

Third Sunday after Pentecost – Year C

Sunday 29 June 2025

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank David Bradwell and Sally Sheail, from the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group, for their thoughts on the Third 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.

Introduction.....	3
2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14	3
Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20.....	5
Galatians 5:1, 13-25	6
Luke 9:51-62	6
Sermon ideas	7
Prayers	10
Musical suggestions	12
Reflecting on our worship practice	14
Useful links	16

Introduction

The Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group is part of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team and is taking forward the instruction to consider what it means to be a justice-seeking Church. This weekly worship material has been prepared by and on behalf of this Programme Group.

In a world where the norms of yesterday are forgotten and a 'new normal' emerges almost daily; and in a world where power is often used for personal gain to silence the voices of the disadvantaged and as a licence to ride rough shod over anyone who gets in the way, the need for justice is imperative.

The need for the church to challenge, influence and speak truth to power is essential.

Our vision as the Public Life and Social Justice Programme Group is for the Church of Scotland to be empowered with knowledge, understanding and courage to respond to, and pursue, issues of social justice and public life, both within the Church and in wider society, using our distinct Christian voice to influence policies and decision making.

Every one of us needs to play our part as we respond to Micha 6:8 –

"...what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

I find it helpful as I work through the passages, to understand the culture and practices of the day, as this helps when looking at them in today's context. As you work through the readings for today think about:

- What piqued your interest?
- Where did they take you?
- What do they say about the world then – and now?
- What do they say about justice and how we respond?

[2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14](#)

Here we see the transition of spiritual leadership from Elijah to Elisha. Elijah was a nobody – he came out of nowhere, yet went on to change the world.

Elijah means 'My Lord is Jehovah' and he was renowned for being a Hebrew Prophet and reformer. He fought as a soldier of the Lord against heathen gods, championed the downtrodden and performed miracles ending by vanishing in a whirlwind. (1)

As for Elisha, prior to Elijah calling him, he was a farmer, working his parents' land with twelve pairs of oxen – implying a wealthy status. Yet he gave all that up to follow God and become a disciple of Elijah. (You can read of his calling in 1 Kings 19.)

Our reading today takes us to the end of Elisha's role as student, and his becoming a prophet in his own right.

Elisha knows it is the day that Elijah will be taken by God, and is firm in his commitment to follow Elijah to the end. Several times, Elijah gives him the opportunity to stay behind so that he doesn't have to witness his departure, but each time, Elisha affirms his dedication to Elijah and in doing so, to God.

It is evident that Elijah also knows God is about to call him home when he asks Elisha what he can do for him before he is taken. The response is, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." (2)

The use of the cloak in this passage is highly symbolic, affirming the prophet's authority under God with which God has clothed and empowered them.

Elisha tore his own cloak as an act of mourning, and, in putting on Elijah's cloak, affirmed his commitment to continuing Elijah's legacy and serving God with the authority and power it symbolised.

There are several points of interest which give context to the reading;

- The group of prophets from Bethel was a group similar to a school, a gathering of disciples around a recognised prophet. Such schools would be located throughout the country (3)
- The cloak or mantel was the most important article of clothing a person could own. It was used as protection against the weather, as bedding as a place to sit and as luggage. (4)
- Elijah's cloak was a symbol of his authority as a prophet. In putting it on, the transfer of authority from Elijah to Elisha was complete. (5)



1. Who's Who in the Old Testament, Pages 89-90
2. This is a quote from Deuteronomy 21:17 – rights of the first born
3. Chronological Life Application Study Bible, page 750
4. Chronological Life Application Study Bible, page 732
5. Chronological Life Application Study Bible, page 750

Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20

Here we have a Psalm of problems and solutions.

The psalmist was pleading and praying to God to the point of exhaustion. Feeling as if they had been abandoned by God and struggling to find any comfort in prayer or praise, despite every effort.

In order to move forward, the Psalmist first looked back, reflecting and meditating on what God had done and on God's redeeming power. They also reflected on how God had rescued the people from Egypt and led them to the promised land, thus revealing God's power to redeem, to save, through the extremes of nature and nature's fear and respect for God, to the point of obedience.

The parting of the waters, the thunderous cloud and whirlwind each played their part in bringing the people of God to safety.

It was the psalmist's turning of the focus from themselves to God that transformed their thinking and enabled them to worship God in Spirit and in Truth, transforming and enabling them to move forward with God.

The retelling of the Jewish nation's story from the time of slavery in Egypt to David's reign was shared from generation to generation, so the people would not forget.

In connection with the reading from 2 Kings, the description found in verses 17-18 give some insight into the setting in which Elijah was taken up to heaven in the whirlwind.

Some commentaries have Elijah being taken up to heaven in a chariot. That is not so, as it was the whirlwind which took him, the chariot, cleared the way and separated Elijah from Elisha.

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

The Galatians were at odds with one another, as the legalists were promoting circumcision and obedience to the law, in contrast to the steadfast who were promoting freedom in Christ. Such division causes us to lose our personal and corporate testimony, bringing the church and even God into disrepute.

Paul gives another option – to be led by the Spirit, depending on the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not make us act and behave against our will, it waits for us to be ready and willing and to choose to be dependent upon it.

We are called to freedom, yet freedom comes with responsibility. Paul details the behaviours of the flesh/human nature which the Galatians were most inclined towards and the works of the Spirit they were most in need of. The fruits, also known as the nine graces, can be broken into three groups:

- Habits of the mind – love, joy, peace
- Reaching out to others – patience, kindness, goodness
- Conduct of a Spirit-led believer – faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

We cannot obtain these graces by simply trying harder, but need to join our lives to Jesus' – to know Him, love Him, remember Him and imitate Him. In doing this, we will fulfil the purpose of the law – love God, love our neighbours and ourselves.

Luke 9:51-62

This passage covers the different reactions people have when asking or being invited to follow Jesus.

We start with Jesus' plan to go to Jerusalem via Samaria and the Samaritans' refusal to accept Him. First, it is important to understand the longstanding history between the Samaritans and the Israelites. The conflict between the two nations had been going on for several hundred years, ever since the Assyrians invaded Israel's northern kingdom and settled its own people there, creating a mixed race – something the law had warned against. The Samaritans worshipped at Mount Gerizim, but the Israelites did not recognise this, believing that the Temple in Jerusalem was the only true place of worship.

The disciples' reaction to this rejection is reminiscent of when Elijah asked God to bring down fire on those who were opposing God's work (2 Kings 1), yet Jesus calls for tolerance.

We move on to some of the people Jesus meets on His way to Jerusalem and the different reactions and responses towards invitations to follow Jesus or invitations. In essence, it encourages potential believers to count the cost, recognise what it will mean for them, such as their comfort, security, family, etc.

It is about understanding what it means to follow Jesus with all **your** heart and with all **your** soul and with all **your** mind.

Foxes have holes, the birds have nests but the son of man has nowhere to lay His head – Jesus is resolutely on the way to Jerusalem – as followers, are we ready and willing to follow in his footsteps and relinquish the comfort and security we know?

Burying your father was considered a sacred and binding duty. Jesus' response isn't about neglecting family, but about encouraging us to examine our motives.

The proverb 'hand to the plough – don't look back', is about where you put your focus. Where we look is the direction we travel.

Interestingly, Luke doesn't tell us the outcome of these conversations.

Sermon ideas

2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14

There are several themes you could pick out from this reading:

Firstly, to explore what it means to journey with someone to the end and how we honour that person's life and walk with God – the commitment and dedication not only to the person, but to God. Then to be willing to continue their legacy.

There is also the transfer of power. You could compare and contrast today's reading with current examples of where power has been transferred in the world, using this to help define what 'good' might look like. Elisha went on to exercise God's power through a ministry of compassion and care for people. What does this say about world attitudes, nationally and internationally? What does this mean for a justice-seeking church? The attitude in which power and responsibility is taken on is key if that role is to bring about justice. It needs to be done with kindness, love and in humility.

Elisha's request for a double portion is asked in humility – it was a requirement in polygamous relationships that a double portion of the inheritance went to the eldest son

when born of a wife that the husband did not love. Otherwise, the wife and child could end up destitute. The purpose of this was to bring justice into an unjust practice.

Another aspect you could explore is the continuation of the work people are doing today for the glory of God.

You could invite people to meditate on/discuss the following:

Whom do you admire enough to take on their cloak? What does this mean for you?

- What would you need to take on?
- What would you need to give up?
- What impact might it have on those around you?

Conversely, for the 'Elijahs' among us:

- Whom do you see you handing on your cloak to?
- Who has demonstrated faithfulness and commitment?
- Who has the right attitude, skills and abilities to warrant 'a double portion'?

Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20

The world is a difficult place within which to exist, especially as a Christian in a secular society, where God is overlooked and ignored.

You could use this psalm as a meditative resource, giving time and space for people to privately bring their concerns to God, then remember God's saving power and grace in their own lives, in the life of the church and those they love and care for.

How many times have you cried to God because you felt overwhelmed – be it personal circumstances, concerning a loved one, or the state of the world? Have you ever felt God wasn't listening or had abandoned you? It is ok if you have. The Psalmist felt the same.

It is healthy to question, even to doubt, especially when it leads us to seek God in a new and transforming way.

When we look at the world today and all that is happening, it can be easy to become despondent and disillusioned. It can be easy to wonder where God is in all of this. Yet by

the grace and power of God, we can make a difference. Not by dwelling on all that is wrong in the world, but by remembering and sharing all the good things God has done for each one of us and for us as the Church of Christ.

In the same way, the Israelites passed on their shared history of God's saving grace. What 'God given stories' do you have to pass on? You could leave time for reflection or invite people to share stories in small groups.

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

The analogy of a tree being planted and tended by the gardener may be useful. Nature provides the sunshine, rain and frost – needed to help it to grow into a strong and healthy tree, yet there is need for pruning to produce the best fruit. This reflects life as there are good times and hard times – times when we are pruned and times when we flourish. Such pruning is needed for us to grow and be fruitful and be able to live out the fruits of the Spirit.

In the context of being a justice-seeking church, you could reflect on the attitudes and behaviours described in verses 19-21 which lead to pain, injustice and slavery through addiction and abuses of power. This is in contrast to the nine graces or fruits of the Spirit, which not only bring freedom and liberty to us, but create a fairer, more just world for those around us, both near and far. You could also invite people to consider what qualities they would like the Spirit to grow in them – with a health warning e.g. If you ask for patience, you can expect situations to arise where you will need to practice patience.

Luke 9:51-62

The Samaritans and the Israelites were at loggerheads. It had gone on for so long that all trust was gone. The Samaritans didn't trust Jesus to come to Samaria and not berate them because they didn't worship at the Temple in Jerusalem.

When disagreements and fallings-out go on and on, we can sometimes forget what started them. We can forget that whether right or wrong, the other party can feel hurt and wounded. We can forget that their actions and reactions could be brought about by trauma.

Jesus gives the disciples a row for wanting to bring down fire on the Samaritans. He doesn't have time for that, and He is sympathetic to their hurt and suspicion. Instead of anger, He calls for love, instead of revenge, He calls for peace and gentleness.

When others reject or scorn us, it is easy to want to retaliate and get revenge, or seek our own justice. We need to remember that judgement belongs to God.

Invite people to reflect on their relationships and where they see injustice, asking them to consider how a little love, compassion and gentleness could change things for them.

At the same time, there are some relationships which are irrevocably crushed, with little or no hope of restoring them. In these situations, you could invite people to give them over and trust in God for justice.

As we work through the passage, we see that people want to follow Jesus, but each have their own conditions attached; bury my father, sort out my affairs, will you go where Jesus goes?

Then we have the illustration of having your hand to the plough and looking back. In a society where agriculture is something of a mystery to many, you could invite people to come up with a modern-day illustration. (This could be part of an all-age talk.) The point being, that we cannot do what we are called to do if our focus is elsewhere.

Questions you could raise:

- Where is Jesus asking you to go?
- Are you ready and willing to follow Jesus, wherever He goes?
- What, if anything, gets in the way of focussing on Jesus?

Prayers

Gathering prayer / Call to worship

I yell out to my God, I yell with all my might,
I yell at the top of my lungs. God listens.

Confession / Repentance

I found myself in trouble and went looking for my Lord;
my life was an open wound that wouldn't heal.
When friends said, "Everything will turn out all right",

I didn't believe a word they said.
I remember God—and shake my head.
Most merciful God,
we confess we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved You with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

In Your mercy,
forgive what we have been
and help us fulfil our potential in You;
that we may do justly,
love mercy
and walk humbly with You, our God.
O God! Your way is holy!
No god is great like God!
You're the God who makes things happen;
You showed everyone what You can do —
You pulled Your people out of the worst kind of trouble,
rescued the children of Jacob and Joseph.
We thank You and give You the glory.
Amen

Thanksgiving / Gratitude

Gracious God, we thank You for all You have given us,
for friends, family and loved ones,
for the 'God-incidences' and the miracles You have woven into our lives.
We give You what we have,
our time, talents and money
to help make the world a fairer and kinder place to live,
bringing glory to You.
In the name of Christ,
Amen

Prayer for others / Intercession

1. The Church of Christ
2. Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority

3. The local community
4. Those who suffer
5. The communion of saints

I like to use these headings to structure intercessory prayers. This way you can keep them relevant and to address current affairs – locally, nationally and internationally. Using silences before moving onto the next section gives people opportunity to lift their own prayers to God.

Blessing / Closing prayer

As we leave this place of worship,
May the Holy Spirit go with us,
may the graces grow within us.
As we take on the mantle given to us,
may we act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.
Amen

Musical suggestions

God Welcomes All (GWA) is the new supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition. This exciting new collection features over 200 hymns and songs in a wide range of styles by writers from Scotland and around the world.

The full music version and words-only versions are now available; and digital resources, including the expansion of the existing Church of Scotland music website, will be published in due course, with streaming functions and further information on each song; backing tracks; and lyric videos. *God Welcomes All* is available to order from

<https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225573/god-welcomes-all>

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.

Relating to 2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14:



- GWA 178 – “Look as far as I can see”
- CH4 495 – “Spirit of God, descend upon my heart”

Relating to Psalm 77:

- GWA 176 – “In my wrestling, and in my doubts” (‘My Lighthouse’)
- CH4 49 – “I cried aloud to God”

Relating to Galatians 5:1, 13-25:

- GWA 199 – “Oh how good it is when the family of God”
- GWA 204 – “This is God’s house, holy ground for God’s people”
- CH4 159 – “Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided”
- CH4 231 – “For the fruits of all creation”
- CH4 265 – “Pray for a world where every child”
- CH4 349 – “In our lives plant seeds of hope”
- CH4 374 – “From heaven you came, helpless babe”
- CH4 454 – “A safe stronghold our God is still”
- CH4 484 – “Great God, your love has called us here”
- CH4 495 – “Spirit of God, descend upon my heart”
- CH4 523 – “Hands to work and feet to run”
- CH4 582 – “O Day of joy and wonder!”
- CH4 599 – “Holy Spirit, hear us”

- CH4 613 – “Gracious Spirit, hear our pleading”
- CH4 620 – “Spirit of Jesus, if I love my neighbour”
- CH4 626 – “Holy Spirit, truth divine”
- CH4 694 – “Brother, sister, let me serve you”

Relating to Luke 9:51-62:

- GWA 181 – “We set our feet to travelling along our pilgrim way”
- CH4 195 – “Here to the house of God we come”
- CH4 395 – “What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul”
- CH4 399 – “My song is love unknown”
- CH4 533 – “Will you come and follow me”
- CH4 644 – “O Jesus, I have promised”
- A suggested playlist of songs from CH4 throughout Pentecost can be found on the Church of Scotland website (<https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/inspire-me/playlist/pentecost>)

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'.
- If singing in our congregations is 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

God Welcomes All can be ordered from [Hymns Ancient & Modern](#)

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](#)

You are free to download, project, print and circulate multiple copies of any of this material for use in worship services, bible studies, parish magazines, etc. If you would like to reproduce this material for commercial purposes, please contact the copyright holders, the Faith Action Programme, for permission: faithaction@churchofscotland.org.uk

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

©Faith Action Programme