick's breastplate, God is the "soul's shelter" and sanctuary.

There is something very special and sacred about the words "He restores my soul". What message do they hold? The writer of these words was perhaps a shepherd working hard to safeguard and hold a small flock together, seeking the best nourishment for the sheep, and being exhausted in the process. The shepherd is perhaps most able to relax and recover as she/he draws on the air of green pastures and gazes upon still waters, when the flock is together and safe.

From here emerges the reflection that God is the Great Shepherd who in the experience of the writer is always with her/him, and with those who are precious to her/him, and holds them together. This goes a long way to hold and restore her/his soul. From this grows her/his commitment to the pathways of righteousness, without fearing loneliness, and with the assurance that she/he has nourishment and goodness even when surrounded by "enemies". The Psalmist concludes that this is where her/his ultimate rest is.

Restoration is a gift of God, but it is also rooted in communion with others. In the mind of Christ, the key lies in communion with two or three "soul mates". Soul mates like nourishing pasture and pools of still water, in whom we find restoration. In the context of coronavirus and Covid-19, the focus is rightly on medication. But we cannot ignore the psychological and mental wellbeing. We are discovering more than ever that communion with others is essential to our health and contribution. We are troubled when anyone in distress is alone.

Do not underestimate the reassurance and restoration that can come from communication and communion in twos and threes. It strengthens our souls.

The soul is precious. It is the centre of our resilience when our body is weak. Nevertheless, our body, with all its fragility and vulnerability is the sanctuary of our soul. Perhaps the soul also is the "treasure in clay jars" we read in apostle Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 4:7). Paul goes on to say, "we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). Praise the Lord, that when our bodies are bruised and broken and exhausted, our souls within us will find pastures and pools, and paths of righteousness. It is God's business to restore weighed-down souls. Jesus asks us not to focus on material gain and wellbeing at the expense of our souls (Matthew 16:26; Luke 9:25). His desires that we know God's love, saving grace and protection – and sing, 'It is well, it is well - with my soul'. Adapted largely from a recent (6/4/20) reflection by Inderjit Bhogal,

## Prayers for ourselves and others



"Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul." Psalm 143:8

Loving Father, it is to you that we lift our souls and our very beings. As we draw near to you in this very moment, we ask that you guide us, that you cover us, that you hold us in the palm of your hand and cover us with your ever present love. It is this that we need as we long for hope. Hope for a world to be more loving to one another, hope that your pure love might cover us both in our celebrations as well as in our mourning.

God, we pray for healing of brokenness as we grieve the loss of life, of businesses, of your natural world. We pray for courage and resiliency for people in USA facing wildfires. We lift up the communities, also in USA, where tornadoes have changed lives forever and demolished the livelihood of so many. We ask for your presence to be off the coast of the Republic of Mauritius where an oil spill has damaged your beautiful creation.

God, as you continue to cover with love those who suffer from Covid-19, we now pray for those who have seemingly recovered from the virus, but may indeed experience life-long effects. We pray for those in Spain, Italy, and Iran where there have been significantly more cases in the past days. We pray for people in our country and beyond struggling to rebuild their businesses.

God we are so grateful for our family and neighbours to whom we can offer our love and from whom we also receive so much love. We are also so grateful that no matter where we go or what we do, we can walk knowing that we have your love on our backs and hope in our pockets. Lord, be with our family, neighbours and friends. Enrich and direct our plans to reopen our church buildings. Rekindle in us the need to come closer together even as we safely stay apart.

Help us Father to enjoy fellowship with one another and to reach out with open arms to all around us. May we all be one and celebrate unity in diversity. Show us how to delight in what is good, to reject injustice in all its forms, to confront what is cruel and to heal what is damaging. Give to us a discerning strength to move into the next moment, the next day, the next act of compassion and courage. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## Closing Hymn: 'Praise to the Lord, the Almighty'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEh7vt9sxmc>

## Final blessings

May you know the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May His spirit overshadow and consume you. May the song within you which sings for eternity, sing loudly. May the Father quiet the voices around you which tell you to settle for less than what He promises.

"Always be joyful. Pray continually and give thanks whatever happens. That is what God wants for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

