

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

Call to worship

God is here, as we, God's people, gather to praise, to pray and to reflect.
Move amongst us, by your Spirit, that we might see your Kingdom come, your will be done. Amen.

Hymn: There's a quiet understanding

There's a quiet understanding
when we're gathered in the Spirit.
It's a promise that He gives us,
when we gather in His name
There's a love we feel in Jesus.
There's a manna that He feeds us.
It's a promise that He gives us
when we gather in His name

For the many ways you lead us,
Thank you, thank you, Lord.

There's a quiet understanding
when we're gathered in the Spirit
It's a promise that he gives us
when we gather in his name
There's a love we feel in Jesus
There's a manna that He feeds us.
It's a promise that he gives us
when we gather in his name

And we know when we're together,
sharing love and understanding,
that our brothers and our sisters,
feel the oneness that He brings.
Thank you, thank you, thank you, Jesus,

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Opening Prayers

Let us create a space for the Spirit, this day.
Let us pause, and be still, and listen to the word of God.
Let us listen to the quiet understanding that comes from gathering in the Spirit, whether we gather physically or
gather as part of God's whole church, meeting on this Lord's day, around the world.
Let us open ourselves up to the love we feel in Jesus, to the promise that you love us, as we gather today in
your name.
Let us feel that sense of openness, with our brothers and sisters around the world, that quiet understanding.
Let us give our thanks and praise to you, gracious God.
Let us pray, in the quiet...
[Hold a moment of stillness].
Come amongst us, holy God, clear our hearts and minds from distractions and turn our thoughts to you this
day.
May we be at one with you, though Christ our Lord, Amen.

We say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Exodus 1:8 – 2:10 - The Israelites Are Oppressed

⁸ Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ He said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. ¹³ The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, ¹⁴ and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ¹⁶ "When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live." ¹⁷ But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. ¹⁸ So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?" ¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them." ²⁰ So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. ²² Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live."

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Birth and Youth of Moses

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ² The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him three months. ³ When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

⁵ The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" ⁸ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰ When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

Romans 12:1-8 - The New Life in Christ

12 ¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. ⁶ We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ⁷ ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; ⁸ the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Reflections on the readings

It doesn't matter how old we are or what we are doing in our lives, we all have to follow rules.

For children there are school rules. When we learn to drive there are rules of the road to be followed. There are rules in all the games and sports that people play and there are rules to be followed in our places of work. Why do we need rules?

The main reason for having almost any set of rules is to keep us safe. Where would we be if we did not follow the rules of road and instead chose to drive where and how we liked, regardless of other road users? If we didn't stop at a red light?

You have to be a certain height to ride some roller coasters, because the rides aren't built to be safe for every body type. You'll only be kept safe by the bar or harness if you're a certain height - you wouldn't want to slip free and fall off the roller coaster!

Some people make up rules that we know, deep down, aren't fair. Maybe a group of children at school make a den in the playground and go around telling everyone, "No girls allowed", or tell a certain person they can't join in. In some countries across the world, until very recently, there was a rule that women weren't allowed to drive cars. There have been rules all over the world that allow people to treat others differently and unfairly because of the colour of their skin, because of where in the world they come from, or because of their religious beliefs. Lots of work has been done to change these rules, but it's still a problem in many parts of the world.

In the Bible story from Exodus, the King tells everyone there's a new rule. He's a bit worried because he thinks there are too many Israelites. He makes the Israelites work for him as slaves, but he's worried they might get to be too big a group and start taking over. So, the first thing he does is to work them harder and harder. Then, he tells the women who act as midwives for the Hebrew women: when you help the women to give birth, let the baby girls live, but kill the baby boys. That's the new rule they're given. But they know, deep down, that's wrong. They trust in God and they feel in their hearts that God is telling them not to follow it. So they play a little trick. They secretly let all the babies live, and when the King demands to know why they haven't killed any of

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the boys, they say, 'These Hebrew women, you know? They're just too quick for us. They're so fast - they always have their babies before the midwives even arrive!' The story says that the women get rewarded for this - God sees the good they've been doing and is very pleased. They were very clever, and they found a way to avoid following the cruel new rule.

Sometimes, I think we are called to do something when we see people making unfair rules. Sometimes we just get a feeling inside us that something isn't right, and God can help us to see that. In the book of Romans, it says:

Do not be shaped by this world. Instead be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you. And you will be able to know what is good and pleasing to God and what is perfect. (Romans 12:2)

That doesn't mean we should ignore the world and just focus on God. It's ok to enjoy being a part of the world, because we were created to live life to the full. What I think this passage means is that, sometimes, we'll come across things that just don't feel right, and that's ok; we can turn to God, who will help us to think differently about it.

Lots of people throughout history have found clever ways of showing that they don't think a rule is right. Rosa Parks is a great example. She was the woman who refused to give up her seat on the bus for a white man – by doing that very simple but extremely brave thing, she was sending the message that she, and other people of colour, deserve to have the same rights as white people. Black Lives Matter protesters all over the world are using their voices today to tell people in charge that people of colour are still not being treated fairly.

Greta Thunberg is a name you might have heard quite often. She started the 'School Strike for Climate' movement where she encouraged school children all over the world to take a Friday off school as a protest for more action on climate change. She wants to make sure kids her age and younger actually have a world to live in when they are adults, and wants the people in power now to do their bit to save the planet for their grandchildren. She broke the rules that say that every child needs to be in school every single day to send a message that she is serious about wanting change. If you think there is a rule that is unfair, you can sign a petition or write a letter to your member of Parliament. If it's a problem at school, or in your job, you can talk to your teacher or manager to say that things aren't fair.

There are lots of things we can do, and the passage from Romans continues to say:

Each one of us has a body, and that body has many parts. These parts all have different uses. We all have different gifts. Each gift came because of the grace that God gave us. If one has the gift of prophecy, they should use that gift with the faith they have. If one has the gift of serving, they should serve. If one has the gift of teaching, they should teach. If one has the gift of encouraging others, they should encourage. If one has the gift of giving to others, they should give freely. If one has the gift of being a leader, they should try hard when they lead. If one has the gift of showing kindness to others, that person should do so with joy.

For me, that means that we don't all have to do the same things. We all have ways we can make a difference. Some of us are teachers. Some of us are scientists. Some of us are artists. Some of us are writers, singers, builders or doctors. Whatever our skills, and whatever our gifts, we can use them to make a difference. All of these things give us skills to speak out when a rule is leading to people being treated unfairly.

The one thing we know for sure is that God is with us and, when we speak out for people who deserve more love from others, we know we are doing God's work.

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Hymn: 673 STF – Will you come and follow me

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|---|--|
| 1 Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name ?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same ?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me ? | 4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name ?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same ?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and
sound
in you and you in me ? |
| 2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name ?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same ?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare ?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me ? | 5 Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me. |
| 3 Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name ?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same ?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me ? | |

John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)
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Prayers of intercession

God of all grace, hear us now, as we join in with people praying all around the world. You know that there is much that is not right with our world, our community, our family and our own lives. You know the things that trouble us, the thoughts that weigh heavy on our hearts.

God of all grace, we hand these thoughts and prayers to you now. You who say 'come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest'.

As we've reflected on Greta Thunberg's story, so we pray for all affected most by the climate crisis and climate injustice – those whose homes, livelihoods and families are at risk of destruction by rising sea-levels, floods or increased storms.

God of all grace, we hand these thoughts and prayers to you now. You who say 'come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest'.

As we have reflected on your invitation to Peter, to become the rock on which your church is built, so may we find our place in your story. May we come to know the calling you have on our lives, the ways we can be an answer to prayer.

God of all grace, we hand these thoughts and prayers to you now. You who say 'come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest'.
Come amongst us, by your Spirit. Amen.

Blessing

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy, Lord of all we have and are, Inspire us by your Spirit to be a part of your mission. Amen.