

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost – 16 October 2022

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank Rev Roy Henderson, Minister of Pollokshaws Parish Church, for his thoughts on the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

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Introduction

October is a month with a particular focus on tackling poverty. Monday 17 October is the United Nations' International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and 3-9 October is [Challenge Poverty Week](#) and the resources for the first four Sundays in October have been written by Priority Area congregations.

You will also find more Challenge Poverty Week resources on the Priority Areas [Facebook page](#), including videos and prayer memes. We would encourage you to share these with your congregation as a way of highlighting how the church is engaging in anti-poverty work at a local level. Since the early 1990s the Church of Scotland has placed a priority on putting resources into the most deprived communities. However, while there is great work happening in [Priority Area congregations](#) (those in the 5% most deprived parishes), it is important to recognise that the priority for the poorest and the most marginalised is the Gospel imperative facing the whole church.

Priority Area congregations often have roots in the days of church extension or the building when new housing estates were being built. [Pollokshaws Parish Church](#) (PPC) can be traced back to the Pollokshaws Secession Congregation of 1763 (first church built 1764). It is the last Original Secession Church building in use within the Church of Scotland and has seen times of great physical and social change (see [Pollokshaws Heritage Group](#) and [Pollokshaws Heritage Trail](#)).

Timeline:

1964

Auldfield Parish Church unites with Shawholm Original Secession Church, forming Pollokshaws Parish Church (PPC).

Auldfield Church demolished in general rebuilding of Pollokshaws.

Majority of the old town replaced by the 'multis' (multi-storey flats) and other blocks of flats.

1970s/80s

Forerunner of PPC now well-established and the Nearly New Shop was set up.

Closure of Pollok Church of Scotland (site of Kirk Care, now Trust House).

1990s

Neighbouring United Free Church closed and PPC church halls extended.

2000s

Local building stock in visible decline.

Many asylum seekers housed in the area.

Pollokshaws Integration Network founded (now [Pollokshaws Area Network](#)).

Public swimming pool closed after attempts to stop or delay this.

PPC refurbished (2009), creating flexible space for activities in addition to worship

2010s

Demolition of the 'multis'. Construction of more mixed housing stock begins.

[Sir John Maxwell Primary School](#) closed in 2011, after attempts to stop or delay this.

Establishment of Pollokshaws Community Project by the church to ensure the continuation of the work of the Adult Literacy Service.

Local Salvation Army building closed. Some worshippers come to PPC.

2019

Return of the original Auldfield Church bell, now situated outside PPC.

2021 onwards

Work begins on Glasgow Presbytery Mission Plan after instruction of the General Assembly of 2021.

Since World War II, the people of Pollokshaws have lived through times of building, demolition, rebuilding and changing economic situations and has often featured in the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) statistics.

Many hard-working ministers, elders and members have given much to this parish, now represented by a core of committed and generous people. Some members of PPC and community 'reps' have been active in local causes, advocacy and issues: e.g. Community Council, Pollokshaws Area Network, Pollokshaws Community Project. The current PPC roll is under 100 people and since Covid-19 now has around 30 regular worshippers. PPC collaborates with Eastwood Parish Church, Pollokshaws Methodist Church and Auldhouse Community Church, sharing in chaplaincy with local primary and secondary schools and a wider church circle. With a group of eight neighbours, PPC is working on the local expression of Glasgow Presbytery's Mission Plan.

Following demolition of the multi-storey flats in 2013 the parish appeared 'emptied out'. A consultation process reimagining a Pollokshaws with the former primary school redeveloped as a community hub and a renewed rail connection reaching through Glasgow

had fallen foul of the 2008 financial crash and Covid-19 struck just as the new mixed housing was nearing completion. It remains to be seen what the changing demographics of Pollokshaws will bring.

People sometimes express a feeling of powerlessness. Who makes the decisions? Where does authority lie? Town and presbytery planning alike will have a profound effect on the future shape of the parish and its worshipping communities, including PPC.

At the time of writing, there are growing anxieties about the rising cost of living and how to pay rising heating and lighting bills. This will be more acute by October. Then there are shared global concerns such as the impact of Covid, climate change and the Ukraine conflict.

When approaching the text for a worship service I often ask, 'Who does what?', so I might identify the verbs or name the actions of the characters in the passage. I also look for what 'jumps out' for me as I prayerfully consider the scripture in my context.

Another entry point can be finding references to the text in a commonplace saying, popular culture, song, film, a joke, or in art or poetry.

[Genesis 32:22-31](#)

This one piqued my interest. It is alluded to by the band U2: "In the locust wind/ Comes a rattle and hum/Jacob wrestled the angel/and the angel was overcome". ('Bullet the Blue Sky') There are also many artworks that depict it. For example:



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[2 Timothy 3:14-4:5](#)

In verses 16-17 of chapter 3 we read: “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

Some worshippers are at home in the world of the Bible, others find it less congenial. We may have heard someone’s puzzlement as Jacob wrestles with his mysterious adversary. In what way is this passage of Scripture ‘useful for teaching?’ What does this mean for us now?

For example, these points jump out at me:

1. Jacob is returning to his brother, Esau, whom he had cheated out of his inheritance. They have history. What awaits Jacob?
2. Jacob is alone.
3. The event occurs at a ford or a crossing place.
4. Who or what is his opponent: ‘man’, ‘angel’, ‘god’, ‘God’?
5. What could it mean to know the name of a human or other being or when one’s name was changed?

6. Jacob was winning before his assailant injured him.
7. Jacob's blessing left him limping.
8. It all begins in the dark and ends at sunrise.

What jumps out of the text for you? Commentaries, physical or online, help with such questions as number 5 above. Relating them to experience can also yield up something of value. Jacob's persistence strikes me as one potentially fruitful avenue. We all face obstacles or struggles calling for persistence. Facing them, naming them and then finding blessing or even God in them may be unwelcome, but unavoidable.

People in Priority Areas have obstacles and challenges specific to that context. Where in our world, nearby or far away, is 'Jacob' still wrestling, still hanging on for a blessing? With whom? What are the names of today's adversaries? Where is God?

[Luke 18:1-8](#)

It can appear relatively easy to say, 'bless you', to pray together, or pronounce God's benediction, but what unspoken struggles are in hearts and minds as we do so? This idea of persistence in seeking blessing and more, leads us to the gospel reading, often called the 'Parable of the Importunate Widow'.

2 Timothy 4:2 urges the reader to "proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable." This chimes with today's parable of a judge who neither fears God nor respects anybody and is given a good 'speaking to' by a feisty widow seeking 'justice against some adversary'. In *The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*, Amy-Jill Levine translates part of verse 8 as '... she will wear me out/give me a black eye'. Now, there's a memorable image!

I remind myself that the well-known titles of parables are conventions of some kind and not necessarily part of the Gospel text. Therefore, what title would you or I give this parable? The parable of ... the feisty widow? ... battling faith? ... a widow, a judge and a black eye?

Wearing out a gatekeeping judge or giving them a black eye is certainly an arresting word picture of what faith looks like if it is found here on earth. Why is faith like that?



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Another area to explore might be, Where is God in this parable? What do you think?

Sermon ideas

Depending on the formality and room setup, before the reading or at the beginning of the sermon we might begin with an open question, like those above, such as:

- When you hear this story of Jacob, what jumps off the page for you?
- Here is a story, it is a parable that Jesus told, have a listen and see what questions come up for you

In my introduction, I referred to local experiences such as the building, demolishing and rebuilding in our parish over the years, and of consultations that built hopes up, only to see them dashed. There is also a history of local attempts to forestall closures of amenities and so on. Who makes those decisions? Who are the gatekeepers? What does the story of Jacob and Jesus' parable have to say to us? I think of those who are active in their communities, who put faith into practice, seeking justice, or who have to return somewhere to have a 'brave conversation' with someone they have wronged, who are faced with something in their way that they cannot pass but must go through.

Many years ago, an inspiring 'old lady' facing a particularly troubling situation told me, "Oh, it is a huvtae, son." It was something that she just had to deal with it. There was no avoiding it.

Jacob must return to Esau. Alone now, he must face a mystery opponent. In the struggle he is left limping but blessed with a new name. A name expresses something about a person or

a deity's character. To know a name was to have power over its bearer. In [The Courage To Doubt](#), Robert Davidson writes, "Jacob 'the Cheat' becomes Israel". The name 'Israel' comes to mean "you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed" – the name of a people who must wrestle blessing out of the hard encounters with people and 'The Eternal'. The songwriter Bruce Coburn sang: "But nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight – Got to kick at the darkness 'til it bleeds daylight." (Lovers in a Dangerous Time)

The widow, a woman without male support in the public realm, must speak up for justice against a road-blocking judge. This persistent, truthful speaking up somehow relates to faith and to prayer. Blessing and justice alike might only come with a struggle and may not be at all polite.

For you in your context, who, what and where are the personal or institutional opponents that you or others must face as you make your way to some important destination? Who or what are the gatekeepers that must be addressed if there is to be justice?

'History belongs to the intercessors' (Walter Wink – [Engaging the Powers](#) p298ff).

Prayers

Call to worship

Friends, fellow travellers,
all who come here today (and who connect online...*) [**You may wish to substitute your own words or phrases here*]

companions in worship ...

Let this be the place and time for:

fellowship* ... conversation* ...

solitude* ... contemplation* ...

praise* ... silence* ...

Let this be a crossing place,
where paths human and divine, weave together ...
and just sometimes,
blessing comes to those who persevere.

“I lift up my eyes to the hills-- from where will my help come?
My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” Ps 121:1-2 NRSVA

Prayer of approach

God, Holy and Living:
Maker of heaven and earth,
Healer of creation,
Breath and fire of Life.

We pause now to worship You,
now as the seasons turn,
we still ourselves in reverence,
now as days turn short and nights grow long ...

Pausing, still, we wait on You ...
We, who need Your blessing upon our lives,
as night gives way to dawn.

Optional contemplative music – solo or congregation

*“I waited, I waited on the Lord
He bent down low and remembered me
When he heard my prayer.”*

(Heaven Shall Not Wait, Wild Goose Publications p 134)

Confession

Holy God,
We who have fallen short,
missed the mark,
lost our way in the shadows;
we need Your blessing,
Your good word upon us ...
to reach the goal, make the mark, find our way home.

We who have so much to celebrate and also to regret:
we need Your blessing,
Your good word within us
in our daily struggles;
the obstacles faced,

our burdens borne and challenges met,
apart and together.

Whisper Your blessing to us today,
The blessing of a new, grace-soaked story to live by,
in place of the tired old tales we repeat to ourselves.
The blessing of the precious name You call us by,
Your name for each of us, Your beloved in Christ.
The blessing of a new direction of travel,
the way that leads to life, the way of Christ.

We wait on You ...
we who need Your blessing upon our lives,
as night gives way to dawn.

Optional contemplative music – solo or congregation

*“I waited, I waited on the lord
He bent down low and remembered me
When he heard my prayer.*

(Heaven Shall Not Wait, Wild Goose Publications 134)

Word of pardon/forgiveness

People of God
all you who watch and wait,
who persevere in prayer,
who seek the blessing of the God of Life:

“Your help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”
“The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.” (Psalm 121 v2, vv7-8)

A home-made collect for Jacob

O Holy Mystery;
who are you,
who faces me here tonight at the crossing place?
Are you human, angel, god
or my own imagining?

Now I must face you and not let go,
not until you reveal your name
or out of joint, I limp on into the dawn,
blessed and new-named,
a new me, a new day.
Amen

Dedication

Living, loving God,
as fuel bills and the cost of living rise,
we give of what we have:
money,
time,
skills, gifts and talents,
all for the flourishing of Your church near and far
and as a blessing for others.

Thanksgiving

Loving God,
all our times are in Your hands.
We give thanks,
for the many who have made this journey before us
here, in and around this church,
this beloved place of worship and community life;
where friends, fellow-travellers and companions,
have found blessing in times of
trial and struggle,
celebration and festivity,
all through lives of patient faithfulness
and persistent prayer.

These people, we name quietly now,
in gratitude for all that they have given
and every way that they have been a blessing

Silence

Intercession

As Jacob wrestled for blessing
and as Jesus urges us to pray always and not to lose heart,
so in our turn we pray for these,
our concerns of the day, naming them now:

- Global and national *
- Local, parish and neighbourhood *
- Denominational, Priority Areas and Presbytery *
- Congregational*
- Personal*

*[*These will be apparent come the time. At the time of writing it would be fair to expect climate change, Ukraine, the cost of living, National and Presbytery Mission Planning and more, to be on our minds.]*

God, Holy and Living:
Maker of heaven and earth,
Healer of creation,
Breath and fire of Life:

As Your world turns on its way
and all its people pass from night, into day
and back into night again,
may the prayer of Your people never cease
and Jacob's struggle for blessing
and the widow's demand for justice continue,
until every voice in heaven, on earth
and all of creation redeemed,
cries 'Glory!'

Until that day,
we will join our voices to their persistent chorus
in the prayer of Jesus:
Our Father ... [according to local custom]

Sending & Blessing

Go now,
striving like Jacob for blessing,

persisting as the widow demanding justice.
Pray always and do not lose heart.

And the grace of Christ attend you,
the love of God surround you,
the Holy spirit keep you,
this day and forever.

Or, if a prayer

Let us go now,
to strive like Jacob for blessing,
persistent as the widow demanding justice,
praying always and not losing heart.

And the grace of Christ attend us,
the love of God surround us,
the Holy Spirit keep us,
this day and forever.

Musical suggestions

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

Genesis 32

- CH4 21 – “Lord teach me all your ways” – can this be imagined in the mouth of Jacob?
- CH4 132 – “Immortal, invisible”
- CH4 158 – “God moves in a mysterious way”
- CH4 133 – “Source and Sovereign”

- CH4 134 – “Bring many names”
- CH4 769 – “Holy holy holy, my heart adores you (Santo, santo, santo)” – these last three hymns reflect the mystery of God

Psalm 121

- CH4 81 – “I to the hills will lift mine eyes”
- “He watches over you” – Shane Heilman, the Psalms Project Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9_QFgg_ukY
[Lyrics/chord sheet here](#)
- “I lift up my eyes” – Sons of Korah https://youtu.be/iHYXP0tC_dE
- “Lifting my eyes up to the hills” – Iona/Wild Goose Worship Group, Psalms of Patience, Protest and Praise #46

2 Timothy

- CH4 159 – “Lord, for the years”
- CH4 588 – “Praise the Spirit in creation”
- CH4 598 – “Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire”
- CH4 600 – “Spirit of God, unseen as the wind”
- CH4 603 – “For your gift of God the Spirit”

Luke 18

- CH4 250 – “Sent by the Lord am I” – doing what we pray for
- CH4 342 – “Says Jesus, ‘Come and gather round’”
- CH4 544 – “When I needed a neighbour” – From the point of view of someone for whom intercession is needed
- CH4 547 – “What a friend we have in Jesus”
- CH4 563/564 – “Jesus loves me! This I know”

- CH4 710 – “‘I have a dream’, a man once said”

Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord’s Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of ‘holy chaos’.
- While singing in our congregations is still restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different “Spiritual Styles”?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?

- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?
Did it function well as a whole?
How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?
- How balanced was the worship?
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/
community?
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

Useful links

Up to date information for churches around Covid-19 can be found [here](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)

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