

**SCONE and ST MARTINS  
PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND**

at

**Scone and St Martins  
Church**

**21 February 2021**

***The First Sunday in Lent***

The Church Buildings are Safe Spaces and following Government Advice.

You are invited to Worship and to the Peace and Beauty of the Sanctuary.

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A special welcome is extended to any visitors worshipping with us. You are invited to sign the Visitors' Book. If you have moved into this area, we would be very pleased to have you worship with us regularly. Please speak to one of the Welcome Party, or to the Minister as you leave.

Email: [sconeandstmartinschurch@talktalk.net](mailto:sconeandstmartinschurch@talktalk.net)

A **Telephone Prayer Chain** is available to support in prayer any person/s in the church or community, or their family or friends whether living here or elsewhere, particularly if urgent prayer is required for matters such as illness, operations or other problems. Phone requests to Lilian at 553651 or, if she is unavailable, Ina at 551607 or Helen at 01821640560. Or, instead of phoning, you can write your request on a prayer request slip, sign it or leave it unsigned as you wish, and place it in the Church Prayer box on a Sunday morning. Click here then Backspace at conclusion

## Call to Worship

### Hymn

Come with me: [Click here then Backspace at conclusion](#)

As we listened to that introductory hymn, I wonder where it took you. IT took me to some of my friends from the African continent and to robust singing with a depth of tone as they invited us on to the trek through the desert or seemingly dried up landscape of World and Church. With rhythmic, determined, pace, they led us all, powered by the Spirit of God.

### Call to Prayer

Nelson Mandela, who knew the Long Walk to Freedom, said: “Do not look the other way; do not hesitate. Recognize that the world is hungry for action, not words. Act with courage and vision.”

*Jesus said: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’*

### Prayer

O God, hear our prayer as, in this morning hour, we call out to you;

Come among us, and may we feel your presence and healing power near.

Make your presence so real amongst us and let us celebrate afresh your good news.

Jesus Christ, Friend and Saviour, You have lived our life, know our temptations, failures, frustrations, yet time and again offer forgiveness and freedom from all that would harm us.

We come to you as your loved ones, who seek your healing and renewing in communion with you. Grant us such peace.

Spirit Divine, you fill us again with the energy of your blessing, we pray and give thanks that our hearts and minds may be enlivened to share Christ’s gospel of peace and of love, of hope, justice and reconciling power, in our community and throughout the world.

Peace. Peace. Peace. We give thanks for the blessing that infills us, in and through the Trinity of Love

OUR Father . . . Amen

### Hymn

All Creatures of our God and King: [Click here then Backspace at conclusion](#)

### Reading

*Genesis 9: 8 – 17:*

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>‘As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.

<sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. 'God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup>I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'

**Anthem** The spacious firmament on high: [Click here then Backspace at conclusion](#)

**Reading** *Mark 1: 9 – 15: The Baptism of Jesus;*  
*The Temptation of Jesus: The Beginning of his Galilean Ministry:*  
In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' <sup>12</sup> And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

**Hymn** On Jordan's bank: [Click here then Backspace at conclusion](#)

**Thought for the Day**

Well now, we're in the wilderness this morning, and that, I dare say has not been unfamiliar territory to many over the past 9months or so. Though today you may have been introduced to the song, *Walk with me, come with me, for the journey is long*, I don't doubt that you heard and responded to the invitation in faith and spirit long before now. As you have drawn on your faith while travelling through this pandemic, not simply

ministering to yourself but seeking to love your neighbour as Christ has loved you, among the numerous passages of the Bible from which you have drawn encouragement, no doubt, will have been the wilderness experience of Christ. I hope you have encountered the company of the One who has been there before you, travels with you, and encourages you onward: Walk, Come with me, for the journey is long, is the invitation Christ holds out to each and all.

So, on this first Sunday in Lent, let us engage as Mark succinctly transmits his encounters with Christ. He gets straight to the point as he leads us to wilderness encounter with John the Baptist who prepares the people for the one whose sandals he is unfit to untie. Then, to John comes Jesus for baptism. Jesus knows his humanity. As he ascends from the waters of baptism, the one whom we call The Son of Man is the Son of God. "This is my beloved Son".

Isaiah's Prayer has been answered, "O that you would rend the heavens and come down". The dove hovers; the Spirit is alive in blessing. There is relationship of the human and divine stirring around those Jordan waters, in blessing. The depth of entry into the darkness of the waters and the rising from them, sign the way for the liberation of the great swathe of humanity to whom Jesus, we know as the Christ, will offer his Love in all its fulness and blessing. Jesus is driven to the wilderness. In times of solitude, wrestling and testing, times as few would wish upon themselves, fresh encounter can come with the One who accompanies us, leading us through the challenge and onwards, for testings he himself has endured and moved forward, forward into ministry, preaching the Good News and healing, and onwards to seeing death swallowed up in victory! And that promise, "weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning", holds fresh significance.

Now, I know many people have been supporting *the Rainbow Covenant* as a sign of Hope, throughout the pandemic. Coloured rainbows have been decorating windows all over the parish, and the hope of the rainbow has been inclusive of all, but please do not neglect the *New Covenant in Christ*. In sign and symbol, and in all your living, confess your Faith this Lent, share and celebrate it. Why not place the symbol of *the dove* in your window and the words, *the Peace and Love of Christ be with you*, and/or *the Cross* surrounded by adults and children of different colours and cultures with the words, *May the Fulness of Life bless you and yours*, and/or the *Easter trumpeting lily* with *Christ is Risen! He is Alive! Happy Easter!* And as Jesus shared the Good News of God's way drawing close, of the Kingdom and its values drawing near, of the need for us to seek forgiveness of some of our former ways and for us to believe in the Good News that New Life is promised, might we not follow him.

There has been much talk about how we have better respected nature and of the joy of encountering and appreciating fresher air, less pollution, less congestion on the roads. We have chattered our appreciation of the bird song and of all God's creatures wild and

tame. Have we spoken of the sustaining power we've known, of the outgoing love that has been shared? Have we shared in everyday conversation the wonder of having been led through deepest darkness into the light of newness of Life? Do we ever speak of the fulness of life that we have encountered through adversity? Have we ever spoken in conversation why meeting in fellowship on a Sunday morning means so much to us? Do we stop in the day's routine to give God a thought and to utter a word of thanks especially for the One who walks the road of life with us and whose Spirit enlivens our spirit? Do we speak of and give thanks for the One who liberates us into Life, Love, and Living. You know, 9 months of pandemic has been no joke and people have been suffering, searching and seeking healing. Sad, so sad, in loss of life as the situation undoubtedly has been, and is, have we stopped at any point to give thought to the countless numbers of men and women who down through the years have been engaged in a very long walk to freedom. Spare a thought for our brothers and sisters whom Aid Organisations, including Christian Aid, seek to help, day in, day out, year in, year out, and for those who seek help through Fair trade and Fair Share. Spare a thought for the hungry and homeless, those affected by drought or flood, those who seek cures from water borne infections, those who seek cures from blindness but who can't afford the treatment, those who are unemployed or who are unemployable, those who have to work the streets. Spare a thought for all consigned to the gutters of life, and for those persecuted for their creed or colour or culture or politics or Faith. Over and over the world, in far flung places, and in places more local, even on our doorsteps, are those who long for liberation. Is Lent not a time to consider the extent to which as Church and followers of Christ we accompany others on their walk to Freedom.

When I think of Christ in the wilderness and then of his ministry and of the liberation offered in him, two quite different Christians come into view today. The first is Pope John Paul 11nd who, in his engagement with Liberation Theology in South America, advised, "God's essential act was entering into our time and our humanity and transforming our history into the history of salvation". It was through salvation, through healing ministry that the poor and oppressed were to be raised up." Undoubtedly, the health or otherwise of political programmes matters, social action is to be the image of the gospel, the gospel that is open to anyone. Jesus makes it a condition for our participating in his salvation/in his healing ministry that we give food to the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and clothe the naked, console the sorrowing, for when you do it to the least of these, you do it to him. In 21<sup>st</sup> century terms that means we help people grow and develop their lands, give money for the tools they need, the irrigation required, all that will aid them to be self-sufficient. We encourage/help/ and respect people to move out of a situation of dependency on others to know personal growth and fulfilment and where that is not possible due to disadvantages of health we love and respect them and value them for the people they are, all in Christ's name. They are all God's children, not to be shackled to

the wilderness of existence but to be freed into knowing the fulness of life.

But I mentioned another who came to mind, and the other was Nelson Mandela whose autobiography was entitled "Long Walk to Freedom". You will be familiar with his work against apartheid, of his setting up and chairing the Commission for Reconciliation, of the years he spent in imprisonment and then of his Presidency of South Africa. Presiding over the transition from apartheid minority rule to a multicultural democracy, he saw national reconciliation as the primary task of his presidency. Mandela, if you didn't know, was baptised in the Methodist Church and brought up a Christian, and though like the rest of us not perfect, his Faith in Christ mattered to him. Desmond Tutu was a friend and support to him. He shared this prayer: *From the cowardice that dare not face new truths; from the laziness that is contented with half- truths; from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, Good Lord, deliver us.* Then he continued in a prayer, he wrote: *Goodness is stronger than evil; Love is stronger than hate; Light is stronger than darkness; Life is stronger than death; Victory is ours through him who loves us.* It was a prayer Mandela and Tutu shared, having kept company with one another, and knowing the company of Christ as he travelled with them in the desert places of existence and led them onwards into fulness of life.

Lent, can be a time of creative transformation, a time for letting go of all that keeps us in aridity of being and from fully experiencing God in our lives. Lent can be a time of letting God awaken in us new possibilities, and new possibilities for our churches and communities. Through the desert of life, Lent offers enlivening encounter. Shall we accept the invitation of Christ to walk, to come with him on the journey, for in him we can overcome, and can celebrate the dryness of existence giving way to the fulness of life and living? So be it . . .

### **Prayer**

In this prayer, you may click into the links to O Lord hear my prayer or simply play the link at the end of the prayer. Remember to backspace at the end of each. You'll not require the 7minutes given unless you would like to afford that time at the end

### **Prayer**

Lord of all creation,

All that we have in this world comes from you, the marvels we see around us, the physical and spiritual gifts that bring blessing to our lives, and we thank you. You have given us a world of plenty that we may share with our neighbours and so, we dedicate the gifts brought to your table, as an expression of our love for you and with the desire that these may be used as you would have them used, in your service in the Church and out into the world; In Jesus' name.

We bring before you our prayers for the world. As we enter the season of Lent, seeking refreshment and renewal, mid all the challenges of this pandemic, we remember that Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, knew what it was to experience the desert places of life and did not retreat from their challenges but embraced them; so, may we as your body here on earth have the confidence to step out in faith into the desert places of our world today, knowing we are strengthened and guided in your Spirit. Liberate us from self centredness to fulfil our calling to service in the world, making known your blessings of life and love. In Jesus' name [Click here then Backspace at conclusion](#)

God of the nations, many of your children are worn out right now, and so many are worn down by a burden of debt and brought to their knees by unfair trade, some are unemployed as a result of the pandemic, some have mouths to feed apart from their own, some have mortgages to pay, some are on the brink of eviction, some feel hope expired: we pray for justice and a world where all shall have opportunity to live life in all its fulness. In the decisions we make daily, may we remember the disadvantaged, the homeless, the unemployed, all who feel neglected and unloved, the poor, and the sick, and those slow to learn or unable to learn the skills to survive in life, and often swept aside by worldly power and profit. Fill us with your love and your Spirit that, active and ready to live for the fulfilment of your values here on earth, we may in faith and hope bring opportunity and healing to all who crave it, in Christ's name.

God, who calls us to life and blessing, awaken within us your goodness and your grace. May we stand up for those who cannot stand for themselves; may we be the voice of those who are voiceless, or who are denied, the right to speak up, through intimidation, lack of education or lack of opportunity. Where freedom and dignity are denied by systems and authorities, may those responsible be brought to account. Where barriers of racial prejudice and discrimination lead to persecution and rejection, may your love break through the pain to heal divisions and promote better understanding and proper respect among your people, and may we contribute to the answering of the prayer we make. In Jesus name [Click here then Backspace at conclusion](#)

Come Healing Spirit to those sick in mind, in body or in spirit; grant to them courage and hope in their troubles and the knowledge of your sustaining love. Break down barriers of fear and prejudice, whichever these may be. Where there is pain grant comfort and peace; where there is despair grant new hope; and never let doubt overcome faith in your power to save and heal.

Loving God we pray for all doctors and nurses and medical specialists, those who tend the sick and those involved in research to discover treatments and cures; fill them with

wisdom and equip them in all that they do that their efforts may bring healing and wholeness to those who know brokenness. [Click here then Backspace at conclusion](#)

In Jesus Name.

**Hymn**

God is Love, let heaven adore him [Click here then Backspace at conclusion](#)

**Benediction**

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.