

Friendship

Pershore Abbey Iona Service 5pm Sunday 24th July 2022

2

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION July 30th is the UN International Day of Friendship. This service will draw on part of the Lent course 'Still Standing', written by Rachel Mann. Rachel uses clips from the film Rocketman, Elton John's life story, to explore themes of identity, relationships, failure and redemption. There will be time in the service for the sharing of our own thoughts, stories and prayers about Friendship, as well as the opportunity to make a card for a friend if you wish to do so.

GATHERING SONG: 🎵

**Let us build a house where God can dwell and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.**

**Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed, as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.**

OPENING RESPONSES:

Leader: Creator of the world, eternal God,
ALL: **WE HAVE COME FROM MANY PLACES FOR A LITTLE WHILE.**
Leader: Redeemer of humanity, God-with-us,
ALL: **WE HAVE COME WITH ALL OUR DIFFERENCES, SEEKING COMMON GROUND.**
Leader: Spirit of unity, go-between God,
ALL: **WE HAVE COME ON JOURNEYS OF OUR OWN,
TO A PLACE WHERE JOURNEYS MEET.**
Leader: So here in this shelter house, let us take time together.
For when paths cross and pilgrims gather, there is much to share and celebrate.
ALL: **IN YOUR NAME, THREE-IN-ONE GOD, PATTERN OF COMMUNITY. AMEN**

PSALM 139 abridged

A O God, you search me and know me. You know my being and my doing. From far off you read my inmost thoughts.
B *You know the journeys that I take and the places where I rest. You know the meaning of my words before I speak.*
A You are familiar with all my ways; you are around me on every side, holding and protecting with your power.
B *Your knowledge of me is too wonderful, too high for me to reach.*
A Where could I escape from you? Where could I flee your presence?
B *If I climb to the heavens, you are there. You are there if I lie in the grave.*
A If I fly off into the sunrise, or dwell beyond the western sea, even there your hand will lead me, even there you hold me fast.
B *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*
A Search me, O God, and know my heart, test me, and know my thoughts.
B *See that I do not follow wrong paths, and guide me in the everlasting way.*

BIBLE READING: Luke 24 v14 - 18

Reader: Naomi tries to persuade her two daughters-in-law to return to their families, after her two sons and her husband have died.

Listen now for the word of God.

¹⁴ Ruth and Orpah wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go, I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Reader: For the word of God in scripture,

**ALL: FOR THE WORD OF GOD AMONG US, FOR THE WORD OF GOD WITHIN US,
THANKS BE TO GOD.**

Leader: Another friendship in the bible is between David and Jonathan. They show a level of devotion and trust in each other that seems unusual in our culture and they use covenant language to define their friendship. Rachel Mann asks how we would define a good friendship?

SONG: 🎵 (*'The Web of Love' – tune 'Love Unknown'*)

1. **Of all that we enjoy, in harmony with heaven,
of all our hearts desire, of all received and given,
we cherish most the web God wove, of costly and inclusive love.**

2. **Such diverse threads combine, in woman and in man:
Ruth pledged to Naomi, David to Jonathan;
John laid his head on Jesus' breast, whose feet a woman's tears caressed.**

3. **And Paul with special care, chose poetry over prose,
to celebrate how love affirms, endures and grows,
believes the best, embraces pain, survives through death to rise again.**

4. **God, make all Christians bold, to live and love by grace,
and nurture deep affection, in this holy place.
Help all believers to be true, to how you make them and to you.**

BIBLE READING:

Reader: Jesus called his disciples 'friends', including Judas, during the last supper. Rachel Mann asks "What are the implications for us if we call Jesus our friend?"

Matthew 26 v 31 – 38

Listen now for the word of God.

³¹ Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."

³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

³³ Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

³⁴ "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

³⁵ But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

³⁶ Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸ Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

Reader: For the word of God in scripture,

ALL: **FOR THE WORD OF GOD AMONG US, FOR THE WORD OF GOD WITHIN US,
THANKS BE TO GOD.**

A TIME FOR SHARING OF THOUGHTS AND STORIES ABOUT FRIENDSHIP

Please feel free to make a card to give to a friend, if you would like to.

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS: *(You are welcome to add your own prayers in the pauses.)*

Leader: Loving God, offer the hand of friendship to those who are cut off from friends because they suffer illness or disability which makes social interaction difficult, or because unemployment has severed the daily routine of working with colleagues:

(pause)

ALL(♫chant): **GOD TO ENFOLD YOU, CHRIST TO UPHOLD YOU,
SPIRIT TO KEEP YOU IN HEAVEN’S SIGHT;
SO MAY GOD GRACE YOU, HEAL AND EMBRACE YOU,
LEAD YOU THROUGH DARKNESS INTO LIGHT.**

Leader: Offer the hand of friendship to those who nurture friendship in unlikely places, finding support and community in hospital wards or prison blocks or deprived areas where the shared struggle helps community to survive:

(pause)

ALL(♫chant):

Leader: Offer the hand of friendship to those who are separated from friends, where distance has cut former ties, where work or new relationships cause isolation; for those moving to new areas, needing to make connections and build networks:

(pause)

ALL(♫chant):

Leader: Offer the hand of friendship to those making friendships in the midst of diversity, crossing barriers of race or culture, class or age, finding connections and common ground that increase understanding and empathy, and discovering differences that enrich their sharing:

(pause)

ALL(♫chant):

Leader: Offer the hand of friendship to those whose friends have turned away, forgetting to visit or failing to keep in touch in the stress and pressure of daily life; or rejecting them because of their way of life, turning friendship to condemnation and betrayal:

(pause)

ALL(♫chant):

Leader: For those in a church seeking to offer friendship, looking beyond the familiar group and language to welcome and befriend the stranger:

(pause)

ALL(♫chant):

Leader: Three in One God, God of Friendship,
you make us in and for relationship;
by your grace and encouragement, help us to grow into your likeness.
Lead us into rich, real and holy friendship with our neighbours
and most of all with you, our true friend. **AMEN**

TIME OF QUIET

CLOSING RESPONSES:

Leader: O Trinity of Love, you have been with us at the world's beginning,

ALL: BE WITH US TILL THE WORLD'S END.

Leader: You have been with us at our life's shaping,

ALL: BE WITH US AT OUR LIFE'S END.

Leader: you have been with us at the sun's rising,

ALL: BE WITH US TILL THE DAY IS DONE. AMEN

BLESSING:

Leader: May the blessing of God,
who plays alongside you in creation,
walks with you on your journey,
and inspires you with dreams for the future,
accompany you in love and friendship,
and welcome you home in joy. **AMEN**

THE GRACE:

**MAY THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE
FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BE WITH US ALL, NOW AND EVERMORE.
AMEN**

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There is no Iona service in August.

Please contact Michael for information about the pilgrimage to Iona at the end of September. michaeldelmerday@icloud.com

