

LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCO20871 and SCO10035

Call to worship

As we settle into the rhythm of 2021, even though it is not necessarily the rhythm we would like, we gather in your presence today. As a new week begins, we come to worship you. As a new service starts, we seek to encounter your grace. As we enter into this moment, we pray for transformation by your Spirit, O Lord. Amen.

Hymn: This is the day

This is the day, this is the day
that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice, we will rejoice
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day
That the Lord has made.

©1967, 1980 Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing (Admin. by
Brentwood-Benson Music Publishing, Inc.) CCLI Song #32754 CCLI Licence 632441

Opening Prayers

Lord, as we prepare for worship, let your presence come in Jesus name. We meet as a family, welcoming each other with open hearts and minds. We ask that your Holy Spirit work within us and make yourself known to us today through our worship, prayers and the reading of your word. Bless our worship today. May we hear you speaking. Help us to have you as the focus of all that we are. Amen.

Psalm 29

- ¹ Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- ² **Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendour of his holiness.**
- ³ The voice of the LORD is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.
- ⁴ **The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is majestic.**
- ⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
- ⁶ **He makes Lebanon leap like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.**
- ⁷ The voice of the LORD strikes
with flashes of lightning.
- ⁸ **The voice of the LORD shakes the desert;
the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.**
- ⁹ The voice of the LORD twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.
And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
- ¹⁰ **The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD is enthroned as King forever.**
- ¹¹ The LORD gives strength to his people;
the LORD blesses his people with peace

LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCO20871 and SCO10035

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Genesis 1:1-5 - Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, **2** the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. **3** Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Acts 19:1-17 Paul in Ephesus

19 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. **2** He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." **3** Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." **4** Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." **5** On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **6** When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—
7 altogether there were about twelve of them.

8 He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. **9** When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. **10** This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

Reflections on the readings

Have you ever noticed how some people's voices simply seem to be able to command a situation instantly? It is not necessarily the person with the loudest, strongest, most booming voice that does this. Rather, it is often the softly and gently spoken individual whose voice demands greatest attention.

It seems counterintuitive to many but adding a raised voice to an already fractious situation seldom brings resolution.

Have you ever heard people of peace speak? What words did they use? How did their physical voice sound? How did you/others respond?

Today's readings remind us of the power of the voice and speech (but not necessarily just that of humans):

In Genesis 1:1-4 we hear how God begins to speak creation into being, first separating light and dark. In verse 3 we read: *"Then God **said**, 'Let there be light', and there was light."*

Notice the creative power of God displayed in the seemingly simple yet profound act of speech. We are then told that God goes on to name the light day, and the dark, night. Fundamental rhythms that we continue to experience as humans and could be defined as the basis of life.

Read Genesis 1:1-4 again and as you do, encourage yourself (and others) to reflect on the passage by asking 'I wonder' questions. For example, 'I wonder if God's voice was audible?' or 'I wonder why God spoke when no other living thing was present?'

**LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCO20871 and SCO10035**

In Psalm 29 that we read together we hear the voice of God but this time we find it within the context of a storm. The Psalmist raises their praise to God, opening the Psalm with: *Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendour.*

This clearly communicates the awesome nature of God and recognises what our response ought to be. Yet enveloped within this text there seems to be the feeling that the voice of God is less to be feared and more to be respected. The voice of God alone can do more than humans ever hope to do even if they used all the resources available to them. The Psalm doesn't end with a call for people to revere God, but instead we are offered the prayerful and encouraging words:

“May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace.”
(Psalm 29:11, NRSV).

We are reminded in the midst of the noise, chaos and drama of the storm that God can and does distil peace.

Have you ever experienced the peace of God within a stormy period of your life? How did it feel? How did you respond?

In Acts 19 we meet a group of disciples in Corinth. They have clearly misunderstood the message which John the Baptist proclaimed as they were living out their faith with an obscured understanding. Paul reminds them of the need to be baptised into Christ and to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When Paul lays hands upon those gathered they proceed to speak in tongues and prophesy; surely in this act they both praised and were encouraged to point people towards the triune God.

The passage continues, notice, and we are told that Paul goes and **speaks boldly** in the synagogue for three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. Paul clearly perseveres with this congregation, before he finally leaves when people stubbornly refused to listen; but his act of proclamation, alongside these disciples continued until all of Asia had heard the good news.

Have you ever experienced a situation where people stubbornly refused to listen? What did you do? Why? What would motivate you to continue sharing the Good News?

Today's readings beautifully and profoundly remind us the wonder of a voice. We are reminded of the awesome nature of God, that he simply spoke creation into being. We are reminded of the power of God in the way his voice is heard in the midst of a mighty storm. We recognise, through the role of John the Baptist, the part we can play in proclaiming God but yet we need to be cautious that we share the message in such a way that those who hear fully comprehend.

Communication goes beyond words alone, we perhaps notice this in the very act of creation.

In what ways has God called you to communicate the Good News and point people to Jesus? How will you respond?

Prayers of intercession

Lord God, as we move forward into a new year,

we ask you to bless all for whom the year is not being looked forward to.

We think of people who are ill and fearful of what the year will bring. This probably includes most of us. We think of all who have family difficulties and are concerned as to how to solve them. We think of all for whom the new year is bringing money problems, and the many who are fearful for their jobs.

**LAIRG CHURCH OF SCOTLAND & ROGART (ST CALLANS) CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCO20871 and SCO10035**

Lord, for us all the future is unknown — help us to have the faith to trust in you,
the wisdom to do the right thing, and to be guided by you constantly.

Remind us, Lord, that you always keep your promises;
remind us too that they are kept in your time and not ours.

We ask your blessing on all who have turned their back on You; or who have not known
You. May they hear your word and respond to your love. Be with those who are lost,
who have never known you. Help them to seek and find the peace and love found in you
and you alone.

Heavenly Father we bring before you our loved ones, and in a few moments of silence we
pray for them.

For our family, our friends, for all whom we know.

May this year be good for all whom we love,

Lord God, guide us in our lives. May others see your love shine through us.

May our words and actions constantly point to you; may we put You first in everything
and serve You always.

We ask you to be with us

and give us a year where we know and feel and are guided by your presence.

Whatever the year holds may we never lose sight of you.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn In Christ alone

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and
storm.

What heights of love, what depths of
peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings
cease!

My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on Him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand:
Till He returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty Copyright © 2001 Thankyou
Music CCLI Song #3350395 CCLI Licence 632441

Blessing

Go in peace; love and care for one another in the name of Christ;
and may the Spirit of God which filled John and Jesus,
fill your hearts, souls and minds;
may the power of God which upheld them,
strengthen you for each day;
and may the love of God which directed their every action
be your guiding light and your shining star,
both now and forevermore. **Amen**