

Ceres, Kemback & Springfield Parish Church

Epiphany 6

Sunday, 11th February 2024

10.30a.m.



*Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold,
frankincense and myrrh.*

Call to Worship (Carol Ann Duffy)

And some swore on their lives, on their children's lives,

that they saw an olive tree turning to pure gold ...

that the moon stooped low to gape at the world.

Hymn 63 All people that on earth do dwell



Candlemass



We're in the time of Candlemass - and candles in the Christian tradition - sadly something lost for a while after the Reformation but now being recovered - symbolise the star light guiding the Magi to Jesus ... These candles aren't here because they look nice p but because they're symbols of that guiding star light ... and we as God's martyrs, witnesses seek to shed and share that holy light ... and this season we're focussing on those things we're doing as a church, locally, nationally and globally ... those things were doing personally and in our private lives which testify to our martyrdom - those things we're doing - those we get right - are God's light ...

This morning I'd like to welcome our Social Media & Research Worker Caro Pineda and her parents, Jaimie and Patricia who have been visiting with Caro for the last several weeks and months and who return to their home in Colombia next week ...

Jamie is a medical doctor and a missionary and Patricia is a professional baker and home economics expert who has for many years been working with women and girls to help them build business acumen and resilience. Working in Colombia is challenging where armed conflict stalks many there, and attendant poverty ruins too many lives. Their combined ministry engages with the power of the Kingdom of God to establish opportunity, fulfilment and a chance for more people to have abundant life. Together they make a formidable team in the name of Christ ...

We have been thinking over the last several weeks about our being martyrs for Christ - remember the word martyr means 'To be a witness for Christ' and we are all his witnesses in the way we live our lives and in the way we are Christ's church on earth

...

Later in the service I'll be having a conversation with Caro about her calling to Scotland and also to Jaimie and Patricia about their work in Colombia ...

Welcome and News from Church & Community

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Call to Prayer and Prayers

Gracious God,
creator of all that we perceive,
we join today in community,
in the joy that comes through your love; through the nourishment of Jesus,
our shepherd and our guide,
the one who feeds us in mind and in body; through the sustenance of the Spirit,
and the knowledge that you are with us as we face the highs and lows,
the struggles and joys of this life.

Ever present God,
strengthen us today in faith
as we each struggle, hope, and pray for
the steadfastness to follow you
in these difficult times.

When the world is hungry for your presence, is in need of your care,
is crying out for your love,
where spreading your word
and your mission is harder,
yet ever more necessary,
guide us, God of abundance we pray.

Merciful God, forgive us
in your abundant compassion, love, and grace, though we each strive to live up to
your commands we often fail,
so renew within us the reassurance that through every time of trial,
through every time we fall,
you hold us in the palm of your hand; supporting, strengthening, and loving always.

Forgive us, merciful God,
for all that we bring to you now:

Silence

Out of an abundance of grace, love, and mercy, God forgives you. Accept the peace
that this brings in hope and faith.

Silence

Guide us today and every day,
as we seek to do your will
in this ever-changing world.

Open our eyes to the great variety of blessings and opportunities which you have
poured out on us.

Make us aware of the pain of others, drive out our own sense of helplessness. Free
our minds to love and be loved.

In Jesus 'name and for his sake,

we pray.

Amen.

Hymn **317** Before the world began

Setting the Scriptures in Context

Our Bible Readings today are familiar ... the first, the account in the second book of Kings about a great army commander called Naaman who served the King of Aram ... Aram was an area probably on the boundary of Syria and Israel ... Obeying his king, Naaman led an army into Israel and in this account we hear about their capture of a slave girl ... like many important women in scripture she isn't given a name but she must have been impressive because she ended up serving the wife of the invading army ...

Watching the invading armies today of Russia and Israel into Ukraine and Gaza respectively it's hard to imagine anyone on the receiving end of these atrocities taking pity on the ill health of the invading army commander ... but the Israeli slave girl did and told her mistress she knew of a holy man who could cure Naaman of his leprosy ... here we see astonishing spiritual leadership by a slave girl with little or no

worldly power? In her worldly powerlessness she changed regional events and she was the reason for Naaman's cure ... she, a slave girl responsible for calling Israel's top holy man to cure a violent enemy! This is powerful God-inspired leadership from a person with no worldly power but who looked to God's instead ..

And then we'll hear the well known account from Luke's pen of the five thousand being fed we know it would be many more than 5,000 because only the men are mentioned ... there must have been at least 12,000 because they were there in family groups - and the excessive numbers are important because this story points to the Last Supper ... remember in St John's gospel there is no upper room, because John uses the feeding of the thousands as his Last Supper ... and remember in our Reformed Presbyterian tradition we understand the meaning of the Last Supper to point to Jesus Christ who is the one who can feed everyone ... if the world followed the ways of Jesus Christ there would be no global hunger ... This teaching means that Christ is the one with the God-given power to feed every mouth which cries out for food ...

In the Old Testament story and in the New Testament parable I suggest mustard seed ministry is at work - the disproportionate power of a young slave girl on regional events and the disproportionate reach to thousands of hungry people by means of a handful of loaves and fish:

These accounts should surely encourage us all as we sometimes wonder what we can do to make a difference. With God's help, it seems the possibilities are endless.

Old Testament Bible Reading 2 Kings 5 vv 1 - 6

New Testament Bible Reading **St Luke 9 vv 10 - 17**

Homily *Not so Little Women*

The homily this week took the form of a Conversation on the Chancel between the minister who asked Caro and her parents about their respective ministries.

For a full version please see our website and social media: This was recorded so that people can watch and listen. It may take a few days to post this so keep watching.

Reflective Prayer

In a world of plenty,
too many have nothing.

In a world of greed,
too many go hungry.
In a world of ease,
too many face unimaginable hardship.

Jesus, our brother,
our saviour
and our friend,
how can we feed like you? How can we nourish
mind, body, and soul?

Show us a path to a better world, a fairer world,
a world where
we see your will

in the actions of all.

Show us a way where ingenuity, science and kindness can intersect and transform
empowering all.

In this world,
with its inequality,
with its plenty and insufficiency, help us to be bold,
to reach for the impossible,
to do the unthinkable and
make your miracle a reality
for all.
Amen.

Hymn SGP 45 How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him

(1) How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him
who brings good news, good news,
proclaiming peace, announcing new of happiness:
Our God reigns, our God reigns!

(Refrain) ***Our God reigns!*** x4

(2) You watchmen lift your voices joyfully as one,
shout for your King, your King.
See eye to eye the Lord restoring Zion:
Your God reigns, your God reigns! **(Refrain, *Your God*)**

(3) Waste places of Jerusalem break forth with joy,
we are redeemed, redeemed.
The Lord has saved and comforted his people:
Your God reigns, Your God reigns! **(Refrain, *Your God*)**

(4) Ends of the earth, see the salvation of your God,
Jesus is Lord, is Lord.
Before the nations he has bared his holy arm:
He is King, He is King! **(Refrain, *He is King*)**

Offering & Dedication of the Offering

Gracious God,
in your love and in your grace,
you have given the whole world to us, for our pleasure, to our safe keeping,
everything we have
and everything we could want,
you have provided.

In dedication, in praise, and in worship, we offer back these tokens,
as a sign of our commitment
to your church and your mission,

and in thanks for your constant presence in our lives.

Amen.

Prayers For Others And Ourselves & The Lord's Prayer

Loving God,
Creator,
Redeemer,

and Sustainer,
we come before you in awe, searching and seeking, doubting and hoping,

trying to follow you,
to understand you,
to know you.

As we gather,
hearts and minds turned toward heaven and the abundance of love, grace, and joy to
be found in our Saviour, we pray:

We pray for our country
and all those who call it home,
especially those who have been forced to come here through violence, strife,
economic hardship,
or some other reason.

Help us, God of abundant unimaginable love, to be a neighbour to all, to see the
humanity of our sisters and brothers before we see labels, nationalities, skin colour,
sexuality, or gender.

We pray for our world,
which continues to be ravaged by disease and war, while still struggling with age old
problems
of poverty, isolation, and fear.

In particular, we pray for
all who know the pangs of hunger,
who fear for what tomorrow brings,
who go without to help others.

We pray for those who staff, support,
and use foodbanks and charities
which attempt to alleviate poverty.

Help us to remember even on his most
difficult days, Jesus gave all he had
to nourish others, and give us the boldness
follow his example in whatever way we can.

We pray especially for women in science,
and all who work for the betterment of society,
in the arts, in medicine,
in education, and in all areas

that serve our communities and our world.
We pray for a blessing on their lives and their work.

We pray for your Church,
all over the world, and here, at home,
as we continue to discern its place in this world, as we continue to seek to do your
will in this difficult time for this and all churches,
help all those who try, God of abundance,
to work and to decide the path forward
based on the good of your people,
the furthering of your mission
and the coming of your kingdom.

We pray for ourselves,
all those gathered here
(in this building and online),
that we may have our hearts and minds turned ever towards heaven,
towards our neighbour and towards you, feed us and empower us to serve you,
abundant God,
our Creator,
our Redeemer,
and our Sustainer.
Hear all our prayers,
said and unsaid,
as we pray in Jesus 'name.
Amen.

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 this is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen

Sending Out & Benediction

Hymn 320 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!