



Worship at Home—Sunday 5 September 2021

Call to Worship

Merciful Lord
You created the universe out of love
We live only by Your grace and love
In Your image and likeness,
You created us to form relationships with others.

With thankful hearts, we worship You

Opening Prayer

God, our God

This morning we gather to worship You.

We come together, each of us from our own lives,
with our own thoughts, and hopes, and worries.

Let us bring our hearts, with all that weighs on them, before You this morning in worship.

And unburden us, do not let us be weighed down,

but instead send Your Spirit anew among us, and clear in our hearts and minds a space to focus on You
and our relationship with You.

For we come, thirsty—longing for refreshment.

For we come hungry—longing for sustenance.

We come as Your children: and long to know Your love.

You restore us anew, and shape us in Your ways.

in this quiet and unlaboured time—

Speak to our souls

Gives us hearts to know Your presence, not just today,

but every day in our walk with You,

and that in our worship we will remember Your constancy in every moment of our lives.

You are the God who freely loves.

You have no needs or requirements; the whole universe belongs to You:

yet as infinite, majestic and glorious God:

You concern Yourself with us.

You care for us.

You know us.

When we make mistakes you are the one who can forgive us
Help us to come before your unconditional, infinite love and confess openly our failings;
when we have been unkind, unhelpful or unthoughtful
May you forgive us, uplift us, and remind us once more
You love each of us eternally: enfold us into Your embrace;

All this we pray, for the sake and in the name of Your son Jesus Christ

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

The Scriptures

1st Kings 17:8-16

Then the word of the LORD came to him: “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.” So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”

“As surely as the LORD your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.’”

She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.



Mark 12: 38-44

Warning Against the Teachers of the Law

As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

The Widow’s Offering

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.



Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

Sermon

This woman is one of the nameless saints in the Gospel of Mark. We don’t know much about her. Was she old or young? We don’t know where she lived. Mark gives us only three details about her: she was a widow; she was poor; and she gave everything she had as a gift of worship.

But the poor widow was not the only person Jesus saw going into the temple courts that day. He watched the scribes, the social elite who had reserved pews in the synagogue. William Barclay describes them as “the experts in the law” and these were men who walked about in flowing robes and assumed the places of highest honour. They were members of the finest clubs in town and were able to contribute lavishly. But the other side of this picture paints them as “slum landlords”—the word of the text says, “they devour widows houses.” That is quite a harsh accusation—however some biblical scholars agree that it is very possible that Jesus knew this poor widow and knew further why she was poor. All she could muster to give to the temple treasury was the equivalent of a few pence—giving to God the cost of a meal, a story very reminiscent of Elija’s encounter with the poor widow and her son who were also poor and malnourished.

It is important to note that Jesus was not saying this to the public. This was a private lesson he was using to try to teach his disciples something important. Earlier in Mark 12, Jesus was asked by a teacher of the Law “What is the greatest commandment?” He replied Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and love your neighbour as you love yourself.” (Mark 12: 30-31)

And it is as if Jesus points out the widow to his disciples as an example of this kind of devotion.

Lamar Williamson explains that Mark, the author of this gospel is using this story as an overture to Jesus' passion. This scene in front of the temple is the last scene before Jesus' angry temple outburst which leads to the crucifixion.

The teaching emerges when Jesus was getting infuriated by the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees in the temple—Jesus contrasts her small gift with the gifts of those who were ostentatiously placing large sums of money merely as public gestures. Jesus teaches his disciples to beware of such experts with their flowing robes who pray at length to keep up their image.

The widow is often hailed as a heroine for her generosity despite her circumstances. Lamar Williamson wants us to understand that Jesus is teaching his disciples about costly sacrifice as a means of foreshadowing that he himself would soon give himself up entirely for the sake of the world. He himself is the great example of total complete self-giving love and devotion.

I think it was Winston Churchill who said, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

What is money we may ask—they say money makes the world go round. Well, in some ways it does. It is at the heart of every national budget. During this Pandemic so much discourse was not about the virus but about furlough schemes and rent assistance and that is because the virus created immense financial implications.

I know that in Scotland we often get embarrassed to talk about money. Unlike the temple scribes, the Scots are not ostentatious by nature. That said, the Scots have an unfair reputation for being un-generous, or even stingy, and I know that is NOT true in Currie. But it is something that can make us laugh. I like the story of the rural church—and when the offering plate came back to the minister there was so little money in it, that the minister simply prayed, "Dear God we are just thankful that the offering plate was returned safely."

Certainly, Presbyterians have been characterised down the years as being money focused. There is a story of a new town that was being built. The town planner considered all the places of worship that the town needed and wanted to place them in locations appropriate for their ministry. So he built the Methodist Church next to the fire department because of their fiery preaching. He placed the Baptist Church next to the river. He noticed that the Episcopalians like to wear robes and finery so he placed their church next to the Haberdashery store. When it came to the Presbyterian Church, he thought for a bit and decided the most suitable location was half-way between the bank and the ice-house. (Hence our nickname the frozen chosen).

Another story is told of an athlete who stood before an audience with an orange in his right hand. His strength was so great that the juice from the orange just flowed out into a container until at last, the orange was reduced to shrivelled peel. By way of challenge, the athlete asked if anyone wanted to come forward and he offered a prize to be given if anyone in the audience could obtain even one drop from an orange. Amazingly, a very small, frail looking man in a suit stepped forward and the crowd began to laugh. The little man took the orange in his hand and squeezed and squeezed and squeezed until finally two small drops fell into the container. The crowd gasped and cheered. "How did you develop such strength?" the athlete asked "Easy", the chap replied "I am the treasurer of a Presbytery".

Simply, although money is an awkward subject to talk about at times, one of the reasons I am so excited about this National Giving Day is because it is a one-off opportunity. It is not often that we get a one-off opportunity like this and the timing is very meaningful for two reasons. Firstly because this is the season of HARVEST AND THE WEEKEND THAT WE HOLD OUR NATIONAL GIVING EVENT WILL BE the same weekend as our HARVEST CELEBRATION (25th and 26th September).

Just as the seeds are planted and the crops grow and the trees bear fruit, this is our chance to plant new seeds that will bear fruit again—Fruits of the Kingdom. Secondly, the timing is key because we are just beginning to make baby steps to crawl out of Covid. So many of us have been so fed up and down, and we are all just yearning to leap out of lockdown life. This is a perfect opportunity for us to raise funds to get our Kirk and community back on its feet, and not just ‘back on our feet’ but up and running and going again and all that is given will be a big help to enable us to care, to create, to show compassion and commitment and to grow new life that bears fruit.

Folk on session ask “well what shall we spend the money on?” The key factor here is that we—all of us, for once, will be allowed to choose and decide together what to spend the money on.

That is why this opportunity is so important and decisive. I know from my time away that a good music ministry can be a great asset to a community and church. We have wonderful Michael and fantastic local choirs nearby. There is much musical talent about—I would love to use some money to build up our ministry of music—the idea of a 9am family service with a praise band, has been aired, well that would need some good kit—we could set up a few music scholarships of £500 per year to some students at Heriot Watt to help us with a music ministry. That model works well elsewhere, and students who are hard up often enjoy being part of a church community. Music is always a ministry in itself. Perhaps that is something that would interest you?

Money that comes in can help to build up Heather’s ministry to the young. Perhaps we could use the money to seed fund a youth trip. We can use money to help support The Boys’ Brigade and the Dementia Pentland ministries too. The money does not have to all stay in the Kirk. I am keen this Harvest season to support the Trinity Food Bank again and the Currie Community Food Project that has helped so many families with economic troubles caused by Covid.

Currie, Balerno and Juniper Green have welcomed many refugees from Syria and I know that shortly there will be at least 50 families from Afghanistan settling in our area and so we can use our resources to welcome and support them—in the past we have created festive meals and food hampers for refugees.

If you want to use your imaginations, please do. If I seem too excited, I apologise. I have had a miserable lockdown life too and I am so energised to be back with you all. One person—a good and trusted friend who has an ear to the ground said to me recently, “some people seem to think you have been in America too long and you need to tone down your positivity, because you sound too much like a cheerleader and we’re not like that in Scotland.” My dad said to me, well, if they don’t like your enthusiasm, tell them ‘blame God’ because, Dad said, Enthusiasm comes from Enthusiasmos which means, “full of the Spirit”. And so I cannot apologise for my excitement. It has been so, so hard for everyone and finally, finally we can meet face to face, open our Kirk and halls. Finally. Halleluia, we can praise God in person. Here is another fun story I came across from a chap. Named Billy Strayhorn.

A businessman who needed millions of dollars to clinch an important deal went to the temple to pray for the money. By chance he sat next to a man who was praying for \$100 to pay an urgent debt.

The businessman took out his wallet and pressed \$100 into the other man's hand. Overjoyed, the man got up and left the temple. The businessman then closed his eyes and prayed: "And now, Lord, that I have your undivided attention . . ."

It is all in good fun. As we approach this National Giving Day, let us make it fun and enjoy not just this opportunity to be generous but to engage in fellowship and creativity and to ask God to help us seek our way forward as we re-engage with one another in our mission to serve and create disciples with the Good News we have to share.

Prayer of Intercession

Loving and gracious God,
we come before You to give thanks for what You have done for us.
We celebrate Your Name and offer You praise because of Your Holiness,
yet You are a living God in whom we trust and believe.
We thank You, God, for the rainy season and for health.

Oh God, we thank You for the life we have,
for the air we breathe
and for our relationships with those who are both close and far away.
We thank You for Your infinite goodness,
which deepens our trust in You.

We pray for our broken world and for peace.
We pray for the children of all nations,
for men and women longing to be reunited with their families.
we pray for the refugees who will come and live here.
Help us to welcome them to our community.
We pray for all those caught up and have been affected by the forest fires and floods.

We pray for the removal of all types of barriers which stunt or destroy relationships.
We pray for new ways to create closer relationships with God and others.
We pray for all nations, churches and faith-based organisations,
to encourage and empower us all.
Bless our local schools, and all the children, teachers and staff
We ask you to bless us and energise us
as we reopen and emerge from Covid

Lord God in all we do and say, help us
to build loving and supportive relationships
that reflect the image and likeness of God
Help us to be faithful and kind, loving, generous and grateful Amen.

Blessing

May the Lord of strong and stable relationships
help you to live wisely and in peace.

May the Son guide your paths.

May the Holy Spirit lead you into wisdom.

Amen

If you plan to attend the Kirk please let Nina know by phoning or emailing her between 10 am and 12.30 pm on Thursday—this is for “track and trace”.

Current regulations require:

- ◆ face masks must still be worn.
- ◆ worship still requires that we stick to the one-metre social distance rule.
- ◆ There will be sanitizing stations.

Kirk Contacts

Minister: Rev Dr Easter Smart—Tel: 449 4719 email: esmart@churchofscotland.org.uk

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Website: [//www.curriekirk.org/](http://www.curriekirk.org/) or [//www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/](https://www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/)

All sermons from Currie Kirk can be found on the Kirk’s website and on YouTube—search Currie Kirk



Currie Kirk Guild

I have much pleasure in announcing that the Guild will be starting again this Tuesday 7 September at 10 am. Our speaker will be Canon Mike Parker who will be speaking on “Leaping off the Page”.

All attendees must wear masks and 1m social distancing will be in place. You will be met and directed to a seat. Track and trace details have to be taken.

Annual subs are £13 and payment per meeting remains at £2. Please write a cheque for £15 payable to Currie Kirk Guild or put the exact money in an envelope with your name on it.

New members are always welcome and, as we move out of lockdown, you might be looking for a fresh interest. The Guild is not just for the fairer sex—men can also join. Visitors pay £3 per meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact me on 0131-466-3472 or email elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk

Louise Lamont
Guild President