

**6<sup>th</sup> July 2025 – Morning Service**  
**Iona Commitment Service**  
**Margaret Bradley**

## **Introduction**

Our worship material this morning comes from the Iona Community. This originated around 563 AD when Columba, an Irish abbot and missionary evangelist, sailed over the sea with 12 companions to settle on the Scottish island of Iona. Here they founded a new abbey as a base for spreading Celtic Christianity.

The present-day community was founded in 1938 by Rev George MacLeod, who restored the ruined 13th century Benedictine monastic buildings. It maintains a residential group of men and women, lay and ordained, who seek new ways of living the Gospel in today's world, and also includes members living in other countries.

The community is an inheritor of the Celtic tradition, with its emphasis on the earth, and of the Benedictine tradition, which has a commitment to hospitality, so enabling Keith and myself to spend time with them in April 1993, sharing in the common life of worship, work and recreation. The community also stands in the tradition of the Protestant Reformation with its evangelical zeal, its call to commitment and understanding of the continuing challenge to every generation to 'find new ways to touch the hearts of all.' Since 1952 it has come under the auspices of the Church of Scotland, but people of other denominations, traditions and faiths, and those who have no faith allegiance, are welcome to its centres. It is an inspiring place of pilgrimage.

## **Opening Prayer**

God our Creator, your kindness has brought us the gift of a new day. Help us to leave yesterday, and not to covet tomorrow, but to accept the uniqueness of today. **Amen.**

## **StF 22 – Come all you People**

Come all you people,	Come all you people,
Come and praise your Maker;	Come and praise your Maker;
Come all you people,	Come now and worship the Lord.
Come and praise your Maker;	

*Alexander Gondo © Alexander Gondo*

## **Lighting of Candles**

I will light a light in the name of the Maker, who lit the world and breathed the breath of life in me.  
I will light a light in the name of the Son, who saved the world and stretched out his hand to me.  
I will light a light in the name of the Spirit, who encompasses the world and blesses my soul with yearning.  
**We will light three lights for the Trinity of love: God above us, God beside us, God beneath us: the beginning, the end, the everlasting One.**

## **Responses**

Jesus says, 'I am the Way for you.' **And so we come to follow Christ.**  
Jesus says, 'I am the Truth for you.' **And so we come to dwell in the light.**  
Jesus says, 'I am the Life for you.' **And so we come, leaving behind all else to which we cling.**

The Iona community is known for its music and hymn-writing. Our next song was written by two members, John Bell and Graham Maule.

## StF 28 – Jesus calls us here to meet him

- 1) Jesus calls us here to meet him  
As, through word and song and prayer,  
We affirm God's promised presence  
Where his people live and care.  
Praise the God who keeps his promise;  
Praise the Son who calls us friends;  
Praise the Spirit who, among us,  
To our hopes and fears attends.
- 2) Jesus calls us to confess him  
Word of life and Lord of all,  
Sharer of our flesh and frailness,  
Saving all who fail or fall.  
Tell his holy human story;  
Tell his tales that all may hear;  
Tell the world that Christ in glory  
Came to earth to meet us here.
- 3) Jesus calls us to each other,  
Vastly different though we are;  
Creed and colour, class and gender  
Neither limit nor debar.  
Join the hand of friend and stranger;  
Join the hands of age and youth;  
Join the faithful and the doubter  
In their common search for truth.

*John L Bell & Graham Maule © 1989 WGRG Iona Community*

## Prayer of Confession

Holy God, we come to celebrate that your Spirit is present deep within us, and at the heart of all life. You are always true to us in love and we are left wanting to say sorry for our faithlessness to you and to one another, for our forgetting of the poor and the broken, for our failure to cherish creation. In your graciousness, give us the will to change, renew us, and help us to grow in love. **Amen**

## The Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And 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.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

The words of our next song are from Psalm 46 and the music is by John Bell.

## StF 19 – Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am God  
And there is none beside me.  
Be still and know that I am God  
And there is none beside me.

*From Psalm 96*

Circa 50 AD, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christian community living in Galatia, urging them not to give up doing what is right, but to persevere in working for the good of all.

## Reading: Galatians 6:7-10

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

## Reading: Luke 10: 1-11

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house."

"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.'"

## Reflection

Today's Gospel reading tells of how Jesus, having called disciples, summoned 70, or 72 of them according to which ancient text you read, and sent them out on a mission. The names of these are given in several old manuscripts, but they are considered to be dubious sources. Luke had described the sending out of 12 in the previous chapter, as do Matthew and Mark. But the sending of 70 others, to the towns on Jesus' fateful route to Jerusalem, is recorded only by Luke, although the instructions given relating to their behaviour and their message are very similar as those given to the 12. It is possible that, whereas the 12 were sent out to the 12 tribes of Israel, this was an anticipation of the later mission to the Gentile nations, listed in the Book of Genesis as being 70 in number. (Genesis 10). Also, the great Jewish liberator and teacher Moses selected 70 elders to assist him (Numbers 11: 24-5) and the implication is that Jesus was like a second Moses.

The Apostle Paul wouldn't have been able to carry out his work if he had stuck to the letter of the instructions, and we can't use them today as a practical guide to us. However, there are some pointers which ARE relevant.

### 1. *The 70 were sent out to witness to people in pairs*

They weren't sent out alone, but in twos. This probably reflects the Jewish belief that the testimony of one unsupported witness was insufficient. But it also had an advantage of providing mutual support, especially when they encountered an unreceptive audience. After Jesus' death, Paul and Barnabas were a pair who planted Christian communities in Gentile territory, including Galatia in modern-day Turkey. Our first reading was an extract from a letter to them. Aquila and Priscilla were an early missionary married couple in Rome whom Paul described as his '*fellow workers in the service of Christ Jesus.*' (Romans 16: 3). This strategy is a good option in the contemporary church too. By collaborating with others in a team, a combination of gifts is available. A few of us may be strong and self-confident and like to operate alone, but most of us need a network of relationships and someone who will bring out the best in us. We need guiding, reassuring, affirming, challenging and comforting. And it is important that we do this for one another.

## **2. *The 70 were told to travel light***

Wandering preachers, carrying a stick, a begging bowl and a few provisions, would not have been an unfamiliar sight at that time. But Jesus' disciples were told to carry no money, no begging bag and no sandals/shoes. Jews were not permitted to approach God without removing their footwear, reflecting God's command to Moses to remove his sandals on Mount Sinai, because he was standing on holy ground. If no-one can see, I've always removed my shoes when leading worship. Observant members of the congregation may notice that I suddenly lose a couple of inches in height. But this isn't for theological reasons. It's for reasons of comfort, so that I'm better able to relax! It's still customary for Middle Eastern worshippers to remove their footwear and wash their feet when they believe that they are entering into the presence of the Divine. We've found this when we've been invited guests at local Mosques. Removing shoes signifies putting off something that is profane. Luke's community may have thought that they should be barefoot as a statement to people that all the ground on which they were walking was holy.

A central conviction of the Iona community is that God is in all. Worship is all that we are and all that we do. There is no separation between 'sacred' and 'secular', between Sunday worship and weekday work and recreation, between religion and politics. God is in all. We today are also called to travel light, as we have a special awareness of our need to live more simply and sustainably. The Celtic religious tradition has always laid stress on God's glory in creation and on our responsibility to take care of the environment. We recognise our need to recycle, to avoid unnecessary packaging, not to waste food, to eat less meat, to save water, to cut down on our travel, to be more eco-friendly. Many people are aware that I don't eat meat, buy my clothes from charity shops and utilise food from the waste-not price reductions. This is a life-style choice and we all need to do more of it. The choices that we make do matter, and we need to change our habits from accumulating 'stuff' so that we have less harmful effects on our planet.

## **3. *The 70 were charged to heal the sick, to bestow peace and to set up the rule of God on earth***

Jesus told his helpers to avoid the time-consuming customs of eastern wayside etiquette, and not to waste time with those who aren't interested. It was a matter of urgency that people are invited to participate in God's present kingdom on earth, not in some future life, but here and now.

It is a matter of concern that the words of many popular contemporary worship songs have a preponderance of the words 'I' and 'me' instead of recognising communities of 'we', who have a concern for others. Rather than confining ourselves to a private, self-absorbed spirituality, we can embody alternative life-styles and create communities which take their cue from the distinctive teachings and practices of Jesus. We may not have healing powers, or belong to the healing professions, but we can still make ourselves available to listen to people in distress and to help put together those who are broken. We can offer forgiveness and reconciliation, kindness and compassion, as we serve others and build welcoming communities. We can accept everyone and 'care for all without reserve and spread his liberating word', to quote the words of the modern hymnwriter Fred Pratt Green. We can oppose injustices in race, social status, gender, sexuality, ability and economics, as we endeavour to lift up the poor and set the down-trodden free. We can challenge evil, hatred, suspicion, separatism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, with the power of love. We can be signs of God's activity and presence in the world.

What a challenge this is! Jesus warned his followers that it would not be easy. As we are sneered at for being 'woke', so Jesus too was mocked, despised and rejected. But his Spirit lives on in all who choose to resist the current tendency towards self-centredness and who would seek to reclaim our sense of connectedness, building on a community spirit which gives us a vision of how we want to live together in the future, underpinned by the love of God as shown in Jesus. Is God's Spirit in YOUR heart, as it was in Jesus?

The first verse and refrain of our next song was written by Alan Dale, who was a lecturer in Religious Studies at Dudley Teachers' Training College when I was there in 1965.

## StF 404 – God's spirit is in my heart

- 1) God's spirit is in my heart;  
He has called me and set me apart.  
This is what I have to do -  
What I have to do:
- 2) Just as the Father sent me,  
So I'm sending you out to be  
My witness throughout the world -  
The whole of the world:
- Ch) *He sent me to give the good news to the poor,  
Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,  
Tell blind people that they can see,  
And set the down-trodden free,  
And go tell everyone  
The news that the kingdom of God has come;  
And go tell everyone  
The news that God's kingdom has come.*
- 3) Don't carry a load in your pack;  
You don't need two shirts on your back;  
God's workers can earn their own keep -  
Can earn their own keep:
- 4) Don't worry what you have to say;  
Don't worry, because on that day  
God's spirit will speak in your heart -  
Will speak in your heart:

Alan T Dale & Hubert Richards © 1969 Vanguard Music

## Call to Commitment

Jesus calls us to follow him and sends us out. And so we come now to commit ourselves to his way. Sometimes we have been faithful in our commitment. Sometimes we have failed. But Jesus wants us all to make new beginnings in our lives. We listen to some words of Jesus. Listen for what he is saying to you – what his special word might be to you this morning:

Do not be afraid	My peace I give to you
You are in me and I in you	Abide in my love
Seek and you will find	Knock and the door will be opened to you
I am the way for you	Follow me
I am the life for you	I am with you always
I am the truth for you	The truth will make you free
I am hungry, give me food	Give and it will be given to you
I am a stranger, welcome me	Take care of my lambs
I am in prison, come to me	Love others as I have loved you
I am sick, visit me	Watch and pray
You are the salt of the earth	You are my witness
Go and tell what God has done for you	I appointed you to go and bear much fruit

## Affirmation of Faith

Let us affirm our faith:

**We believe in Jesus Christ, Son of the one God,**

**Maker and Sustainer of earth, sea and sky.**

**Born of Mary's womb, faithful to the God of Abraham and Sarah,**

**Jesus healed the sick, served the poor and proclaimed heaven on earth.**

**Condemned by the religious, crucified by the state, he died,**

**but transformed even death and rose to life everlasting.**

**He blessed the disciples with his Holy Spirit and sent them forth, east and west, north and south.**

**We commit ourselves to Jesus, to one another as sisters and brothers, and to his mission in the world in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## StF 706 – Longing for light

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Longing for light, we wait in darkness.<br>Longing for truth, we turn to you.<br>Make us your own, your holy people,<br>Light for the world to see.   | 3) Longing for food, many are hungry.<br>Longing for water, many still thirst.<br>Make us your bread, broken for others,<br>Shared until all are fed.        |
| Ch) <i>Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.<br/>Shine through the darkness.<br/>Christ, be our light!<br/>Shine in your Church gathered today.</i> | 4) Longing for shelter, many are homeless.<br>Longing for warmth, many are cold.<br>Make us your building, sheltering others,<br>Walls made of living stone. |
| 2) Longing for peace, our world is troubled.<br>Longing for hope, many despair.<br>Your word alone has power to save us.<br>Make us your living voice.   | 5) Many the gifts, many the people,<br>Many the hearts that yearn to belong.<br>Let us be servants to one another,<br>Making your kingdom come.              |

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## Prayers of Thanks and Solidarity

We give thanks, O God, for the world you have created, full of beauty and wonder. And we pray that we may treat the earth gently, so that future generations may enjoy its resources..

Through our lives and by our prayers: **your kingdom come.**

We give thanks for all those who proclaim peace and justice in situations of conflict, oppression, suspicion and hostility. And we pray that we, and all peoples, may learn to live together in harmony, as you intended, members of one family. We pray for the community of the United Nations. May all nation states and regimes have respect for international law, instead of resorting to acts of terrorism and actions which have resulted in the death, displacement and suffering of immense numbers of children and civilians, in Gaza and the West Bank, in Ukraine, and in Iran, Syria and Sudan. We hold before you all who are fearful and all who have lost members of their families.

Through our lives and by our prayers: **your kingdom come.**

We give thanks for those throughout the ages who have welcomed your messengers and those who have come as strangers into their midst. And we pray that our nation, and those who live in our neighbourhood, might be a people of hospitality, who do not turn our backs upon those who come amongst us.

Through our lives and by our prayers: **your kingdom come.**

We give thanks for those who care for people who are elderly and vulnerable and for those who work in the healing professions. And we pray for those who are sick in body, mind and spirit; for those who are mourning; for those who are in care homes; that all may receive the help they need.

Through our lives and by our prayers: **your kingdom come.**

We thank you, God, for the one from whom we are sent, the one to whom we are summoned, whose image we are, whose flesh we share, whose love is all. And we pray that, as Jesus sent out disciples, as Columba took the word of your Gospel to Scotland, and as people have been sent forth from Iona to evangelize, so you may grant a like spirit to your church throughout the world, in every nation, even at this present time, because the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. We pray for the Methodist Connexion: for the 21 ministers and 3 deacons who were ordained last Sunday afternoon; for those who are returning from the Methodist Conference to implement decisions made there; for our recently-inducted President, Rev Richard Andrew, and Vice-President, Matt Forsyth, and for Bea Hulme the Youth President. We pray for Rev Alan and Michele, who will shortly be leaving this Circuit. Bless them as they move to London to serve you there.

We commit to you the worship and activities of this congregation here, praying that new ways made be found of connecting with the surrounding community. May this church be a sign of Christ's presence, a light on a hill and not a lamp hidden away under a bushel.

Through our lives and by our prayers: **your kingdom come.**

### **Collect for the Day**

Servant Lord, grant us both the opportunity and the will to serve you day by day. May all that we do, and how we bear each other's burdens, be our offering of love and service, to the glory of your name. **Amen.**

### **StF 483 – We are marching in the light of God**

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| 1) We are marching in the light of God,<br>We are marching in the light of God,<br>We are marching in the light of God.<br>We are marching in the light of God.<br>We are marching, Oh<br>We are marching in the Light of God<br>We are marching, Oh<br>We are marching in the Light of God | 3) We are moving in the power of God,<br>We are moving in the power of God,<br>We are moving in the power of God,<br>We are moving in the power of God.<br>We are moving, Oh<br>We are moving in the power of God.<br>We are moving, Oh<br>We are moving in the power of God. |
| 2) We are living in the love of God,<br>We are living in the love of God,<br>We are living in the love of God,<br>We are living in the love of God.<br>We are living, Oh, we are living in the love of God.<br>We are living, Oh, we are living in the love of God.                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

*Anders Nyberg & Andrew Maries © 1987 WGRG Iona/Community & Sovereign Music UK*

### **Closing Responses**

Look at your hands, see the touch and the tenderness: **God's own for the world.**

Look at your feet, see the path and the direction: **God's own for the world.**

Look at your heart, see the fire and the love: **God's own for the world.**

Look at the cross, see God's Son and our Saviour: **God's own for the world.**

This is God's world: **and we will serve God in it.**

May God bless you, may God keep you always, and lead your lives with love. **Amen.**