

## **Fifth Sunday after Pentecost – Year B**

### **Sunday 23 June 2024 – Sanctuary Sunday**

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank writers approached by Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees for their thoughts on the fifth 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.

An archive of resources for daily worship can be found on the Sanctuary First website:  
<https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/daily-worship>

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

Today is Sanctuary Sunday (also called Refugee Sunday), a day when churches around the world remember and pray for refugees and displaced people. The UN estimates there are over 110 million displaced people around the globe, the highest number in human history. Behind that unthinkably large number are human stories: stories of individual people forced from their homes by war, disasters, and persecution. Some of those stories have led people to seek sanctuary in Scotland, making new homes and starting new lives.

On Sanctuary Sunday we look to the Scriptures and reflect on how our faith calls us to respond to the needs of refugees, both around the world and living in our communities. The Bible is full of stories of people on the move. Joseph offered his father and brothers sanctuary in Egypt when their homeland was ravaged by famine, then 400 years later Moses lead that same people out of Egypt to freedom and a new land. Ruth left her home as a penniless widow and worked as a migrant labourer in Bethlehem. And of course, Mary and Joseph fled the violent persecution of Herod, seeking asylum once more in Egypt. Throughout all these stories we see a God who cares for the exile and the stranger.

Our readings today focus not just on the comfort that comes from knowing that God is with us through difficult times, but also the challenge to stand up to injustice where we see it. From terrifying storms to looming giants, these readings do not shy away from adversity, yet they are rooted in hope.

I would like to thank all of the contributors to this resource:

- Jo Love and Catriona Milligan, drawing on insights from Gorbals congregation and community. Catriona is Community Development Worker at Gorbals Parish Church. Jo is Worship Coordinator; one strand of her work as a member of the Wild Goose Resource Group, Iona Community.
- Anna-Claar Thomasson-Rosingh, an Episcopalian priest who worked as the chaplain at Dungavel Immigration Detention Centre before she became the Director of Studies of the Scottish Episcopal Institute. She still volunteers regularly at Dungavel.
- Members of the Salaam team at Edinburgh City Mission. Edinburgh City Mission partners with local churches to facilitate and strengthen mission across Edinburgh. Salaam (Arabic for 'peace') is a ministry that provides care and support for asylum seekers and refugees, offering befriending, conversation cafés, weekend clubs and more.

- Fiona Kendall, a mission partner shared by the Church of Scotland, Methodist Church in Britain and Global Ministries (UCC/Disciples of Christ). She is seconded to the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) where she works within its Mediterranean Hope migrant and refugee programme. There, her primary focus is policy and advocacy in the field of safe passage. Fiona is also Moderator of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME).

They have each used their experiences of working with, and building community alongside refugees to reflect on the scripture and draw out what it has to say to all of us this Sanctuary Sunday. They have taken seriously Jesus' challenge to welcome the stranger and love all of our neighbours as ourselves. There are many more examples of churches and faith groups who support refugees and advocate for all those seeking sanctuary.

It is my deep hope that this Sanctuary Sunday you will reflect on how your church can offer support to refugees and people seeking sanctuary. This could be through practical care, prayer, or advocacy. Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees exists to empower faith groups to support refugees and to advocate for sanctuary. If you would like to know more or access additional resources please visit our [website](#).

Additionally, if you have used these resources and marked Sanctuary Sunday please do be in [contact](#), I would love to connect and hear about how your church is engaging with these issues.

*David Moodie, Co-ordinator, Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees*

## **[1 Samuel 17:32-49](#)**

*This reflection was prepared by the worship team at Gorbals Parish Church, drawing on their experience working with New Scots in the Gorbals community. The church has recently been advocating on behalf of Kaltouma Haroun Ibrahim, a refugee seeking to be reunited with her family. [Read more here](#).*

How many of us, since our own childhoods, have heard and loved how David took his pocketful of pebbles and his homemade sling, and showed a Shrek-sized enemy that victory cannot be assumed just because you're bigger, stronger, scarier, and have won the fight so many times before?

Where is this conflict still playing out, and does it offer insight if we draw any parallels with the experiences of people seeking refuge and asylum today? Have we wished we could see any David, when up against any Goliath, get the same result as the shepherd boy of long

ago? How tempting to wish that all stories of one person, one family, seeking asylum in the face of the 'giants' of unjust laws, international conflict, persecution, hostile immigration systems, could pan out like this tale does.

David's chances look so slim. He is young, small, inexperienced. His confidence that he can take on Goliath sounds equally foolish as brave. Does he not understand the disparity of age, size, fighting skill? He leans on his track record against wild animals and the rescues from their ferocious attacks he has already known. How many metaphorical lions and bears are met as people are forced to flee for their lives – border guards, smugglers, unseaworthy boats, bribes to pay, bureaucracy to wade through?

David is given full armour, the best known, most conventional and well-tested means of protection, to afford him any chance of surviving. But it is too unfamiliar, too unwieldy. He cannot handle what would equip a well-trained warrior; one size does not fit all adult soldiers and boy shepherds.

Are there parallels here? How do laws, policies, systems fail to be fit for each individual case; fail to adequately protect each person in their unique situation?

Looking at the swift end point of the David and Goliath encounter, this polarised, two-dimensional struggle is far from a satisfying resolution, as it raises so many questions for our world. Don't the Goliaths have family who mourn them too? Where is the David whose case reaches a favourable outcome without months or years of complex negotiation, anxious waiting and lack of progress? Every David whose case eventually does reach a good outcome, cannot simply settle into a comfortable existence from there on, but has many challenges of integration ahead.

David's youthful victory did not win the peace. Israelites and Philistines continued to be enemies. David grew up to become what he had slain. His reputation as the greatest of ancient Israel's kings is primarily a fame for his military prowess and the thousands of enemies slaughtered in the name of achieving peace. In the eyes of many, David probably looked like another Goliath. Wearing full armour, wielding a sword with devastating accuracy. Horrific or heroic, depending whose side you were on.

The challenge to hostility and the practice of hospitality are loud absences in this story. What can we learn about how to refuse both swords and stones; refuse that kneejerk reaction of answering the threat of destruction with more destruction?

What would it have taken for both tribes to discover in each other their true warmth and humanity? What was needed to come to regard each other as sheltering company? How about imaginatively rewriting this encounter from the same starting point but taking a truly courageous route to a society all could rely on as safe?

*Jo Love and Catriona Milligan (Gorbals Parish Church)*

## **Psalm 9:9-20**

*This reflection was written in collaboration with people being held in detention at the Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre.*

The “oppressed” in the first verse of this reading are “crushed”. The Hebrew word *dak* is rather unusual, found only four times in the Psalms and Proverbs. To be detained in an Immigration Removal Centre is crushing in a rather unusual way. At the stroke of the pen of a relatively junior civil servant, detainees find themselves locked up, with no idea for how long and sometimes no idea why. “I don’t belong here,” is a phrase I often hear in Dungavel. They wonder: will it be a few days, a few weeks, a few months, or maybe years? This is so cruel, so crushing that internationally we call it torture; in Britain it is just part of signalling how strict we are on immigration. A lot of people do not even know it happens.

I spoke about Psalm 9 with a small group of men detained in Dungavel. For them the psalm feels far away. They feel forsaken, however much they seek God (v10). They find it so hard to trust anyone. The phrase, “gates of death” (v13) is one they recognise, as most of them have struggled with suicidal thoughts and have been on ‘constant watch’ for their safety while in detention. This place is for them the gate of death. They wonder whether God will ever “lift them up” – an immediate symbol for freedom. The Psalmist may feel delivered (v14), they do not. They do admire him (or her) for sticking with God amid trouble and this is a real challenge to them.

Then we come to the verses on judgment. All three of the men I spoke to are ex-offenders and not sure whether they just got stuck in a net of their own making (v15). Who are the wicked? We have all forgotten God from time to time – who hasn’t (v17)? The lines between us and them; the goodies and the baddies; the immigrant and the Home Office are not clear cut. They are both victim and perpetrator; so am I. Colluding with all the ‘safety’ measures in place to have this conversation, I have become complicit in the torture I so despise. We try to navigate the psalm both identifying with “the wicked” (v16), “the nations” (v15) and with the “needy” (v18).

The last verse comes as such a relief. All of us know so very deeply that we are only human and that God is God. That judgment is God revealing Godself (v16) and us becoming aware of our humanity (v20). This judgment sounds indeed like hope and like a stronghold. There is awe and there is longing for God to be gracious, to rise up, to deliver. There is longing for the acknowledgement of our common humanity to transform the particular oppression of these men and the systems in which they got caught.

*Rev. Dr ACA Thomasson-Rosingh (volunteer chaplain, Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre)*

## **2 Corinthians 6:1-13**

*This reflection was written by the Salaam team of Edinburgh City Mission, based on their experiences providing support for asylum seekers and refugees in Edinburgh.*

Through the work of Salaam, we have had the heart-breaking honour to meet New Scots who have had to leave their home countries and move to Edinburgh in search of safety and a more hopeful future. As we read this passage, the similarities are striking between Paul's experiences and what people who have been displaced face: troubles, hardships, distresses, imprisonment, hunger, sorrow, dishonour, being unknown, etc.

In this letter to the Church in Corinth, Paul is reminding his fellow believers of the 'upside-down-ness' of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is in the hidden, in the small, and in the beauty of sacrificial love. This full-of-Grace Kingdom is provocatively and counterculturally different from the kingdom of the world – and it is imminently here (v1). Perhaps you, like us and like our brothers and sisters in Corinth, can at times be blinded by status, appearances, comfort and the power that the world values. Paul and our New Scot neighbours teach us to look beneath the outward appearances and the 'single story narrative' trap. They invite us to examine our hearts and consider how we are living: are we following the way of Jesus or the way of the world? Are we looking beyond appearances to the beauty of the image of God in all of us?

In fairness to our anxious hearts, we are living through difficult and uncertain times. In the face of scarcity, it is very tempting to shut down, withdraw or escape. Yet Paul invites us to follow Jesus into an expansive life of grace, faith and love. Eugene Peterson reflects this invitation to countercultural, defiant living in The Message translation of verses 11-13:

“Dear, dear Corinthians, I can't tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your



lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way. I'm speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!"

Although it is hard to live with open hearts, God has equipped us with everything we need. God has given us Jesus, who has given us new life through His life, death and resurrection. We also have God's Spirit, who leads us into holiness. Finally, we have each other (including our New Scot friends), to encourage us and challenge us to continue to pursue the way of Love.

- What does it mean for you to live expansively?
- What are your values? Are they aligned with Kingdom values?
- What things do you learn from your New Scot neighbours? How is your life richer from having them in your life?
- As you consider this, what might God be inviting you to do?

*Salaam Team (Edinburgh City Mission)*

## [Mark 4:35-41](#)

*This reflection was informed by Fiona's experience working on Lampedusa, an Italian island and one of the main arrival points for boats carrying migrants to Europe.*

The experiences we have can lead us to view Bible readings through a different lens. Now six years into working alongside Mediterranean Hope, a team within the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy whose whole focus is people on the move, my reading of this passage has sharpened. The mortal danger faced by those who journey in barely seaworthy vessels has become a daily reality. Having now seen for myself crude boats and exhausted souls who arrive on Lampedusa, I have a far keener sense of the panic attributed to the Disciples as their vulnerability to the elements becomes evident.

Extreme vulnerability. Asylum seekers are not only at the mercy of the weather and the waves. Their modest ambition to reach a place of safety is not within their gift to realise, for in truth, they are entirely at the mercy of the decisions of others: those who manage borders; those who make and implement asylum policy; those who weaponize migration for political gain; those whose genuine fear of 'the other' – or of poverty – contributes to an atmosphere of casual racism and hostility to migrants.

Few of us experience such vulnerability. Yet most of us know, at some level, what it is to feel terror, anxiety and desperation. How often, in these circumstances, might we too have voiced the Disciples' accusation: "Teacher, don't you care..."? Yet, in the passage, when



challenged, Christ does not confine Himself to simple reassurances. He dismantles the storm entirely and, in doing so, reminds us how far beyond our imagination His power goes. We are confined by our own horizons. Jesus smashes them open.

Is it too much to permit Him to do this in our lives? This passage invites us to trust God completely and, in so doing, to see our fears entirely dismantled. It may also be inviting us to consider what we, as God's hands and feet, are doing to dismantle the fears and vulnerabilities of those around us. For, in lifting the veil of fear, faith is revealed.

*Fiona Kendall (European & Legal Affairs Advisor at FCEI-Mediterranean Hope)*

## Sermon ideas

Whichever of our four passages you are preaching from, I would encourage you to use this Sanctuary Sunday as an opportunity to weave in the experiences and perspectives of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. On themed Sundays like these, I know there can be a worry about imposing ideas onto the text. However, as our four contributors have well demonstrated, these passages are full of resonances with the refugee experience.

Many refugees know from first-hand experience exactly what it is like to be caught at sea in a storm, praying to make it to shore. Most, like the Psalmist, will have raised the "cry of affliction" in response to the situation in their country of origin. Some will be reading Paul's description of imprisonment from the confines of a detention facility. And while giants are rare, refugees will recognise the mocking words of Goliath echoed in the words used to taunt and humiliate them. The words from 2 Corinthians 6:8: "We are treated as imposters, and yet are true;" could have come straight from the lips of a person seeking asylum.

*Note: These are important themes to draw out in your sermon, but as you do please be mindful that some of the people listening may have had first-hand experiences of these traumas, so please do so with sensitivity.*

Our scripture readings do not deny the reality of adversity. They acknowledge that life often brings hardships. Yet they remain hopeful because through it all God is with us. For all of us, refugee and non-refugee alike, it can be easy to feel alone when we are suffering. But God does not forget the cry of the afflicted. God is our stronghold in times of trouble (Ps 9:9), as Paul wrote: "See, now is the day of salvation!". These words can bring us comfort even as winds and waves rise around us. The storm may be raging, but Jesus is there in the boat with us.

But beyond simple comfort, our passages also contain a challenge to act. When all others cowered before Goliath, one shepherd boy refused to back down. His enemies mocked him and his friends doubted he was up to it, but David would not be deterred. He stood before the giant with nothing but pebbles and prayers and achieved the impossible: he slew the giant.

For refugees and the people who seek to support them, the barriers can feel intractable. Around the world brutal wars, rising intolerance and the creeping effects of a changing climate are forcing millions to flee their homes. Meanwhile in our country there is a growing wave of anti-migrant anger, stoked by political actors who are happy to scapegoat society's problems on the outsider. In the face of these daunting challenges it can be tempting to feel powerless, like nothing we can do could ever make a difference.

But our faith should give us courage, courage to stand up for what is just and right! Even when the odds are against us, we can face down the Goliaths in our world. It will not always be easy, we will almost certainly face pushback and disappointment, yet we keep going in faith. In Corinth, Paul faced every barrier imaginable – hunger, beatings, sleepless nights – but in faith he found the courage to keep going with an open heart, full of love (2 Cor 6:11).

So, this Sanctuary Sunday I pray that your preaching reminds people that God's love is available to all those who feel rocked by life's waves. It is a stronghold for all who are oppressed. But I also pray you can inspire people to stand shoulder to shoulder in solidarity with people seeking sanctuary. May God bless you with an open heart and the courage to speak up for justice.

*David Moodie (Co-ordinator of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees)*

## Prayers

All prayers are taken from the [God With Us](#) resource unless otherwise stated.

### **Prayer of Approach** (*Jo Love*)

Hospitable God, You enfold us;  
Compassionate Jesus, You uphold us;  
Advocating Spirit, You are the wind at our backs.  
Trinity of Love,  
because of You, the universe exists  
in all its unfathomable depths,  
in all its meticulous detail.  
What an astonishing thing to do!

What a labour of love!

Thank You for giving us a place in Your creation,  
for making each one of us, an unrepeatable wonder,  
and setting us on this earth in this time.

When we recognise Your presence, life is better.

When we call on Your help and spend time with You, life is better.

When You break in on our consciousness  
with Your timely, gentle, surprising, funny, startling ways of saying hello,  
life is better.

Thank You God for always coming to meet us where we are,  
at our best, at our worst, in ordinariness, in crisis,  
You welcome us and offer help and healing.

So will You silence any fears that we don't deserve Your love,  
take away any guilt from mistakes we have made,  
bring us close to You,  
cheer us up and cheer us on.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession** (*Veronique, St. Rollox, a refugee from the DRC*)

Heavenly Father,

I bow my heart to You and pray.

I give You thanks for all You've done.

Thank You for being my refuge and my strength.

Thank You for Your goodness in my life.

When I wake each morning,

I praise Your name.

I give thanks to You that no matter what the circumstances,

I can count on You to shelter me

And to give me strength.

Almighty God,

Merciful Father,

I, a poor miserable sinner,

I confess to You all my sins and iniquities,  
those known and unknown.

I'm not perfect

and I fall short every day of my life.

Thank You for Your mercy

In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Intercessions**

God of family,  
we bring before You the parents who are weeping and lamenting,  
who are waiting for their children,  
whose trace is lost in the sea, in the desert, on railway tracks, in shipping containers and  
uncertainty:  
men, women and children who had escaped from the war zones,  
the famine and poverty of this world,  
with the hope for a better, safer life.

God of life,  
we bring before You our lament for the dead, stranded at the borders of safety,  
who died fleeing through deserts, over mountains and seas.  
We call to You and join in the cry of all those who sought justice  
and a better life for themselves and their children and perished in the process.

God of justice,  
we bring before You political leaders, advisers and decision-makers  
who hold the fate of others in their hands.  
Make them aware of the causes of migration and flight.  
Keep their consciences alive so that refugees are offered protection and dignity.  
Let them agree rules of residence that are based on human rights and guided by solidarity  
and compassion.

God of peace,  
give us the strength to be witnesses of the suffering of the world and fill us with the fire of  
Your spirit  
to renew our efforts to serve those in need  
and give us the grace to welcome, learn and share our lives  
with people who come to live in our communities. Amen.

### **Litany of Justice**

Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me food."  
Made in the Image of God,  
**We see the face of Christ in all.**

Jesus said, "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink."  
Made in the Image of God,

**We see the face of Christ in all.**

Jesus said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

Made in the Image of God,

**We see the face of Christ in all.**

Jesus said, "I was naked and you gave me clothing."

Made in the Image of God,

**We see the face of Christ in all.**

Jesus said, "I was sick and you took care of me."

Made in the Image of God,

**We see the face of Christ in all.**

Jesus said, "I was in prison and you visited me."

Made in the Image of God,

**We see the face of Christ in all.**

Jesus said, "In as much as you did to one of those considered to the least important, you did it to me."

Made in the Image of God,

**We see the face of Christ in all. We go from here to see and serve Christ in all.**

**Amen.**

**Blessing** (*Fiona Kendall*)

May the storms within and around you be stilled;

May you recall the depth of God's love

And the breadth of God's power;

And may you, too, bring calm to all you meet.

Amen.

## **Musical suggestions**

*God Welcomes All* – the new supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition launches on 19 May 2024. The book is available to order from

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

This exciting new collection features over 200 hymns and songs in a wide range of styles by writers from Scotland and around the world.

It will be released as full music version and words only books; and in due course digital resources including expansion of the existing Church of Scotland music website; streaming functions and further information on each song; backing tracks; and lyric videos.

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.

- CH4 166 – “Lord of all hopefulness”
- CH4 168 – “God weeps at love withheld”
- CH4 195 – “Here to the house of God we come” (alternative tunes: Abingdon, Melita)
- CH4 198 – “Let us build a house where love can dwell”
- CH4 250 – “Sent by the Lord am I”
- CH4 251 – “I, the Lord of sea and sky”
- CH4 253 – “Inspired by love and anger”
- CH4 258 – “When the hungry who have nothing share with strangers”
- CH4 259 – “Beauty for brokenness”
- CH4 265 – “Pray for a world where every child”
- CH4 291 – “When out of poverty is born” (Christmas Carol)
- CH4 360 – “Jesus Christ is waiting”
- CH4 362 – “Heaven shall not wait”
- CH4 465 – “Be thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart”
- CH4 543 – “Longing for light, we wait in darkness”
- CH4 544 – “When I needed a neighbour, were you there”
- CH4 566 – “When I receive the peace of Christ”
- CH4 624 – “In Christ there is no east or west”
- CH4 694 – “Brother, sister, let me serve you”
- CH4 706 – “For the healing of the nations” (alternative tunes: Westminster Abbey, Cwm Rhondda)

## 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

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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