



The Free North Church Inverness

a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland

A GUIDE TO SUNDAY WORSHIP

11 am – Sunday 17th January 2021

Sunday services today at 11 am and at 6 pm are **ONLINE ONLY** conducted by our minister Rev Angus MacRae. Tel: (01463) 832616.

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In response to Government public health regulations, and with the spread of a new more easily transmitted variant of the Covid-19 virus, our elders have suspended all in-person worship at the Free North Church for the whole of January and February. All our services are now ONLINE. We will keep this under review as the situation develops and will advise you of any changes. You will find Morning and Evening services on our YouTube channel at 11 am and 6 pm. (Available afterwards for catchup. Subscribe to the channel at: www.youtube.com/c/FreeNorthChurchInverness).

WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP (PSALM 139: 7-10,23-24)

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

*If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. Amen.*

PRAISE: SING PSALMS 46a:10-11

Be still, and know that I am God,
on earth exalted high;
And all the nations of the world
my name will glorify.

The LORD Almighty is with us
to strengthen and sustain;
For Jacob's God our strong defence
and fortress will remain.

*Recorded at Dowanvale Free Church. Tune: St Paul. Words Sing Psalms Version © Free Church of Scotland, 2003.
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PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER

This week we pray for our sister churches in **MERKINCH & ISLE OF ARRAN**.

BIBLE READING: JONAH 1:1-16

¹The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: ²"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." ³But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord. ⁴Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. ⁶The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish." ⁷Then the

sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.⁸ So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"⁹ He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."¹⁰ This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the Lord, because he had already told them so.)¹¹ The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"¹² "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."¹³ Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before.¹⁴ Then they cried out to the Lord, "Please, Lord, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, Lord, have done as you pleased."¹⁵ Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm.¹⁶ At this the men greatly feared the Lord, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows to him.

**UPDATE ON BIBLE STUDY – YOUTH ALPHA STARTING 10 am SUNDAY 24th
THANKS TO OUR NEW & RETIRING SESSION CLERKS**

PSALM 139 (New Scottish Hymns version)

Were I to cross from land to land
Or sail afar by sea,
Descend the depths or climb the heights,
My Lord remains with me.

Before the blood ran in these veins,
The days ordained for me
Were written in your book, O Lord,
Before I came to be.

I grieve to hear your enemies
Speak hatred, Lord, of You
Long though they scheme with ill-intent,
Their days are numbered too.

How precious are your thoughts to me,
How countless, Lord, they are;

More than the shores have grains of sand,
More than the skies have stars.

Come search and test this heart, O Lord;
Dispel each anxious thought
And lead me onward evermore
To tread the path I ought.

How blessed am I, so bound with love,
Surrounded, yet so free;
In doubt or blessing, life or death,
My Lord remains with me.

*Version of Psalm 139 by New Scottish Hymns.
Sung by Greg De Blicke and the New Scottish Hymns
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SERMON: JONAH - IN DEEP WATERS

Jonah was a real historical prophet (see 2 Kings 14), so there is no reason to treat the Book of Jonah as a parable or a myth. While it contains signs and miracles, the main point of the book is not a great fish but the great heart of God for his enemies and for lost men and women. **1). THE GREAT GOD & HIS GREAT WORD.** 14 times the book of Johan describes things that are huge (huge storm, fear, fish, city, wickedness, anger, etc.). The runaway (or prodigal) prophet Jonah ran westwards, away from his God-given mission to pagan Nineveh precisely because the prophet knew God's mercy to sinners was huge. In his nationalistic anger and pride he did not want the Assyrian enemy of Israel to receive God's grace and mercy. But the great God sent his great word to correct Jonah's world-view and to challenge his unloving heart. **2). THE GREAT CITY & ITS GREAT WICKEDNESS.** God is not blind to the guilt of lost humanity. Nineveh was a deeply wicked place. But as Matthew Henry noted in the 17th century the book of Jonah is "best understood by those most acquainted with their own hearts." We are all wicked and undeserving of God's mercy. If you have ever been told to sit up straight and sort your posture out, this book challenges us to correct the posture of our heart

towards lost and wicked people. **3). THE GREAT STORM & IT'S GREAT FEAR.** God hurled a storm at Jonah and his shipmates. They in turn were forced (reluctantly) to hurl Jonah into the sea. The sailors feared God more than they feared the terrifying storm. Sleepy Jonah's mission to pagans was already winning repentance and the fear of the Lord among the sailors. Seven centuries later another prophet from Jonah's home district of Galilee would be wakened up from his sleep in a boat. The Lord Jesus calmed the storm but his disciples were rightly terrified of his glory. Later at the cross Jesus would demonstrate the greatness of his love and compassion. As the sea would become Jonah's "grave" for 3 days, so a real death and a real grave awaited Jesus for 3 days. He willingly died for the ungodly and did not run away from his mission to the lost world. We should not trust in our religion or ethnicity (be that Hebrew, or Presbyterian). Rather we should fear and love Jonah's Lord, who by his death and resurrection gave us a sign demanding our fear, our repentance and our faith (see Matthew 12:39-41).

PRAISE: GREAT IS THE GOSPEL OF OUR GLORIOUS GOD

Great is the gospel of our glorious God,
Where mercy met the anger of God's rod;
A penalty was paid and pardon bought,
And sinners lost, at last to Him were brought:

*O let the praises of my heart be Thine,
For Christ has died that I may call Him mine,
That I may sing with those who dwell above,
Adoring, praising Jesus, King of Love.*

Great is the mystery of godliness,
Great is the work of God's own holiness,

It moves my soul, and causes me to long
For greater joys than to the earth belong:

The Spirit vindicated Christ our Lord,
And angels sang with joy and sweet accord;
The nations heard, a dark world flamed with
light –

When Jesus rose in glory and in might:

*Words - William Vernon Higham (1926-2016).
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BENEDICTION

After morning service on YouTube why not log onto Zoom for a 15 minute informal "coffee and chat" catch up. A virtual Prayer Room will be available for those who would value that.
Use the usual Zoom log-in details.

SUNDAY AT SIX – on our YOUTUBE CHANNEL at 6 PM tonight.
(Followed by a time of fellowship on Zoom).

DIARY, NEWS & PRAYER

We are sorry in-person services are suspended for at least two months. Please get in touch if you need help or are aware of pastoral and practical needs in the church family. We thank God for technology that enables us to stay in touch and maintain worship and contact with each other. Try to maintain regular routines that keep you close to the Lord and his people.

Today: After the two services on YouTube finish, please join us on Zoom for a 15-minute "coffee-time" informal catch up at around 12 noon or for a time of informal fellowship and discussion at 6.30 pm.

Wednesday 20th - Join us online only for our Monthly Home Groups on Wednesday at 7.30 pm on Zoom. This month we study Psalm 18 (See the *Soul Songs* Bible study by Tim Chester, questions 1-7 on pages 17-19). Join your own Home Group or use the usual Zoom details for the Central Group.

Friday 22nd - We meet online on Zoom on Friday at 11 am for 30 minutes of prayer and Bible reading, conducted by an office-bearer. Use the usual log on details.

Youth Alpha: Starting at 10 am next Sunday 24th Fiona Cameron is hosting a Youth Alpha Course exploring the big questions of life with Secondary age young people. Details from Fiona (fionamarion@yahoo.co.uk) or Martin at the church office (office@freenorthchurch.org). It will be great for the young people at church to have some time together. Alpha is an enjoyable and age appropriate course for teens. The plan is to watch a short video (around 20 minutes) and have a short discussion. The first session is called "*Life: is this it?*". The session can run fine with cameras off - no pressure to appear on screen! The aim is to make this an enjoyable time together exploring issues of faith, life and meaning.

Next Sunday 24th January: Services are online only at 11 am and 6 pm.

Monday 25th – Presbytery at 7 pm. The Presbytery has also organised a free training event with Mark Fleming on **Mental Health Awareness**, open to all on Zoom on **Saturday 6 February** (10 am to 1 pm). The training has a focus on anxiety and suicide and will help all involved in pastoral care and support. Places can be booked at bit.ly/mentalhealthILR.

Book of the month - *Before You open Your Bible*, by Matt Smethurst. We plan to highlight a different Christian book each month to encourage us all to get reading more this year. This month's great little book looks at how we approach the Bible so we can get the most out of our time in God's word. If you would like a copy popped through your letterbox then get in touch with Carrie.

The **Ladies' Bible Study** has resumed, running fortnightly on Thursdays at 10:30 am and 7:45pm on Zoom, studying the book of 1 Peter. The dates for the coming term are: 28th Jan, 11th and 25th Feb, 11th and 25th March. Get in touch with Carrie for more information.

Prayer: Pray for all who have been unwell, the recently bereaved and all who facing difficulties or anxiety in lockdown. Pray for parents in our Church family, for patience and wisdom in home-schooling, and in raising children who will grow as disciples with lives shaped by the gospel. Ask the Lord to help parents prioritise Sundays and prayer with and for their children, even when worship is online. Pray that God would work through online worship to build us up in faith, and to draw many others to Jesus. In January, Free Church congregations are praying for Dunfermline, Carloway, Lochbroom, Edinburgh - Buccleuch, the Inverness - Merkinch Church Plant, Arran, Dornoch, Bishopbriggs, Grace Church Montrose, Leverburgh in South Harris, and Inverness - Free North.

The Record magazine: The Deacons' Court have decided not to charge existing subscribers for their *Record* in 2021. Please advise Martin McLean at the Church Office to set up a new subscription.

Explore Daily Reading notes: Copies for January to March are now available to help with daily Bible reading. Suggested donation £3. Contact Angus or Effie if you would like a copy posted through your letterbox.

If you need help of any sort, we would love to hear from you. Contact the minister (07 506 006 459; angusmacrae1967@gmail.com), any elder or deacon, or the church office (office@freenorthchurch.org).

Support the Free North: Donate through our website (PayPal logo) or via our treasurer, Mrs Barbara Macphail, 31 Towerhill Avenue, IV2 5FX. (01463 794622, treasurer@freenorthchurch.org).