



# **The Free North Church Inverness**

*a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland*

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## **A GUIDE TO SUNDAY WORSHIP**

### **11 am – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

*Service conducted by the minister, Rev Angus MacRae.*

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**This is a guide to our Sunday morning service. The service is streamed online at 11 am on the Free North YouTube channel (and is then available afterwards for catch-up or to watch again):**  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjxeX18IKP4grKdqWEt2dgw>

#### **WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP**

*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns! (from ISAIAH 52:7).*

**Invitation to Guys Group** (please email the minister [angusmacrae1967@gmail.com](mailto:angusmacrae1967@gmail.com) to request a copy of Joe Barnard's book, *The Way Forward*).

**Invitation to Virtual Coffee Morning for WFM** – on Zoom this Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June, 10.30 am.

#### **PSALM 23:1-6 (Sing Psalms version)**

The LORD is my shepherd; no want shall I know.  
He makes me lie down where the green pastures  
grow;  
He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

My wandering steps he brings back to his way,  
In straight paths of righteousness making me  
stay;  
And this he has done his great name to display.

Though I walk in death's valley, where darkness is  
near,  
Because you are with me, no evil I'll fear;  
Your rod and your staff bring me comfort and  
cheer.

In the sight of my enemies a table you spread.  
The oil of rejoicing you pour on my head;  
My cup overflows and I'm graciously fed.

So surely your covenant mercy and grace  
Will follow me closely in all of my ways;  
I will dwell in the house of the LORD all my days.

*Tune: Tarwathie (11.11.11).  
Sung by Olivia Ross.*

#### **PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER**

##### **NEW CITY CATECHISM (Question 1):**

*What is our only hope in life and death?*

**That we are not our own but belong,  
body and soul, both in life and death,  
to God and to our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

## YF VIDEO CHALLENGE – HOPE IS CONTAGIOUS, PASS IT ON!

Thanks to all who took part in the challenge and to Iain MacRae for collating the video clips.

### BIBLE READING: JOHN 3:1-9 (NIV) - read by Annetta Crookes

<sup>1</sup> Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.' <sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.' <sup>4</sup> 'How can someone be born when they are old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!' <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. <sup>7</sup> You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again." <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.' <sup>9</sup> 'How can this be?' Nicodemus asked.

### SERMON – JOHN 3:1-8: LORD OF THE NEW START

Has Jesus featured in your newsfeed this week? We hear so much bad news including daily headlines on Corona-virus and the slow path out of lockdown and the dreadful story of Police brutality contributing to the death of George Floyd. His dying words, "I can't breathe", have gone around the world appalling millions. It is tragic to see news racial tension, violence, rioting, looting amid funerals and dignified peaceful protest. The news reports President Trump holding up a copy of the Bible outside a boarded-up church. If only he had read a few words from God's Book, words of grace to calm down the violence and rage. Perhaps your newsfeed included the tiny innocent face of 3-year old Madeline McCann, snatched from her bed and presumably murdered in 2007. We heard reports of a possible suspect, a German national and convicted murderer and sex-offender. How ironic that the suspect's first name is "Christian". Each news story is linked by a common theme. We long for God's justice to deliver us from the sadness, emptiness and injustice of this broken world. We should not have to say Black Lives matter. No one should be mourning for a stolen life, be it the life of a 46 year-old Black Man from Minneapolis, or the stolen life of a 3-year old British child, now missing now for 13 years. But John 3 has a vital newsflash. Jesus Christ is God's Good News story in a universe of bad news. Jesus delivered that news to older Jewish man named Nicodemus. Although he was a r respected religious man and a community leader, he badly needed to accept this news. Jesus told him that without a radical New Start in his life, he could not see God's Kingdom or enjoy eternal life. God's newsflash for all of us is the same. The "YOU" in John 3:7 is plural. Jesus points his finger at every single human being who ever lived, he looks us in the eye, and he says to us all – **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN. IF HE (NICODEMUS) MUST BE BORN AGAIN... AND IF YOU (PLURAL) MUST BE BORN AGAIN... THEN YOU AND I MUST BE BORN AGAIN.**

Nicodemus got a lot of things right about Jesus. But merely holding right-belief is not enough. In modern ears the term "born again" is understood as a political or social grouping, the socially conservative people most likely to vote for a centre-right political cause. But Jesus is talking to all of humanity, and when he says that everyone must be born again it has nothing to do with politics. Nicodemus was outside God's Kingdom, and without a new birth we are all outsiders to God. Nicodemus came at night, perhaps because he remained in spiritual darkness. You, and I, and Mr Trump all need to hear this newsflash: **YOU must be born again!** Waving God's book about is not enough. Pharisees like Nicodemus took God's law very seriously, but still missed the point. If they had read Ezekiel and Jeremiah carefully they would have seen their need of a new start and a new heart, something that only God's Holy Spirit could create within them. Mere human flesh can only give birth to more mere human flesh. It takes the Holy Spirit to give us a spiritual new birth.

Jesus came to bring about renewal and regeneration. A new-Genesis, a rebirth of all creation. To belong to the palingenesis of creation we must start by repenting of our sins, believing in Jesus, and receiving spiritual new birth as a gift from God. Jesus speaks of this renewal in Matthew 19:28-29: *"Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."* Paul speaks about it in Titus 3. *"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."* That kind of new start, new birth, is like a mighty wind blowing from God. DO YOU WANT TO BE BORN AGAIN? 1 Peter 1:23 describes Christians like this – *"For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God."* God the Spirit creates new life through the powerful word of God. George Whitefield was an 18th Century preacher, who preached this theme of New Birth around 3,000 times. Someone once asked him why he kept on preaching "you must be born again"? His answer should challenge us today. "Because you MUST be born again!"

#### PRAYER OF RESPONSE

*Lord Jesus, Son of God, the Only Saviour, because of sin, we are lost and we are dead.*

*We cannot pay for our sins or overcome death.*

*Only you, God's Holy One, can save us. You tell us that we must be born again.*

*Through your Mighty Holy Spirit, Make us new, make us clean.*

*Make us your own people who trust in you. Give us eternal life, joy and peace.*

*Thank you for the Cross where all our sins were judged. Thank you for the gift of eternal life.*

*Help us to live in you and for you forevermore. Amen.*

#### HYMN: HOW DEEP THE FATHER'S LOVE

How deep the Father's love for us;  
How vast beyond all measure,  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure.  
How great the pain of searing loss;  
The Father turns His face away,  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross,  
My sin upon His shoulders;  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
Call out among the scoffers.  
It was my sin that held Him there  
Until it was accomplished;

His dying breath has brought me life;  
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything,  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
His death and resurrection.  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer;  
But this I know with all my heart –  
His wounds have paid my ransom.

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#### BENEDICTION

## DIARY THIS WEEK

Sunday: There is an informal evening fellowship on Zoom and YouTube tonight at 7 pm. This will include Bible Teaching from Luke 18, *God's Grace for Parent's Hearts*. We will also hear a testimony from Roddy MacLeod of SASRA. The Meeting ID is: 253 249 2745. The regular password or phone numbers can be obtained from Martin ([office@freenorthchurch.org](mailto:office@freenorthchurch.org)). You can also request a regular weekly email update from the Free North Church from Martin.

Monday: **Christianity Explored** is at 8 pm (online using the usual Zoom details for our Sunday and Wednesday Church Nights). Sandy Finlay leads the course introducing Jesus through Mark's Gospel ([rfinlay@toucansurf.com](mailto:rfinlay@toucansurf.com), 01463 241765).

Wednesday: Our Church Night fellowship is on Zoom & YouTube at 7.30 pm (same log on as for Sundays).

Generation Prayer: Pray for our sister churches in Rogart, South Uist and Downvale (Glasgow).

## NEWS & UPCOMING EVENTS

**Philip Amos** is our CWI mission partner working with Jewish folk in London. During lockdown Philip reaches out to Ken, a retired man, to study prophecies about Jesus. Pray that Ken would understand and believe.

Scottish Government Guidance indicates we are in Phase 1 of an exit from strict lockdown. Pastoral visits may now take place outdoors, at a physical distance, in places such as gardens, the street or a public park. For the present all places of worship remain closed.

WFM Projects: We are sadly unable to hold the usual Supper Night supporting the WFM Project. Anyone who would like to donate to the 2020 Project can do so via our congregational treasurer. Funds will support FC Camps; Cross-cultural work in Govanhill; Church Planting in Peru; and the Fraser family serving with WEC International in Holland. This Saturday at 10:30 am our Facebook Women's Fellowship plan a Virtual Coffee Morning, when you can meet some of the national WFM Committee Members. To request a Zoom invitation or to send any photos or stories about your baking contact Ann ([annsmacrae@aol.com](mailto:annsmacrae@aol.com)).

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Carrie Marlow as our new Women's Pastoral Worker. Carrie will be working full-time from October 2020. She brings a wealth of experience and energy to this new post. Please pray for her and for the Church family in Burghead where she has been serving in recent years.

Angus MacRae will be taking a break on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June, when our guest preacher will be Geoff Murray, a Student at ETS who attends Cornerstone Church in Morningside, Edinburgh.

## HERE TO HELP EACH OTHER

If you need help of any sort we are here to help and encourage each other. Contact the minister (07 506 006 459; [angusmacrae1967@gmail.com](mailto:angusmacrae1967@gmail.com)), any elder or deacon, or the church office ([office@freenorthchurch.org](mailto:office@freenorthchurch.org)) if we can help with a spiritual or practical need.

**Covid-19 Ness-side Support** is a community support group covering much of Inverness (Kinmylies to Culloden). Their direct number is 01463 353015. You can contact Julie Ferguson on 07 780 726 893 to find out more, to request help or to offer your support to others in the community.

**Giving to support the Free North:** Donate through our website (PayPal logo at the foot of the page). To set up a standing order, post a cheque or to arrange for Gift Aid, please contact our congregational treasurer, Mrs Barbara Macphail, 31 Towerhill Avenue, Inverness, IV2 5FX. Tel: 01463 794622. Email: [treasurer@freenorthchurch.org](mailto:treasurer@freenorthchurch.org). We welcome donations to our *Development Fund* specifically to fund the post of **Women's Pastoral Worker**.