

Pershore Abbey Iona Service 23rd April 2023 5pm

Theme: Refuge from the Storm

Gathering Song: 🎵 God welcomes all, strangers and friends.
God's love is strong and it never ends. (X 3)

Welcome and Introduction:

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.
All: **For when paths cross and pilgrims gather, there is much to share and celebrate
in your name, three-in-one God, pattern of community. Amen**

Bible Reading:

Reader: In Psalm 142, David cries out to God as he takes refuge in a cave.
I cry aloud to the Lord; I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.
I pour out before him my complaint; before him I tell my trouble.
When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who watch over my way.
In the path where I walk people have hidden a snare for me.
Look and see, there is no one at my right hand; no one is concerned for me.
I have no refuge; no one cares for my life.
I cry to you, Lord; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."
Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need;
rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me.
Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name.
Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me.

For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us,

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Song: 🎵

1. The love of God comes close, where stands an open door,
to let the stranger in, to mingle rich and poor:
the love of God is here to stay, embracing those who walk his way.

2. The peace of God comes close, to those caught in the storm,
forgoing lives of ease, to ease the lives forlorn:
the peace of God is here to stay, embracing those who walk his way.
3. The joy of God comes close, where faith encounters fears,
where heights and depths of life, are found through smiles and tears:
the joy of God is here to stay, embracing those who walk his way.
4. The grace of God comes close, to those whose grace is spent,
when hearts are tired and sore, and hope is bruised or bent:
the grace of God is here to stay, embracing those who walk his way.

Reading: *from 'Radical Hospitality' by Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt, written in America, not long after the 9/11 attacks.*

Reader 1: Daniel tells the story about Lonni, who takes a group of young people to do voluntary work decorating a refugee centre. A man from Pakistan approaches Lonni and invites her to meet his family.


Reader 2: *"He was very different to any person I had known. He was Muslim. I was Christian. My head buzzed with everything I had ever heard about Muslims, and Muslim men."*

Reader 1: But Lonni liked his wife immediately. She had a wide smile and a soft voice. She had been in medical school and hoped to return to it one day. She was simply trying to make the best of a terrible situation. Lonni remembers noticing the loving warmth that passed between the couple in small gestures, glances and smiles. Their behaviour was different than she expected and she was touched by it. Their children were delightful; nothing like the children she expected to find in a refugee centre.

That night, Lonni thought about the mysterious man and his family as she tried to sleep. She thought of all the stereotypes she carried within her, about Muslim men and families. It was disturbing to have the stereotypes so blatantly revealed. Still, she reminded herself, the man was a mystery. She didn't know the stories of the refugees, only that refugees were often fleeing for their lives. What had they done?

Reader 2: *"He made me feel uneasy, not because of anything he did but because he was very different from any other person I had ever known. I thought Muslims disliked Christians. I thought Muslim men did not like or respect women. He had exploded the preconceptions of my clenched little heart in only a few hours."*

Reader 1: The next day, he was waiting for Lonni and asked her to help his family to learn English. He told her he was a political refugee. His crime was resistance to what he considered rigid and evil political systems. He had been involved in law making. Despite being marked for assassination, despite facing changes that would leave most people staggering, bitter and frightened, he was at peace. He understood his present situation to be a gift of God.

Song:  *(to the tune 'Amazing Grace')*

1. The 'other' person Jesus saw, was one the rest despised,
his virtues unidentified, her worth unrealised.
2. The 'other' person Jesus saw, was known for what was wrong,
not for the wrong once done to him, nor for her soul or song.
3. The 'other' person Jesus saw, had faith nobody knew,
and grounded hope and grateful love, found only in a few.
4. The 'other' person Jesus sees, is also known to me:
its who I am beneath the masks, and who I'm meant to be.
5. Come gently, Jesus, to our aid; let there be recognised
the good each 'other' has to share, e'en when it's well disguised.

Leader: *(Reading from the United Congregation of Southern Africa)*

We must move on my people!

This is merely a resting place, a place of transit, where humanity and God pause,
before taking to the road again.

Go, my people, you are ready to set sail, your country is not here.

You are awaited my people, and I declare to you, people of God,

I am going with you.

Prayer:

Leader: Lord as day ends,

All: **may we rest in the knowledge that all things of Earth are holy,
and that all people are one in you. Amen**

The Grace:

All: **May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all,
evermore. Amen**

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Known Unknown © John Bell and Graham Maule An Iona Prayer Book © Peter Millar

Radical Hospitality © Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt

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<https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/about/facts-about-refugees/>

According to the UN Refugee Convention, the definition of a refugee is someone who: 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country' (Article 1, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees).

The definition of an asylum seeker is someone who has arrived in a country and asked for asylum. Until they receive a decision as to whether or not they are a refugee, they are known as an asylum seeker. In the UK, this means they do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen would. For example, people seeking asylum aren't allowed to work or claim benefits.

<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/top-10-facts-about-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/>

NEXT IONA SERVICE: 5pm Sunday 28th May in Pershore Abbey and via Zoom