

Pershore Abbey Iona Service 25th May 2025 5pm

Theme: Abounding Hope

Welcome and Introduction: - *This service uses the Christian Aid week worship materials focussing on the impact of environmental degradation on poor communities in Guatemala.*

Gathering Song 1: 🎵 *a song from Malawi*

1. Humbly in your sight, we come together, God, -
grant us now the blessing of your presence here.
2. These, our hearts, are yours, we give them to you, God,
purify our love to make it like your own.
3. These, our eyes, are yours, we give them to you, God,
may we always see the world as with your sight.

Opening Responses:

Leader: We pray together to our Lord:

Giver of living water, we thirst for your presence.

All: Let your steadfast love be upon us, as we hope in you.

Leader: Bread of life, we hunger for your word.

All: Let your steadfast love be upon us, as we hope in you.

Leader: Holy one, you set a path before us, we seek to walk in your ways.

All: Let your steadfast love be upon us, as we hope in you.

Bible Reading: (Romans 15 v12-13)

Reader: ¹² Isaiah says, 'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope.'

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Reader: 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.

Opening prayer: (Based on Ephesians 1)

Leader: Gracious God, you gather all creation together in love.

As we meet today, enlighten our hearts, so that we may perceive the hope to which you have called us.

As your children, may we grow into your likeness, filled with compassion and desiring justice.

Embolden us to live out our calling, and put faith, hope and love into action.

All: Amen

Aurelia's story – part one *In this service we'll be hearing Aurelia's story of resilience and hope whilst environmental degradation affects the life of her community, and how Christian Aid's partner organisation is providing help.*

In the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala, 90% of people are living in poverty. The region is home to the Indigenous Q'eqchi' (Co-WAY-chee) people. Men in the community often seek work away from their homes, while women grow crops to feed their families.

Aurelia is a community leader, a mother of eight and a beloved grandmother. In recent years record high temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns have hit farmers like her hard. Water sources are drying up or being polluted by industry.

Aurelia and others from her community, walk for around four hours each day, taking two trips, to collect safe, clean water from a cenote – a natural sinkhole like a cave, with water at the bottom.

Song: 🎵 *(An ancient Celtic prayer celebrating God's presence throughout creation)*

1. **God's will for creation, is Jesus' to do:
new branches to wither, old trees to renew.
Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! How can we help but praise him.**
2. **Each plant in its growing, each shape in the strand,
are filled with God's blessing, are stirred by God's hand.
Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! How can we help but praise him.**
3. **All life in the river, all fish in the sea,
Earth's numberless creatures, God summoned to be.
Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! How can we help but praise him.**
4. **Each bird in the morning, each star in the sky,
proclaim the Lord's goodness, which never can die.
Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! How can we help but praise him.**

Aurelia's story – part two

Aurelia has seen first-hand the impact of the climate crisis. 'Climate change has been killing our crops, and this is our food,' she says. 'As the plants are dying, the next thing that will die is us.'

But Aurelia isn't giving up. Congcoop, Christian Aid's partner in Guatemala, supports communities with agricultural resources and training that help them to become more climate resilient. Aurelia took up the opportunity to gain new skills with Congcoop.

She's combining her deep knowledge and understanding of her land with innovative techniques. She's making organic fertiliser, constructing rainwater collection systems, and growing a wider range of crops.

Prayer of confession: *During this prayer, if you would like, you are invited to dip your fingers in the water and make a sign of the Cross on the back of your hand.*

Leader: Merciful Father, you challenge us through the words of prophets.
We confess that we have failed to listen, or pretended not to hear.
'Let justice roll down like water,' you tell us.
But we block the flowing streams and drain the rivers dry.
In your mercy:

All: **Forgive us and help us.** (PAUSE)

Leader: Loving Lord, you came not to be served but to serve.
We confess that we have buried our talents, and turned away from those who need our gifts.
'Love your neighbour as yourself,' you command us.
But we worry that such love will cost us too much.
In your mercy:

All: **Forgive us and help us.** (PAUSE)

Leader: Holy Spirit, you empower us with abundant hope.
We confess that we have given in to cynicism, and declared that the world cannot change.
When we despair, you are there to comfort us.
Forgive us for trying to rely on ourselves alone.

In your mercy:

All: Forgive us and help us. Amen

Song: 🎵 *(To the tune of Tallis's Canon)*

1. **Forgive us when our deeds ignore your righteous rule of all the earth,
when our decisions harm the poor, denying their eternal worth.**
2. **Forgive us when we turn aside from what is honest, true and fair,
when dreams of pleasure, wealth and pride supplant your clear commands to care.**
3. **Forgive us, Lord, our endless greed for what was never truly ours,
when, driven more by want than need, we harness this world's brutal powers.**
4. **Forgive us that we change the rules by which the game of life is played,
and never learn to wield the tools which could see joy and hope remade.**
5. **Forgive us, God! Our lives betray our shallow, vague response to grace;
so help us walk your holy way, to make your world a better place.**

Aurelia's story – part three

With Congcoop's support, Aurelia is using her cacao harvest to make chocolate products to sell at a local market. 'I feel very joyful and grateful when I'm preparing chocolate,' Aurelia says. 'I make cocoa products with all my heart! Perhaps that's why they have such a good flavour!'

Aurelia has a big multi-generational family to take care of, from her father Ricardo to her many grandchildren. But she's always looking to help more people in her community.

'I really give my life to my neighbours, sharing my knowledge with them,' she told Christian Aid. Despite the long journeys to collect water and the need to work on her own farm, Aurelia still finds time to support other women and show them the skills she's learned through her training.

Compost Prayers: *Please choose the prayer written on a piece of card, that says most to you. If you would like to read it out loud during this time of prayer, please do so.*

Leader: Let us pray together.
We pray for an end to the destruction of the natural world.
We grieve for what has already been lost and damaged.

All: We watch in hope for the Lord: our God will hear us.

(PAUSE)

Leader: We hold before you communities who are watching their land become parched and their rivers dry up. We pray for farmers like Aurelia who carefully tend their crops, only to see them wither and die.

All: We watch in hope for the Lord: our God will hear us.

(PAUSE)

Leader: Lord, hear us as we pray for all people living in poverty. For children who will not be able to eat a nutritious meal today, or cannot afford to attend school.

All: We watch in hope for the Lord: our God will hear us.

(PAUSE)

Leader: May we hear the cries of those who are marginalised in our world.
May we speak up with them for a more equal and just society.

All: We watch in hope for the Lord: our God will hear us.

(PAUSE)

Leader: Lord, hear us as we pray for changemakers.
We give thanks for community leaders like Aurelia, whose hope is her power.
We pray for Christian Aid's partner in Guatemala, supporting communities through training.

All: We watch in hope for the Lord: our God will hear us.

(PAUSE)

Leader: Strengthen and sustain those working for peace and protecting human rights.
We pray for a just peace wherever there is conflict.

All: **We watch in hope for the Lord: our God will hear us.**

(PAUSE)

Leader: We offer our prayers in the name of Jesus.

All: **Amen**

Song: 🎵 *(Traditional Guatemalan song. Sing three times)*

(During this song, you are welcome to add your prayer card to the pot of compost.)

The peace of the earth be with you, the peace of the heavens too.

The peace of the rivers be with you, the peace of the oceans, too:

deep peace falling over you, God's peace growing in you.

Sharing the Peace: *(2 Peter 1:2)*

Leader: May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

All: **Peace be with you. / And also with you.**

Aurelia's story – part four

Life for Aurelia and her community remains tough, and as the climate crisis intensifies, she fears things will get tougher. Enduring droughts, storms and fierce heat, Aurelia can see the impacts of climate change accelerating. 'There was a prediction this would happen in the future,' she says, 'but it has come earlier. This is very worrying for our kids and especially our grandkids.'

Indigenous farmers are often under pressure to sell their land to big developers, leading to further environmental damage. But Aurelia says that she and her neighbours remain 'unified' and 'courageous'. They won't give up hope.

Closing Prayers: *(A prayer for Christian Aid Week 2025)*

Leader: Lord, you are faithful to your promises. Through the Spirit, you bless us with abounding hope.
When power seeks to silence justice,

All: **give us the courage to raise our voice.**

Leader: When an end to poverty seems far off,

All: **renew our faith in your kingdom come on earth.**

Leader: When our neighbour reaches out,

All: **inspire us to respond with overflowing love. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Blessing:

All: **God of hope, fill us with all joy and peace in believing,
that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

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NEXT PERSHORE ABBEY IONA SERVICE WILL BE AT 5PM SUNDAY 22nd JUNE