

The Gathering

Welcome - [OLIVER]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Welcome to St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow—a gathering of friends ... not because we all think the same or share the same point-of-view. Instead, people in this place count each other as friends because of a relationship to each other in the Lord. God loves you and every other single person and asks us to love them, too.

Collect for Purity - [MARGARET]

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Confession

[KELVIN] God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[OLIVER] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gloria - [MORVEN]

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect - [OLIVER]

God of all nations, in the gift of your Son you have embraced the world with a love that takes away our sin and bestows perfect joy. Grant to all who have been reborn in baptism fidelity in serving you and generosity in loving one another. We ask this through Jesus

Christ, the first-born from the dead, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Ministry of the Word

GOSPEL: John 15:9-17 – [PETE]

Alleluia, alleluia! Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to Christ our Saviour.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord. Alleluia!

Sermon [KELVIN]

I found myself counting down the days until the last relaxation of the covid regulations.

Each day another day nearer. And the thing that I wanted to do that I had not been able to do before that date was swim.

Three more days until the pool opens.

Two more days until the pool opens.

And I told everyone I was wanting to swim.

One more day until the pool opens.

And then it did.

And yes, getting back into the water was lovely. Up and down. Up and down. Stroke by stroke it felt as though something normal was being restored.

But the truth is, it wasn't just the swimming that I'd been counting down to. It was something else.

And it was the same last week, waiting to go up to Oban for the consecration of the new Bishop of Argyll and The Isles.

Three more days until the drive up to Oban.

Two more days, one more day.

And then the drive.

And yes, the service in the cathedral was really great and yes, Oban was very beautiful. But I hadn't been counting the days until I could eat fish and chips or counting the days until I could watch the sun set over the bay.

There was something more that I was looking forward to.

The swimming pond isn't just the place I go to for a swim. It is one of the places where I bump into friends. People who make me laugh. People who tell me their stories and people who listen to my own.

And the fish and chips were the best fish and chips and the sunset was the best of sunsets.

But it is that I ate them with my friends. And watched the sun set with my friends that made it so special.

That's what I'd been counting the days towards.

Covid has been a disrupter of so many things. And one of those things is our patterns of friendship.

And I'm glad that I've been able to keep up with my friends through walks in the park and on social media and on the phone and all that kind of thing. But I have enjoyed the joy of simply being with people on several occasions in the last week. Still socially distanced to some extent. But closer than we've been for a long, long time. Abiding with them, in the kind of words that Jesus uses.

As a single person, my friendships matter a very great deal and they are one of the strongest things that have enabled me to cope with covidtime.

And I know that I put friendship pretty high up on the scale of human relationships.

I've said before, many times, that I think that the church and the world would have been better if Christians had regarded Friendship as a primary sacrament rather than marriage and had built other models of relationship from that starting point.

In this week's gospel, Jesus seems to speak pretty highly about friendship too.

"I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends."

Friendship clearly matters.

And I know that for some, church is a primary place where they enjoy friendship. That's starting to come back now but, the social distancing still makes that difficult.

But if we can, let's let go of our own predicament for a moment and go back to Jesus speaking to those around you.

There's something I find a bit odd about him saying that he calls them his servants no longer but now calls them his friends.

For, I'm not sure that I do read of him ever calling them his servants.

I have a suspicion that the writer of the fourth gospel is up to his usual tricks, playing around with time and circumstance to make a bigger theological statement.

Writing after the resurrection, after the events of Easter Day, he is remembering the kind of things that Jesus said and using them, years later, to describe what it all means.

John the gospel writer is an adept theological juggler sometimes. Grabbing things from here and there in a show of great and profound theological dexterity.

I don't think that he's simply talking about Jesus and the disciples here.

I think he's making the bigger point, that the relationship between God and human beings need not be about servants grovelling before a master but instead is more like friends enjoying one another's company.

I remember someone once trying to teach a group of people how to write good intercessions – and they said, “Try not to think of God as the Queen Mother”.

What they meant was that if we always think of God as Your Majesty, we may be missing something important. Sure, there's a time and a place for being overwhelmed by the awesomeness of God's presence.

But Christianity is also about God sometimes opting to subvert that way of thinking entirely.

God came down to our level that we might be raised to God's level.

God came down to level with us that we might enjoy engaging with God.

In Jesus, God appeared in a form we could understand that we might enter into a relationship with all that is holy and all that is true.

And the nature of that relationship is friendship. Not being a servant or a subject.

Maybe you are wondering how to connect with God?

Well, maybe, you could start by asking yourself how you would connect with a friend. That might give you some clues. Think about that this week.

The world has felt very closed.

But the world is opening up again. There's the possibility for many of us of seeing and engaging with friends again in ways that haven't been possible for a long time.

Remember, the world of God is already open.

It always has been.

People call those who follow our way of live Christians. But Jesus never called anyone a Christian. He called them friends.

And he loved them. And he loves them still.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Intercessions [PAT]

Jesus - You spent your life held in networks of connection shaped by the imperative of love.

We pray today for the nets which shape and structure our world:

For the complex networks of government across the globe as they make choices affecting the wellbeing of millions; and for all newly elected local councillors and mayors; and members of the Scottish Parliament, Senedd Cymru and the Westminster parliament.

May love for others govern and guide their choices and may they serve with integrity, openness and a commitment to the common good.

God whose very nature is love: hear our prayer

We pray for the overstretched and under-resourced networks of provision and care and those who hold them together, remembering especially today India and other places where such systems are overwhelmed and collapsing.

For all working in hospitals, clinics and care homes, and the services enabling them.

For those working with people who have no support networks, or who are trapped in abusive ones.

We give thanks for their love and care, and pray that they too will know support and find reserves of strength, hope, and grace to sustain them through this time.

God whose very nature is love: hear our prayer

We pray for the world-wide network of all who give spiritual support, guidance and consolation as part of the rich and diverse tapestry of faith and belief which mark human existence and expression; and for all who support them in this calling.

From within our own tradition we pray today for the church in Kenya; for Kevin our Bishop; Christopher Ketley at St Ninian's Castle Douglas; Mark Smith and John Simmons at Christ Church Dalbeattie; and for those who oversee the finances here in St Mary's.

May they find deep joy and delight in these responsibilities and may their own experience of divine love continually deepen and develop.

God whose very nature is love: hear our prayer

We give thanks for the networks of love into which ourselves are woven

praying for the wellbeing of all who matter deeply to us

And we remember those whose networks have been disrupted by the death of loved ones - especially today the family and friends of Lucy Nicholson. May they find comfort and consolation in this time of grieving and may the souls of all the departed rest in peace and rise in glory.

God whose very nature is love: hear our prayer

And we pray for ourselves that we may know that we are all, and always, held in the great net of love which is the life of your Trinity.

and may we likewise remain together in love, attentive and responsive to each other's needs.

God whose very nature is love: hear our prayer

Amen

Communion

Offertory - [OLIVER]

Jesus told his disciples the way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends. As we approach God's altar, we give of ourselves in sacrificial ways to enable friends to gather here week after week.

If you would like to join in giving or to learn more about supporting the relationships fostered in this place, visit www.thecathedral.org.uk and click DONATE TO ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL.

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

**Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in
heaven and on earth is yours.**

All things come from you, and of your own we give you.

Eucharistic Prayer - [OLIVER]

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Worship and praise belong to you, Author of all being.

Your power sustains, your love restores, our broken world.

You are unceasingly at work,

from chaos bringing order

and filling emptiness with life.

Christ, raised from the dead,

proclaims the dawn of hope.

He lives in us that we may walk in light.

Your Spirit is fire in us,

your breath is power

to purge our sin

and warm our hearts to love.

As children of your redeeming purpose,
freed by him who burst from the tomb
and opened the gate of life,
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven,
singing the hymn of your unending glory

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Praise and thanksgiving be to you,
Lord of all,
for by the Cross eternal life is ours
and death is swallowed up in victory.
In the first light of Easter glory broke from the tomb
and changed the women's sorrow into joy.
From the Garden the mystery dawned
that he whom they had loved and lost
is with us now in every place for ever.

Making himself known in the breaking of the bread,
speaking peace to the fearful disciples,
welcoming weary fishermen on the shore,
he renewed the promise of his presence
and of new birth in the Spirit
who sets the seal of freedom on all your beloved children.

Before he was given up to suffering and death,
recalling the night of Israel's release,
the night in which slaves walked free,
at supper with his disciples
he took bread and offered you thanks.
He broke the bread,
and gave it to them, saying:

“Take, eat.
This is my Body: it is broken for you.”
After supper, he took the cup,
he offered you thanks,
and gave it to them saying:
“Drink this, all of you.
This is my Blood of the new covenant;
it is poured out for you, and for all,
that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

**We now obey your Son's command.
We recall his blessed passion and death,
his glorious resurrection and ascension;
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts
and with them ourselves,
a single, holy, living sacrifice.**

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by the Spirit's life-giving power,
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

**Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body
to live and work to your praise and glory;
may we grow together in unity and love
until at last, in your new creation,
we enter into our heritage
in the company of the Virgin Mary,
the apostles, and prophets,
and of all our brothers and sisters living and departed.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

all honour and glory be to you,
Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

Lord's Prayer [KELVIN]

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Communion - [OLIVER]

God is with us wherever we are.

As we gaze in adoration we feed on God in our hearts and minds
that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.

Amen.

Music at Communion - [ROSAMOND]

O love of God, how strong and true,
eternal and yet ever new;
uncomprehended and unbought,
beyond all knowledge and all thought.

O wide-embracing, wondrous Love,
we read thee in the sky above;
we read thee in the earth below,
in seas that swell and streams that flow.

We read thee best in him who came
to bear for us the cross of shame,
sent by the Father from on high,
our life to live, our death to die.

We read thy power to bless and save
e'en in the darkness of the grave;
still more in resurrection light
we read the fullness of thy might.

Post Communion Prayer - [MARGARET]

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.

Amen.

Blessing - [OLIVER]

You are chosen by God—not randomly selected or just in the right place at the right time. No, God has handpicked you in love and appointed you to share that love with others.

For the ways love was shown in today's worship, I give thanks.
And for all the ways you demonstrate love in your lives from day to day, I rejoice.

May Christ, who out of defeat brings new hope and a new future, fill you with new life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Voluntary - [STEVEN]

Alleluyas - Simon Preston

A hymn and materials for Young Church are available on the online worship page at www.thecathedral.org.uk/worship.

There is an online coffee hour on Sunday at 1 pm. Details in the weekly congregational email. Sign up for emails at www.thecathedral.org.uk.

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