

# **Ardoch Parish Church**

## **Sunday 6th December 2020**

Rev Mairi Perkins welcomes everyone to our Service  
on the 2nd Sunday in Advent



'Prepare the way for the  
Lord, make straight  
paths for Him.

Although we can't worship together in the Church Mairi  
urges us to continue to celebrate Christmas in our hearts

### **Our first hymn is**

#### **“The River ”**

To the river I am going  
Bringing sins I cannot bear  
Come and cleanse me, come forgive me  
Lord, I need to meet You there

In these waters, healing mercy  
Flows with freedom from despair  
I am going, to that river  
Lord, I need to meet You there

Precious Jesus, I am ready  
To surrender every care  
Take my hand now, lead me closer  
Lord, I need to meet You there

To the river I am going  
Bringing sins I cannot bear  
Come and cleanse me, come forgive me  
Lord, I need to meet You there

And in these waters, healing mercy  
Flows with freedom from despair  
I am going, to that river  
Lord, I need to meet You there

Precious Jesus, I am ready  
To surrender every care  
Take my hand now, lead me closer  
Lord, I need to meet You there

Come and join us, in the river  
Come find life beyond compare  
He is calling, He is waiting  
Jesus longs to meet You there  
He is calling, He is waiting  
Jesus longs to meet You there

Precious Jesus, I am ready  
To surrender every care  
Take my hand now, lead me closer  
Lord, I need to meet You there  
Take my hand now, lead me closer  
Lord, I need to meet You there

## **Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

Material from Spill the Beans

Loving God,  
creator of all that we perceive,  
father, parent and guardian,

our constant in a world of change.  
we come before you this day,  
drawn in by and through our faith,  
drawn close in and through our love.  
We call out in this time of change,  
as we gather and prepare,  
as we journey together,  
grant us the strength to follow  
the example of Jesus' constant care and compassion.  
Eternal God,

in this season of Advent, we journey together,  
conscious of our past, of our faults and failings,  
but as we prepare for Christmas and  
the remembrance of the birth of  
your son, our saviour, Jesus,  
we dedicate ourselves to the path forwards.  
We ask for the boldness to continue  
to assert our place in this changing and troubled world  
as agents of change, workers for peace,  
and servants of all.

Guide and sustain us on this difficult road ahead.  
Living God,

though this time of year can be busy,  
as we light candles,  
pick presents, decorate trees,  
and reconnect with those whom we love  
help us to find time to dedicate ourselves to your mission  
to remain grateful for the gift of your grace  
and the surety of your love.  
Amen.

Let us say together 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, the power, and the glory, for  
ever. Amen

**Charles Robertson reads from  
Mark Chapter 1 v 1-8  
John Chapter 1 v 6-8 & 19-28**

Charles introduces the next hymn which is

**“When out of poverty”**

When out of poverty is born  
When out of poverty is born a dream that will not die  
a landless, weary folk find strength to stand with heads  
held high,  
it's then we learn from those who wait to greet the  
promised day:  
The Lord is coming; don't lose heart Be blest:  
prepare the way!  
When people wander far from God,  
forget to share their bread,  
they find their wealth an empty thing,  
their spirits are not fed.  
For only just and tender love the hungry soul will stay.  
And so God's prophets echo still:  
Be blest: prepare the way!  
When God took flesh and came to earth,  
the world turned upside down,  
and in the strength of women's faith  
the Word of Life was born.  
She knew that God would raise the low,  
it pleased her to obey.  
Rejoice with Mary in the call: 'Be blest: prepare the way!'  
Words: Kathy Galloway, provided with permission  
Suggested tune: Kingsfold

**Mairi's Reflection is A Voice crying in the  
Wilderness**

Remember last week I said that the Christmas story is full

of the most unlikely characters. Those on the edge find themselves at the very centre of the story.

The unimportant get the starring rolls and the forgotten are the first to know. It's a story of the unexpected and today we meet the first of those unlikely characters. John, John the Baptist

All four gospels agree that John the Baptist is significant only in relation to Jesus, "the Messiah", "the Son of God", "the Lord", the one more powerful and infinitely greater than John himself. John is here to prepare the way for Jesus. But..... there is an obstacles to be removed, the thing that will most get in the way of the coming Kingdom, is people's 'sin'. Their sinfulness was preventing them from being open to the new, astonishing thing that God was about to do in Jesus. And so John urges repentance, and offers baptism as a sign of cleansing and forgiveness.

But..... that is not the good news, it is only the groundwork that is required for the radically new and different gospel of grace. Baptism "with the Holy Spirit" means not just a wiping clean of the slate until the next time we do wrong and have to repent again; it means being infused with the divine Spirit, just as Jesus himself is/was/will be.

This takes us well beyond the Christmas story; the birth of the baby in Bethlehem. The Holy Spirit became real for the disciples only after Jesus' death and resurrection, so already at the very start of Mark's gospel, the entire story is being compressed into one. Time and eternity have merged. John is proclaiming the arrival, not of a cute little baby in a stable, but of a man in whom God will be directly present in the world, for its judgement, redemption and transformation.

But lets go back to John, t was difficult to tell who he was, so that is why they asked.

He didn't look like anyone important so they asked "Who are you?"

They had heard about him, of course. There were hundreds who had come into the city to say they had been out to see him. So the authorities wanted to know who he was.

"Who are you?"

Given he lived in the wilderness, wore camel skins and ate locusts wrapped in wild honey, they couldn't imagine he was anyone significant, yet everyone was talking about him and

that made the authorities frightened.

"Who are you?"

Their question wasn't being answered so they changed it:

"Are you the Messiah?"

They had heard people say he was.

"No, I am not the Messiah!"

"Are you Elijah?"

"No, I am not Elijah!"

"Are you the prophet?"

"No, I am not the prophet!"

The authorities looked at each other confused, and then at the large following he had. He must be someone!

"Come on, give us an answer, who are you?"

He looked at the religious folk all dressed in their heavy material sweating under the hot sun, paused and then said:

"I am the voice!"

They looked even more confused.

He went on, "crying out in the wilderness:"

They looked at him expecting something clearer.

"Make straight the way of the Lord"

"Why are you out in the desert then?" They ask because they were getting nothing clear out of him, nothing that made sense so they thought they needn't be too worried.

"Don't be concerned about me," he said.

There was a gasp of relief.

"Think about the one who comes after me, whose sandal I am not fit to untie. I am only a witness. He's already here among you."

And the dread in their stomachs returned.

Maybe this year Advent feels quieter, different. Perhaps this is the very time to speak up in our village as John did. John was a voice in the wilderness. I challenge you to be that voice in Ardoch. John was someone who broke the silence of God after centuries. He spoke up for the Good News for those who were least and lost.

It's time to find our Advent voice this year and speak into the silence, for those whose voices are heard less this year because of the pandemic, be that voice where resources are less, and hope is marginalised, be that voice for those who are scared to speak out?

Might this just be the voice we have, when other things are not happening this advent, where we can speak more

clearly, as a voice in the wilderness, for those whose voices are frightened and even broken?

Being silence-breakers is the act of witness-bearing for John. He faced the religious authorities, he had them coming out into the desert. It was a long way from the centres of power in the cities, but yet they came to hear. His voice, or the truth his voice held, must have been felt far from the Jordan and locust patches.

It is a rather dramatic, yet real, Advent message today that each one of us can proclaim.

The signpost is directing, the voice is crying, the finger is pointing. Might this become our renewed, reframed Advent ritual.

This is the Good News. Make straight the paths.

Amen

## **Prayers for Others and Ourselves**

Courtesy of Spill the Beans

Ever loving God,  
we come before you and give thanks,  
for all that we are, all that we have  
and all that we can do.

in this, the darkest time of the year  
we ask for the strength  
to carry your love to a world in pain  
and to shine a light into the darkness  
that too often defines it.

On this Sunday when we remember your love,  
we pray for those who cannot see it,  
for those who are searching for the  
comfort of your embrace, but cannot feel it,  
help us to be like John and guide all  
your beloved children towards the gift  
of your grace and the love that we know in you.

We pray for your church, at this the busiest time of the year  
for those who prepare and plan,  
for those who support and sustain,  
for those who bake and make,  
that they will know the thanks of all those  
whose lives they brighten by their dedication.

Help us to know the gift of community, united in your love.  
This year has been difficult for our community,  
and for our whole world,  
we pray for all those affect by disease,  
those who have lost loved ones,  
those who have worked harder  
than they ever thought possible  
grant us the boldness to share your promise  
of a new life to all those who are  
picking up the pieces of lives changed forever.  
We pray for ourselves,  
that we may know peace in the midst of this hectic season  
that we will find the time to reflect on  
your place in our lives,  
and that our love will guide us.  
Amen

**The Hot Chocolate Club members are contributing  
each week to a part of The Story and this week's  
script is about John the Baptist**

**This can be viewed on the Church Website**

**Our closing hymn is "On Jordan's Banks"**

On Jordan's bank, the Baptist's cry  
Announces that the Lord is nigh;  
Come then and hearken, for he brings  
Glad tidings of the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every Christian breast;  
And furnished for so great a Guest.  
Yea, let us each our hearts prepare  
For Christ to come and enter there.

For Thou art our Salvation, Lord,  
Our Refuge, and our great Reward.  
Without Thy grace our souls must fade  
And wither like a flower decayed.

Stretch forth thine hand, to heal our sore,  
And make us rise to fall no more;

Once more upon thy people shine,  
And fill the world with love divine.  
All praise, eternal Son, to Thee  
Whose advent sets Thy people free,  
Whom, with the Father, we adore,  
And Spirit blest, forevermore.

## **Benediction**

Now go, with the love of God in your hearts.  
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit  
Amen

# **Intimations**

## **Collection for the Salvation Army**

Ann Spier's wishes to thank everyone who handed in gifts for the Salvation Army collection.

She and her helpers delivered one hundred and eleven parcels to the Stirling branch. Ann said the helpers at the Salvation Army were most appreciative and thanked everyone for their generosity. We have made people very happy getting a Christmas gift.

## **Youth Team, Ardoch Parish Church**

Christingle will be a little different this year!

It will come in the form of a "do it at home" pack, delivered to your doorstep.

The pack will contain everything you need to make your own Christingle [including an orange and instructions] All we ask is that you light your candle around 5pm on Sunday 20th December and let the candlelight remind us all of the coming of the baby Jesus.

Parents and carers, if you would like a pack for your child/ children please email: [ardochyouth@gmail.com](mailto:ardochyouth@gmail.com)

with your name, address, phone contact and number of packs required. [or phone Liz 880307 or Irene 880947]

Liz Paterson and Irene Robertson, Youth Team.

## **The Christmas tree and Nativity scene in the Church grounds.**

Our grateful thanks go to,

Mark Spurway for donating the Christmas Tree,

Jim and Scott Dawson for erecting it,

Tony and Eoghan Perkins for designing and erecting the stable,

Liz Paterson for sourcing and commissioning the Mary and Joseph silhouettes,

Douglas Lindsay for painting the silhouettes.

We have many visitors to the cemetery during the advent season placing holly wreaths on their loved ones graves. I am sure they will appreciate seeing our lovely tableau.

Well done everybody and thank you

Charles Robertson

## **Used Stamps**

Please keep saving your used stamps, always remember to leave a small border of the envelope round the stamp. Put them in a bag and put them through Liz Paterson's letter box at Drumsheugal, Church Street.

The money raised is used to support projects for the Church of Scotland World Mission, Thankyou.

## **Church offerings**

We have had members asking for the Church's bank details, which for security reasons are not published. As the Church is not re-opening for Sunday Worship in the foreseeable future, it might be a sensible time for us to consider changing our method of giving.

1. using internet banking, transfer directly each month to Ardoch Parish Church..
2. authorising a direct debit mandate in favour of Ardoch Parish Church.

To obtain further details of these methods, please contact Treasurer, Stuart Brannen. Tel.880394 and he will be very pleased to help in anyway.

## **Easyfundraising**

Leading up to Christmas you may be doing a lot of shopping online. Please consider using the charity provider.

It's easy to set up by selecting Ardoch Parish Church as your chosen charity. Each purchase you make will also give the church a small donation too..

More details on the church website; [ardochparishchurch.org](http://ardochparishchurch.org)

Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139

[ardochparishchurch.org](http://ardochparishchurch.org)

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