

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

Call to worship

We are here to meet with God at the dawning of a new year.

In this moment,

We are connected to people of faith – those with us virtually today and those at home,

We are part of a community of saints that have worshipped for generations,

We are joined with others across the world choosing to do the same,

We are here in this special space where God has been for all time.

Let us worship together in the knowledge of God's eternal presence with us wherever we are.

Amen.

Hymn: From the breaking of the dawn

From the breaking of the dawn

To the setting of the sun,

I will stand on every promise of Your word.

Words of power, strong to save,

That will never pass away,

I will stand on every promise of Your word.

For Your covenant is sure,

And on this I am secure,

I can stand on every promise of Your word.

When I'm faced with anguished choice,

I will listen for Your voice,

And I'll stand on every promise of Your word.

Through this dark and troubled land

You will guide me with your hand

As I stand on every promise of Your word.

And you've promised to complete

Every work begun in me,

So I'll stand on every promise of Your word.

When I stumble and I sin,

Condemnation pressing in,

I will stand on every promise of Your word.

You are faithful to forgive,

That in freedom I might live,

So I stand on every promise of Your word.

Guilt to innocence restored:

You remember sins no more!

So I'll stand on every promise of Your word.

Hope that lifts me from despair,

Love that casts out every fear,

As I stand on every promise of Your word.

Not forsaken, not alone,

For the Comforter has come,

And I stand on every promise of Your word.

Grace sufficient, grace for me,

Grace for all who will believe,

We will stand on every promise of Your word.

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend Copyright © 2005 Thankyou Music
CCLI Song # 4642105 CCLI Licence 632441

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obqnmE33zQk>

Opening Prayers

Lord of yesterday, today and tomorrow, we gather here this first Sunday of the New Year, in a mixture of hope, anticipation, fear, excitement, and expectation.

We do not know what the year holds for us. There are things we are afraid of:

worries about health and family, job security and finances.

There is much to look forward to –

weddings or anniversaries or baptisms,

hopefully holidays to enjoy, friends to meet and laugh with.

Lord God, the coming year is full of uncertainty and hope.

Whatever the year holds for us, though,

we trust You, and we place every day of this year in your care

knowing that, as in the past, You are with us, caring for us with constant love.

And so Lord, we place ourselves into your keeping
and dedicate our lives to your service

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

through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour. **Amen.**

Let us now say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-14

For thus says the Lord:

Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say,

“Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel.”

⁸ See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labour, together; a great company, they shall return here.

⁹ With weeping they shall come, and with consolation I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

¹⁰ Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd a flock.”

¹¹ For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

¹² They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again.

¹³ Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

¹⁴ I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the Lord.

Ephesians 1:3-14 - Spiritual Blessings in Christ

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

John 1:10-18 - 10

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’”) ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through

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

Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Good news for God's people

Our readings this week tell us about God's faithful promise to God's creation. Our Old Testament readings from the prophet Jeremiah and Psalm 147 joyfully proclaim that God's dispersed people of Israel will be gathered back together and that this will be done in such an abundantly generous and inclusive way – for those living with conditions that made them outcast or vulnerable, for all genders and all ages. So much so that mourning will turn to joy and life will be like a well-watered garden. A promise for God's people of life – and life in all its fullness.

I wonder if we have experienced a sense of that life after a time of suffering? Or does it sound like something we'll only experience the other side of heaven?

Good news for all people and all creation

The New Testament reading from Paul's letter to the followers of Jesus' Way in Ephesus makes the inclusive image from the Old Testament even more far reaching by highlighting that Gentiles are also heirs to God's promises. Through the dying and rising of Jesus, all humanity can become children of God. That includes you and me. We can choose Christ because the love of God in Christ first chose us (Ephesians 1:11) In fact, Paul's letter to the Ephesians, makes clear that God's ultimate plan is to bring all of heaven and earth together (vv. 9-10).

How does it feel to know you are chosen and sealed by God (Ephesians 1:11; 13)

What does God's ultimate plan to bring heaven and earth together mean for you in terms of how you seek to care for God's creation?

Good news through us?

John's gospel helps us in continuing to remember the message of Christmas – Immanuel, God is with each and every one of us (the Logos or self-revealed Word of God, v. 14) and, like Ephesians, reminds us that all humanity can be children of God (v. 12). Today's readings have shown us that, in the Old Testament, 'The law was given through Moses'; in the New Testament, 'Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (v. 17). But, if the message of Christmas really is to be 'joy to (all) the world' – in the bringing together of heaven and earth – then we have a challenge because, 'No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known' (v18).

2,000+ years on, people are unable to physically see Jesus. So, God call us – through our words and deeds – to reveal the Christ we know and have experienced so that others might come to see him too. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Father God, who created a world of welcome and plenty we pray for those in our world who are in need, who are unloved, rejected, abandoned or abused.

God of compassion, we pray for the homeless and those with no permanent address. As we thank you for your continual provision in our lives, may we be generous to those in need.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of hope, we pray for refugees and migrants. We hold those who are escaping persecution and exploitation up to you. We remember especially those fleeing Syria and all those driven from their homes by civil war. Help us to be a compassionate people for their plight and lead us to seek justice for those affected.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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

God of justice, we pray for those in society that have fallen through the welfare safety net. May those in authority be driven to address state benefits and the housing crisis within this country.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of wisdom, we ask you to bless our elected leaders. Help them to be wise, strengthening them to lead with integrity and compassion for the benefit of all, rejecting the voices of those who seek only personal gain.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

At the beginning of the New Year when so much that we love and are familiar with seems so distant we pray that despite all the uncertainty associated with Covid-19 and with a new relationship with the world following Brexit we may know the constancy of your love. We rejoice that you are the same yesterday, today and forever and that you have promised never to leave us or forsake us. Let us take these promises with us into this New Year as we seek to share your love and your forgiveness.

We ask these and all our prayers in the name of Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

Hymn: Beyond these walls of worship

Beyond these walls of worship,
in the stress and joy of life
can we offer you our bodies
as a living sacrifice?

Will we keep you at the centre
far beyond the Sunday call?

Will we turn to you, be transformed by you
still declare you God of all?

Beyond these walls of worship
in the times of work and rest
will we display our love for all
when our faith's put to the test?
When the people that surround us
deny that you are there,

will we display our faith in you
in life, in praise, in prayer?

Beyond these walls of worship
may your Spirit strengthen us
to make the whole of life our worship
as we witness to your love?

From this moment in your presence
send us out now to proclaim
that we'll live our life as a sacrifice
to the glory of your name.

From this moment in your presence
send us out now to proclaim
that we'll live our life as a sacrifice
to the glory of your name.

© Ian Worsfold and Paul Wood
CCLI Song # CCLI Licence 632441

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9QrjtzvS-w>

Blessing

Let us look for Christ wherever we go
Let us never stop seeking
Believing that there is a light that shines in the darkness
Which the darkness shall not overcome
And may the love of the Creator
The joy of the Spirit
And the peace of the Christ-child
Be with you this New Year, and evermore.