

ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, SIGHTHILL
15TH NOVEMBER 2020

CROSSREACH AND SOCIAL CARE SUNDAY

Hello

How can we help you?

SONG: THE STEADFAST LOVE OF THE LORD
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnOFh9WFe6k>

OPENING PRAYER LORD'S PRAYER

God of the past, the present, and of the future,
God who is, who was and who is to come,
Today we have again gathered here to celebrate
and to rejoice:

With hands held high in the air,

We pray that our congregation and others around us
would continue to be a people that worship, praise
and adore you.

With hands clasped in prayer,

We pray that we continue to be a people who seek
you in prayer, spirit and truth

With hands holding a Bible,

We ask that we continue to be a people who love your
word, a people who seek to study your word to share
with our family and friends.

With hands held out in front of us, ready to serve,

We pray that, through water, wine and bread, we
would go on to be equipped, energised and refuelled
to bear the Christ light and to shine.

And with hands joined together,

We pray that we go on to build a community,

- where love bridges the gap between the young and the old,
- where forgiveness, faith and wisdom are shared so that others might grow,
- where strength, compassion and hope are found in temptation, loss and grief,
- and where laughter, hugs and big, warm smiles bear witness to the welcoming, loving God that we all know.

God of the past, God of the present,
and God of the future, God who is, God
who was and God who is to come -
dwell in this place, dwell in our church
and in our homes; dwell among us and
in our living; So that we, as a
congregation (both gathered and
scattered) might continue to be a
people who welcome, who worship and
who witness to the way of faith, hope
and love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 and the power and the glory,
forever, Amen.

BIBLE READING: PSALM 90

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9sz3srZd3o>

BRIEF REFLECTION (part of a reflection shared by Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland)

If you travel to Torridon in the North West Highlands of Scotland, you'll have opportunity to marvel at what are some of Scotland's most magnificent mountain landscapes. The rock of which these mountains are composed is the oldest in the country and some of the oldest on the face of the earth. It's somewhat humbling – and helps to keep everything in perspective – to step on these rocks and in so doing to be aware of one's own smallness and, as some would have it, insignificance in the big scheme of things.

And yet in the psalm we have this:

*'Before the mountains were born, from
beginning to end, You are God.'*

The point is this, that God stands above and beyond all that we see and all that there ever has been or will be. There's no geological survey technique nor carbon dating method that can put a timescale on God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.

But this is more than theological assertion. It's the foundation upon which we can have confidence to trust that God stands above the shifting sands of time, above the movement of tectonic plates and the rising and falling of great mountain ranges and, if that, then also above the circumstances of our particular time and place.

To put it another way, in God we have THE Rock of Ages – One for whom ‘a thousand years are as a passing day.’ Isn’t this good to know – to be reminded of – when there’s so much uncertainty in our country and across the world right now? Isn’t it a cause for hope to know that even though so much seems to have been shaken to the core, our Rock, is from age to age the same? Covid-19 has done its worst and continues to wreak havoc, but we have a God who remains.

All of this is core to Christian belief and yet God’s forever-ness stands so starkly against our own frailty and mortality. And if we were in any doubt about that, the last six months have served as a forceful reminder of it, and of the associated pain and suffering.

The Psalmist is entirely up-front about all of this. Verses 5-6 speak of we humans as being as grass which springs up in the morning, blooms and flourishes, and is withered and gone by the evening. And in verse 10 we read:

‘Seventy years are given to us! Some even live to eighty. But even the best years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we fly away.’

Among the many hurts that Covid-19 has inflicted, there have been few more heart-rending scenes than those of relatives outside care homes, unable to visit loved ones. And of course care homes were at the epicentre of vulnerability in terms of ‘at risk’ members of our communities.

Our CrossReach care homes were not exempt from any of this. Some of them experienced tragic losses. Frailty and vulnerability were never felt more acutely. And yet the staff in our homes never flinched, never thinking about themselves at the expense of those in their care – those they loved and continue to love. Many staff members contracted the virus, as in those early days it was circulating unseen.

Here is the critical truth in all of this. Though God stands outside of time and space – ‘from beginning to end, You are God’ – God chooses to enter into our experience, such is God’s love for us. And we see that loving and caring being expressed in the sacrificial service of our CrossReach staff, and of course many others.

And so it becomes clear that we are not in fact ‘insignificant’ at all. Our value in God’s sight is inestimable and we give expression to that as we care for others, not least the weakest and most vulnerable members of our communities.

Today we give thanks for the work of CrossReach. But might it also be a moment in which you ask, ‘Are there ways in which I can express something of God’s care for those around me?’

PRAYERS

Because You care, Lord, we too will care. Some say, ‘I couldn’t care less.’ We say, ‘we couldn’t care more.’ Loving Lord, that You do care for us is beyond debate. On every page of scripture, we hear the reassuring whisper that You care – that You always have and always will. And so, reassured in that truth, send and equip us to be bearers of Your care in the world around us.

Today we thank You for CrossReach and for the care and compassion that informs all that it does. Hear us as we pray everyone at Crossreach as they seek to plan, to resource, to manage, to inspire and to encourage. Grant them all necessary wisdom to lead in these most challenging of circumstances.

Hear us as we pray for all team members charged with frontline service delivery – that Christ might use their hands and their hearts as they offer help, support and a willingness to listen.

Hear us as we pray for those who experience the care that CrossReach offers: from elderly residents of care homes, to those struggling with emotional well-being, poor mental health or addiction, to children and families facing educational and disability challenges.

Loving God, through the work of CrossReach might Your name be known more widely and Your compassion experienced more closely. In Jesus’ name, we pray, Amen

CLOSING SONG: ROCK OF AGES CLEFT FOR ME

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4clxxd4Dvw>

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save me from its guilt and power

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778)

BENEDICTION

May you all always be aware that the Living and Loving God Almighty walks right alongside you, in everything you do and wherever you go. May the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all and all those you love and find difficult to love, today, tomorrow and forever. Amen

