

## Third Sunday after Pentecost

### Third Sunday after Pentecost – 21 June 2020

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank Rev Dr Steve Taylor, Principal of the Knox Centre for Ministry and Leadership in Dunedin, New Zealand, for his thoughts on the third Sunday after Pentecost.

Our new online music resource is now live: [here](#) you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4). The search function allows you to bring up a list of songs by keyword, tune, theme, author, composer and metre, covering all of the indexes in the hymnbook. The site features Weekly Worship and thematic/seasonal playlists, alternative settings and background information on the hymns.

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## Introduction

I have been asked by the Weekly Worship editors to explore possible links between the lectionary readings for Sunday 21 June and Windrush Day, which is being celebrated on 22 June.

In seeking to be faithful to both Biblical text and context, I will link two of the lectionary texts with Windrush Day, paying particular attention first to the place of national identity in relation to the story of dispute between Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 21:8-21 and second to the way that baptism, as an act of immersion in water, connects us to all who seek migration over water. I will provide a more conventional set of resources for the Gospel reading and the Psalm.

I trust this two-pronged approach will enhance the possibilities for every worshipping community to resource themselves in their own unique context.

**Windrush Day:** Observance of Windrush Day was introduced in the UK in 2018. It was on 22 June (1948) that several hundred people arrived from the Caribbean on board the HMS Empire Windrush to start a new life in Britain. Caribbean people who had served in the British armed forces were encouraged to come to Britain to work. More people followed. It is estimated that around 500,000 people living in the UK are part of the Windrush generation. Windrush Day celebrates these arrivals and seeks to honour the diverse contributions the Caribbean community has made to British society.

Like many migrant stories, those who arrived were full of hope. Over time, many faced racism and discrimination. Children were picked on at school and jobs were difficult to obtain. Hence Windrush Day can be broadened to include reflection on migrant journeys in general and what it means to be a hospitable community. As Professor Alison Phipps, UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow argues, many countries have a hospitality crisis rather than a refugee crisis. This is an invitation to focus on what it means to be hosts, rather than guests. While this continues to focus attention on the already dominant cultures, it can invite learning, growth and changes of behaviour.

**A liturgical theology of ordinary time festivals:** The UK Government promised £500,000 per annum to groups and local authorities who want to celebrate Windrush Day and educate communities about the experiences of the Windrush generation. More information is available on <https://www.windrushday.org.uk/>

Before a church participates in community festivals, it does well to ponder the theologies by which it might engage. One place to begin reflection is through a liturgical lens, that of ordinary time festivals. This begins with the recognition that the Church has a range of feasts. These include Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Easter, Pentecost and again at Christmas and Epiphany. These feasts fall within the Church seasons and provide a way to commemorate the reconciliation and promised consummation of the world in Christ.

In the Church calendar, time that falls outside the Church seasons is called “ordinary” time. One of the tasks of the Church is to clarify God’s presence in ordinary time. This provides a way to approach community festivals. They provide an opportunity to clarify God’s presence in everyday life. Despite the lack of religious feasts, at the heart of ordinary time is the affirmation that God remains present. Hence community festivals are an invitation to clarify God’s remaining presence.

The community beyond the Church can offer a wide range of festivals. Some are local, for example festivals specific to the area. Some can be more general, for example May Day.

Theologian Amy Plantinga Pauw suggests a wisdom ecclesiology by which the Church is present in ordinary time. This enables a focus on “our creaturely existence as it is sustained by God’s creative blessing and calling.” (Pauw, 1.) She argues that ecclesiology has “largely neglected this ordinary-time dimension of Christian life ... the primordial and ongoing graciousness of God’s work as Creator.” (Pauw, 2.) Pauw outlines liturgical themes of

- Making new
- Longing
- Giving
- Suffering
- Rejoicing
- Joining hands

Each of these themes could provide a theological way to engage a community festival, including Windrush Day. If you were to join a community group planning a local Windrush celebration, or encourage your church to attend one already planned and advertised, you could invite them to reflect on a question as they participate in a Windrush Day festival.

For example – What part of life is it hoped there will be a making new? What is being longed for? What do you see being given? What suffering is being named? What dimension of life is being celebrated? Where are there signs of partnership?

These become signs of God's activity. As Paul Fiddes, writes: "But wherever in the world people give themselves to others or sacrifice themselves for others, these actions will also match the movement in God that is like a Son going forth on mission in response to the purpose of a Father; their acts share in the patterns of love in God, and so in them we can discern the body of Christ. Wherever there is the movement of a measure of music, or a stroke of a brush, or a blow of a chisel, or a sequence of thought in the arts or sciences, which reflects God's truth and beauty, this too shares in the dynamic flow of the life of God." (1)

This is because the world is the sphere in which God is active. This allows us to look for the activity of God in the world and looks for ways to understand this activity, occurring in the space opened up by God, matching the movements in God. This is perhaps what is meant by Wisdom 1:7, in which "the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world, and that which holds all things together knows what is said."

This work can then shape our prayers, particularly those of approach and thanksgiving, as we affirm in community festivals what we see of God's movements in longing.

[1] Fiddes, in "Ecclesiology and Ethnography: Two Disciplines, Two Worlds?" in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* ed P. Ward (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 31, reflecting on Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans N. Horton Smith (London, SCM, 1971), 66-68.

## Scripture passages and Sermon ideas

I offer points of interest for each passage, and two different sermon ideas for Genesis 21 and Romans 6.

### [Genesis 21:8-12](#)

This is one of two accounts in Genesis of the departure of Hagar (Genesis 16:1-16; 21:8-21). Some scholars see this as a single event. Others see this as two distinct events.

In seeking to read in light of Windrush, two commentators proved provocative.

Delores Williams offers a black womanist reading of Hagar, that she, like "many black women, goes into the wide world to make a living for herself and for her child, with only God by her side." (2) This reading provides dignity to Hagar, and to all those who experience

injustice. Like Hagar, they can enact agency. They are not dependent on the existing familial systems of injustice. As they seek to make their way, they can expect to find God with them, attentive to all who cry for justice.

New Zealand biblical scholar, Judith McKinley, who sadly died less than 12 months ago, argues that the wilderness and ethnic dimensions of the text resonate strongly with our world today (3). Hence this text allows us to have sensitive conversations with people today who experience marginalisation, including through gender and ethnicity. In order to undertake such conversations, McKinley increases her empathy by exploring accounts in history in which women are marginalised. She does this by examining New Zealand mission history. Such an approach invites those of us working with the text in other contexts to explore our own histories.

[2] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, Orbis, 1993, 33

[3] "Sarah and Hagar: What Have I to Do with Them?" *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements of Historical*, edited by Caroline Vander Stichele, Todd C. Penner, SBL, 2005, 159-77

## Sermon idea

### Who is God?

Take McKinley's approach. Explore your own national history by seeking a story from an individual, perhaps from the Windrush ("The stories of the Windrush veterans" on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m\\_83opQtBYY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_83opQtBYY)). Or locate some more recent migrant experiences. As these stories are read, we can ask questions of the Biblical text (Genesis 21:8-19)

- What distress is God, like in verse 11, hearing?
- What weeping is God, like in verse 16, hearing?
- What promises might God be speaking, like in verse 18, to those who weep?
- What eyes, like God in verse 19, are opening?

These actions by God provide a way to preach about how God might speak in light of Windrush Day.

## **Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17**

This is a prayer of David, often classified as individual lament. It has the pattern of

Call for help (1-7)

Confidence (8-11)

Thanksgiving (12-13)

Further prayer (14-17)

There is a rich and fascinating link with Genesis 21, particularly in verse 16, which refers to the need to save the child of your serving call. Applied to Hagar, the use of the word “your” is inclusive, weaving her as part of God’s family.

The words “be gracious to me” are used both in verse 3 and verse 16. It has echoes of the well-known Aaronic prayer from Numbers 6: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you.” Words spoken to Moses, who experienced God in the desert, first in the burning bush experience and again in Exodus.

This invites the imagination, in which God of the desert appears not only to Moses, wanting to bless and be gracious, but also the desert appears to Hagar, equally wanting to bless and be gracious.

## **Romans 6:1b-11**

The temptation is to read this text through individual eyes, with a focus on purely human-divine interactions. The challenge is to read this text in corporate and social terms. We can test our approach by asking, with John Ziesler, (*Paul’s Letter to the Romans*), is justification only about ‘being put right with God’ or is it equally about ‘entering the people of God’. (Ziesler, 18).

Romans 14:1-15:6 suggests that this book is about divisions between different ethnic groups. What role does baptism, as discussed in Romans 6:1b-11, play in overcoming division between groups and cultures with different ethnic and religious identity markers?

To contemporise, what does baptism say about the place of migrants and refugees amongst the people of God?

## Sermon idea

The band U2 has in recent years drawn attention to how Europe might respond to migration. Consider, for example two songs from their most recent (and fourteenth) album, *Songs of Experience*. The album debuted at no 1 on the Billboard charts, making U2 the first music group to gain a no. 1 album in four consecutive decades.

In the midst of commercial success, U2 has continued to engage social issues, singing no to human evil in the world. *Songs of Experience* is no exception, as U2 engage the evils around the European refugee crisis.

Evil is a strong word. Yet the Scriptures are clear. The greatest of God's commandments includes the loving of neighbour as yourself. Israel's laws emerged from the Exodus experience, of being refugees, fleeing the tyranny of Empire in Egypt. As Israel in history experienced God's protecting love as refugees, so now in everyday life humans should express God's love, including to refugees. Any less is to deny the Commandments, downplay a heritage and diminish one's future.

On *Songs of Experience*, U2 engage the evil of the refugee crisis in a mid-album bracket of two songs. A first song, *Summer of Love*, longs for flowers to grow amid "the rubble of Aleppo." The hope, 50 years after a drug-fuelled, music-drenched Summer of Love in San Francisco, is for peace to descend on the West Coast of Syria in the Middle East. A second song is *Red Flag Day*. The title suggests a continuation of the beach vibe of *Summer of Love*, while the lyrics remain focused on the consequences of Aleppo, Syria's largest city, becoming rubble.

The civil war in Syria resulted in a refugee crisis. For more than 1 million people in 2015, this meant crossing the Mediterranean Sea, seeking safety in Europe. Deaths at sea rose to record levels, with more than 1,200 people drowning in the month of April 2015. And so in *Red Flag Day*, U2 address this evil: "Not even news today; So many lost in the sea." This is *evil-as-disinterest*, as the lost and the least disappear from our 24-hour news cycle.

For U2, the response to this evil is located in one word. "The one word that the sea can't say, Is no, no, no, no." It is easy to imagine the impact of this line performed live, Bono holding a microphone out to an audience, inviting them to sing, "no, no, no, no." It is a powerful lyric. Water, the sea over which refugees travel, can never speak. But humans can. Humans can sing that one word, "No."

At the same time, having raised children, I am well aware of the limitations inherent in the simple word “No.” It is often the first word learnt by a child, easy on the lips of a two year old, teetering on a tantrum. So when U2 sing no, what exactly are they asking us as humans to do?

U2 conclude “Red Flag Day” with the provocative line “Baby let's get in the water.” It reminds me of the baptism of Jesus. It is the way Jesus begins ministry, by getting in the water.

So is the refugee crisis in fact an invitation for the Church to sing “no”, to respond to evil by entering the waters of baptism? Physically, in entering the Jordan River, Jesus expresses His obedience to God. This makes getting in the water the essential pattern of Christian discipleship, a way of saying “No” to our own plans and a “Yes” to God’s intentions. Historically, as Israel crossed the Jordan River, they were saying “Yes” to living God’s commandments no matter what country they found themselves living. This makes baptism an expression of “Yes” to loving our neighbour. Sacramentally, baptism and communion are woven together in the Exodus story of the Passover, which involves Israel entering the waters of the Red Sea. This makes getting in the water an expression of solidarity with all those who decide to say “No” to persecution and tyranny, whether in fleeing Egypt in history or the rubble of Aleppo today.

Hearing U2’s “Red Flag Day” and listening to the Gospel story of Jesus’ baptism offers ways to respond to the evil of refugee crisis. It fills the one word of “No” with Christian content. Every red flag swim in this summer of love becomes a singing of “no.” It means lobbying of Parliament to “Let them come.” It involves lighting candles as prayers of intercession for all those lost at sea, refusing to forget those forgotten by the news today. It means a welcome to the promised lands as we teach English classes and guide migrants around previously unfamiliar supermarket shopping.

Adapted from Steve Taylor, “Saying no: U2’s response to the evils of the refugee crisis.” *Zadok* 138 Autumn 2018, (4).

## **[Matthew 10:24-39](#)**

The passage begins with truth telling. Every secret is named; every truth is told; every hair is counted; every human is valued.

The passage works with hyperbole as a genre. The passages make more sense interpreted figuratively than literally. Jesus does not literally bring a sword. However He does invite

stark choices which will divide opinion. Hence taking up the cross is read in the context of the challenge of discipleship.

At the same time, in the “literal” reality for many young Christians in Africa and Asia, following Jesus does result in enormous familial pressure. This is closer to the reality of life for Matthew’s community. Note how in Mark 13:9 – you will be beaten in synagogues becomes in Matthew 10:17 – you will be flogged in their synagogues. Familial pressure is a reality. In such situations, the words of Jesus are both challenge and comfort. God pays attention to the sparrow – not one will fall. So God is paying attention to every disciple of Christ. This of course can be linked to the story of God paying attention to Ishmael in Genesis 21 and Psalm 86:16.

## Prayers

### **Prayer Approach to God** (using Genesis 21 and the question of Who is God?)

Hearing God,

Help us hear what You hear

Speaking God,

Help us receive what You say

Eye-opening God,

Help us see what You see

### **Thanksgiving** (drawing on Matthew 10:29-31)

God who cares

Watching every sparrow

Counts every hair on every head

Names every refugee in every camp

We gather knowing You are

Watching us

Counting us

Naming us

With that care, aware of Your attention

We express our thanks

**Confession** (using Genesis 21 and Romans 6)

God, in every other  
If we're honest,  
We see ourselves more clearly –  
Sometimes our warmth,  
Our welcome, our hospitality, our inclusion  
And for this we give You thanks, loving God

God, in every other,  
If we're honest,  
We sometimes see ourselves more clearly –  
Our coldness  
Toward those different  
And in this we confess our sin,  
Our sense of superiority, Our desire for monochrome identity, those like us

God  
Help us accept Your welcome of us  
And of every other,  
In one shared body, as forgiven, baptised children

**Intercession** (using John Holt, Stick by me, from *The Tide is High, Anthology 1962-79* (Trojan Records, 2001 <https://youtu.be/dMVMpqrCzY>), and imagining God singing to Hagar and Ishmael:

“Stick by me, I'll stick by you  
When you cry, I cry, too, oh oh  
Stick by me and I'll stick by you  
Remember my heart and my love belong to you, oh oh  
Stick by me, I'll stick by you”

**A possible prayer**

Lullaby God,  
We hear You soothe in the desert  
Singing to a crying child – Ishmael, Isaac climbing Mt Moriah and the Exodus children facing  
the Red Sea  
We hear Your comfort,  
Don't be afraid,  
When you cry, I cry too

Stick by me, I'll stick by you

Lamenting God,  
We hear You sing in the wilderness  
Hope for a grieving mother – Hagar, Hannah, Elizabeth  
We hear Your peace,  
Don't be afraid,  
When you cry, I cry too  
Stick by me, I'll stick by you

Serenading God of the Blues, who mourns in the wilderness  
For all families torn apart by bitterness, envy and strife  
When you cry, I cry too  
Remember my heart and my love belong to you,  
We hear Your heart,  
Don't be afraid,  
No one can tear us apart  
Stick by me, I'll stick by you

Harmonizing God  
For all churches facing a hospitality crisis  
Help us hear Your melody, harmonize with Your desert lullaby,  
May we open our arms  
To all those estranged in our community  
You've got a place in our heart, oh yeah  
Stick by us, as we stick by You  
Amen.

“Stick by me, I'll stick by you  
When you cry, I cry, too, oh oh  
Stick by me and I'll stick by you  
Remember my heart and my love belong to you, oh oh  
Stick by me, I'll stick by you.”

## Alternative Material

This material has been supplied by kind permission of Spill the Beans and allows you to explore the readings or theme of the service in creative ways that include everyone gathering for worship.

New material from Spill the Beans is provided in the latest issues available from their [website](#).

## Through the Season

On Trinity Sunday the focus was on Genesis 1:1-2:4a, the whole of Creation in one Sunday. Genesis gave us six days, how could it all be covered in one?

It's too much for us really, a bit mind blowing, so we suggest that you do something a little different each week and set up stations around the church so that the congregation can spend a little time at one, a few or all of the stations and reflect on Creation and the Trinitarian Creator of it all. The seven stations follow the Genesis pattern of seven days. A suggestion is that you then use the seven stations to spread the story over each Sunday for the following weeks.

You could start on 14 June with a single station or installation and then add each station as suggested on a later Sunday. In as many of the stations as possible, it is suggested that the simplest way is to build on what you already have in the church, for example the "water" station should be laid out around the font, where people are familiar with the sign of water. Each station has a small installation and an action. Remind people that there is no hurry and they can take their time to do the action, reflect and pray. Give lots of time for this during the service. If possible it would be good to have someone at each station to assist those who want to use the station.

## Day 5 – Birds (and Fish)

**Keywords:** valued, noticed, loved, never ignored

**Situation:** In the quietest, most ignored corner of church, often it is where the junk gathers, everyone has one.

**Installation:** Place flocks of little birds on the floor. See template for printing 4 per A4 page on p18 at the end of this document. There should be enough birds so that there are two for each person in the congregation.

**Action:** Write on one of the birds something that you value in yourself or in someone else. Take one to keep with you through the service. Either they could be taken home or brought back to the flock as part of an offering prayer.

## Prayers

### Call to worship

Come into the space of truth.  
Come into the space where  
all are loved and valued.  
Come gather together  
as confident, beloved people.  
Come gather before our God,  
Creator and protector of us all.

### Responses

Leader: God of the bold

**All: we come to you in confidence.**

Leader: God of unsure

**All: we come to you in confidence.**

Leader: God of the loud

**All: we come to you in confidence.**

Leader: God of the whisperer

**All: we come to you in confidence.**

Leader: In confidence we come

**All: the bold, the unsure,  
the loud and the whisperer,  
together we come to you.**

## **Sending**

**Leader:** Valued and loved,  
known and understood,  
forgiven and free,

**All: we go to serve God,  
to take up our crosses,  
to confront our fears.**

Leader: We go with good news  
stirring within our souls,  
our hearts and minds,

**All: and we shout it from the  
rooftops and treetops!**

Alternative Material ©2014 Spill the Beans Resource Team

## **Musical suggestions**

*You can hear samples of these suggestions in the 'Weekly Worship' section of <https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/>. This new online music resource will allow you to listen to and search the breadth of music available in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4).*

*You will find hidden gems and alternative arrangements to familiar songs that will inspire creativity and spark fresh curiosity about how we best use music in worship.*

Given the invitation by Weekly Worship to focus on the theme of Windrush, I have focused my attention on creative possibilities. The Windrush Generation transformed British arts and culture (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6grnrd>), bringing an explosion of dance, art, writing and music which would transform British culture. So in seeking to connect with contemporary issues raised by the theme of Windrush, some of the musical and spoken word suggestions are from contemporary culture. Images, songs, poetry and art can evoke strong emotions. Curating worship when using these resources will require conversational space for processing ideas and hearing diverse views. These resources are suggested with that in mind.

**Windrush music** – consider for example *The Tide is High, Anthology 1962-79* (Trojan Records, 2001) – John Holt encapsulates Jamaica’s sublime vocal tradition, moving in the mid-60s from rocksteady to passionate ballads with strong roots lyricism. He penned the much-covered ‘The Tide is High’ and the lovers’ anthem, ‘Stick by Me’. For the early Windrush generation, Holt was a nostalgic reminder of Jamaica’s outdoor blues sessions. The song *Stick By Me* is on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMVmPqmrCzY> and I used it to write one of the prayers above.

**U2** – The rock band U2 have recently engaged with the hospitality crisis, particularly in their Songs of Experience tour. You could also use the DVD U2: Innocence + Experience, Live in Paris. There is video footage of Syria during the song October. There is video footage of migrants seeking to enter UK during Zooropa. There is Scripture (at a rock concert!) and prayer in the transition between “Zooropa” and “Where the Streets have no name”. Before deciding to purchase the DVD, you can preview the images at <https://youtu.be/3aGE0NyI0Ao> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDxCn8QzXTI>

**Beyoncé** – U2 is now a band that might not connect with emerging generations. For another generation, recently Beyoncé, in *Lemonade*, has drawn on the work of Warsan Shire, the Kenya-born, Somali-British poet. Here is redemption – Beyoncé (written by Warsan Shire) lyrics. The video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGZczCdCDnc> is 3:29 in length. It begins talking about her grandmother, who “found healing, where it did not live.” The video transitions around 2:16, and the words, “So we’re gonna heal, we’re gonna start again, you’ve brought the orchestra, synchronised swimmers.” This language could be imagined on the lips of Hagar and perhaps even Hagar’s children and grandchildren.

**Warsan Shire** has been called the new voice of the refugee crisis. Here is an excerpt from his poem, “What They Did Yesterday Afternoon”. This could be used to begin prayers for others.

“later that night  
i held an atlas in my lap  
ran my fingers across the whole world  
and whispered  
where does it hurt?

it answered  
everywhere  
everywhere

everywhere  
everywhere.”

**Glasgow University art and poetry** – In seeking to redress the institution's historical links with racial *slavery*, the University has initiated fact-based *reporting* that offers public scrutiny and oversight.

**Art** – One result in an art exhibition, unveiled in the University chapel in August 2019. The title is distinctly liturgical – Call and Response: The University of Glasgow and slavery. The exhibition is available online:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/humanities/slavery/callandresponse/exhibition/>. Some images could be shown in worship, in the context of an explanation (call) and space for people to react (respond) to the histories of enslaved people could offer an art-based worship resource.

For example, a rare “Slave Bible” – only three first edition copies are left in the world. Any passage that might incite rebellion was removed – gone, for example, were references to the exodus of enslaved Israelites from Egypt.

God, we wonder what parts of the Bible we want to remove ....

**Jackie Kay poetry** – “Here’s the redress that’s long been owed.  
Here’s the first step on the road.”

Scots Makar [@JackieKayPoet](https://www.facebook.com/JackieKayPoet) performs an original poem written for the University of Glasgow at <https://www.facebook.com/UofGlasgow/posts/2800983769921320/>

- CH4 187 – “There’s A Wideness in God’s Mercy” – themes from Psalm 86
- CH4 239 – “When Your Father Made the World” – themes from the Gospel reading in Matthew
- CH4 533 – “Will You Come and Follow Me” – themes from the Gospel reading in Matthew
- CH4 635 – “We Know That Christ is Raised and Dies No More” – themes from Romans reading and of Baptism

- CH4 785/786 – words from the Aaronic blessing
- “May the Lord Bless You”, by Yvonne Lyon – another version of the Aaronic blessing. Words, music and a recording can be found online:  
<https://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/music/contemporary/new-music/may-lord-bless-you>

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