

## **MORNING SERVICE**

Sunday 24 January 2010, Kilcalmonell, linked with Killean and Kilchenzie

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany*

*preacher: Rev Martin Grashoff*

*hymns: Church Hymnary. Fourth Edition (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005)*

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### **Welcome & Intimations**

**Opening Hymn** : 'Take my life, Lord let it be' (CH 502)

### **Children's Talk**

**Children's Hymn** : 'Lord I pray' (CH 541)

### **Prayer & Lord's Prayer**

God of heaven and earth,  
we thank you for this earth –  
for the sea and the hills,  
for animals and people,  
for lovely cakes and a cup of tea;  
for days off and even for school.  
We praise you for all goodness  
you have given to us.

We also thank you, O God,  
for your great heaven –  
is it the dark sky with stars we see at night?  
is it the blue sky with sunlight all around?  
is it a place we cannot see?  
or is it something deep inside ourselves?  
We don't really know,  
but we thank you, O God,  
that heaven and earth belong together.

We pray today, God of heaven and earth,  
for all people in Haiti,  
old and young and in between,  
for whom the earth was shaking  
and the heaven seemed to fall upon them;  
we pray for all those who try to help them,  
coming from Haiti, Brazil, France and Mexico,  
America, Belgium, Israel and The Netherlands,  
and many more.  
And we also pray  
that the world will not forget Haiti,

and really help to rebuild this country  
in the years to come.  
God in your mercy,  
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

And now as Jesus taught us, we pray:  
Our Father...  
...Amen.

**Readings** : Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (*English Standard Version*) & Luke 4:14-21 (*Good News Bible*)

**Hymn** : 'Spirit of God' (CH 495 – *tune: Woodlands = CH 286*)

### **Sermon**

*[hang saltires from lectern/pulpit]*

Today is a special day: it is exactly one year ago that we started in Kintyre. So: flags out!

We can still see ourselves getting off the bus for a first meeting with the Nominating Committee. From the very start it felt right. We can still see the faces, we still remember the bakings. It was all lovely and welcoming. And of course we remember the sea. It was a sunny day. Everything felt very right and that was the wonderful start we made.

Once we moved into the manse one of the first things we had to learn was that very few houses have numbers. Virtually all houses have names. That was confusing for those who were delivering things we had ordered. We have seen more than one van desperately driving up and down the road, trying to locate 'The Manse'. One coming from far south did not even know what a manse was.

Somebody had obviously thought about this and had given us Ordnance Survey maps to help us find all these houses with names we could not pronounce, because they were in Gaelic. That was very helpful. (Contrary to what some may think: I am not yet a great believer in satnavs – I prefer decent maps.)

With the roll keepers I waded through all the names of people and houses. And Agnes Stewart was a great help too. Names are important. Behind each name sign I found a different place. Houses have an identity of their own and it's good to give them names rather than numbers.

Of course we had no choice about the name of our house. It just is The Manse. We still have to make a proper name sign (especially since the sheet we made was blown away this week), so all our guests and visitors can find us.

Soon we settled in. You all made that easy for us. You have been very welcoming and

you did not push us into anything. At the induction I was told that things move slowly in Kintyre, but the most important thing is that they actually do move.

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We still have the same feeling we had at the very start: it feels very right to be in Kintyre.

Through the year we learned to know each other better. As one can expect that included bits of grinding and even clashing. You always hope that will not happen, but of course it does.

I readily admit that I have made mistakes. I sometimes misunderstood people's expectations. I am still finding the style of worship that helps this congregation best forward. Sometimes I found I was still thinking a bit too Dutch. I don't think it has led to any real disasters, and I am eager to learn. It really helps if you make comments – as someone did this week, and I am truly thankful for that. I also hope you are getting used to me. On my part it all feels right, as it was in the beginning.

I see it as my task as a minister to help the congregation move forward. That is what this parish asked when you called me. You deserve the best I can offer to support that. But it can only happen in the way and to the extent we *all together* are willing and able to move. And that is the way it should be.

But moving forward *has to happen*. I am one of the younger ones, I think, but back in 1956, when I was born, we lived on a different planet. The changes in our world as we have witnessed – and still are! – are immense. The church has to keep up with that or she will lose her reason to exist.

I am also here for people living in the parish, but not involved in the congregation (or even for people knocking at my door). People can have very different reasons for not going to church, including very good ones. If a congregation locks itself safely within the walls of its church, it misses the point. The church is here to serve the world, not to be an exclusive bunch of chosen ones. And outside the church there is surprisingly much of God.

I have no doubt whatsoever that we are all, in our very different ways, able to do this. Change is a fact of life, not an academic exercise. It can help to study and analyse, but only if that is fully rooted daily life experience. I admit that sometimes I tend to make things too difficult. Please do tell me whenever I do. I promise to listen and work on that!

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In the book of Deuteronomy Moses is looking back on all the years he led his people through the desert. Today we read that he gave the commandment to write the Name of God on our doorposts. To be honest, there are very few places in Kintyre where that

is literally done. Now please don't rush to Giffnock to buy yourselves a mezuzah. That would be silly.

Most of our houses have names, sometimes even on the doorposts. Many of these names are in Gaelic. Some names may actually have something of blessing, love or goodness in them. As a minister I hope that when I visit a place in some way something like the name of God remains there when I leave. That, after all, is my call. Sometimes God is present on the words of prayer, often God's holy Name sits among the coffee cups, children, farmyards and banter.

But how does the name of God remain in a place? Rarely in the form of big religious words, and even rarer in theology. God's name remains when people have experienced something of God's love, when they know they are accepted as they are, when they learn how to use the goodness and blessing God has given to each of us. God remains wherever God's people are living his words.

That is precisely what Jesus is teaching the people in his native town of Nazareth. These great, and perhaps distant, words of Isaiah have come true, he says. God's promises become reality in the things people do and say, day by day.

Over the past week our cousin Hein has texted messages from Haiti. The island is devastated and so are the people. In between stitching wounds, bringing people to the hospital, making shelters and giving refugees their first meal in a week, quite a few people asked for prayer. Rice and beans and tents and bandages and prayer all spoke of God. Let us pray that this may be a start to really rebuild people's lives and the places where they live.

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One year ago we came to Kintyre. It felt good from the beginning. That's why the flags are out. Even though there have been a few wild waves – literally and symbolically – it still feels good.

So, now would be a good moment to propose a toast, but since Church of Scotland laws forbid to bring any really 'water of life' on the premises, I'll have to do it simpler.  
*[toast with water: Slainte!]*

Meanwhile we are learning to know the names of the houses and places, as well as people's names. And more important, what is behind each name. We like it and we feel welcomed.

While we together continue our journey forward, we will find new names and new places. Even those who lived here all their life do not know all the names. In our words and deeds, in our attitudes and choices, in our caring and our challenging we silently add God's name to these. That is: if we do it right.

We are looking forward to a new year in Kintyre. Together we journey and from each

other we learn. May the blessing of the God of Life be on us, each night, each day.

Amen.

**Hymn** : 'Will you come and follow me' (CH 533)

### **Offering and Dedication**

#### **Prayer of Intercession**

God, whose Name is all around,  
help us to find that name,  
and to make it visible in the places where we live.  
May your name be  
upon our houses, our children, ourselves;  
may it come true in deeds of compassion,  
in every small act that restores the world a bit;  
may your name make us think before we speak,  
and fill our words with goodness.  
God in your mercy,  
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

God, whose Name is much abused,  
forgive us if we are the abusers,  
and help us to purify our language.  
Help us to speak truth and goodness,  
rather than lies and wickedness.  
In prayer we remember two boys  
who tortured two other kids,  
without even feeling they were doing wrong;  
we pray for the victims, scarred for life,  
and we pray for those who did it,  
who were also severely damaged  
by domestic abuse and a total lack of love.  
God in your mercy,  
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

To day we pray in particular for...  
(see *intercession book*)  
God, in your mercy,  
HEAR OUR PRAYER.

In silence we remember those  
we know need us  
to remember them.  
(*silence*)

So we pray,

in the Name of God.  
Amen.

**Closing Hymn** : 'The voice of God' (CH 283)

**Blessing**