

HOPE CHURCH

WEDNESDAY WORSHIP SERVICES IN LENT

March 4, 2020



EVENING PRAYERS

SERVICE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE



Evening Prayers based on the Service for Justice and Peace
from The Iona Community Iona Abbey Worship Book.

“In this service we draw on that part of the Iona Community’s Rule which is a commitment to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. We celebrate that God wills for the world peace with justice, known in the Middle East as ‘Shalom’ or ‘Salaam’.

This is not an abstraction or something only possible in another world or eternity, but a real hope for this place and time. This justice is proclaimed by the Law and the Prophets and is embodied in Jesus. It flows from the simple fact that God loves the world. When what God loves is threatened, those who love God cannot remain neutral.”



HOPE CHURCH
WEDNESDAY WORSHIP SERVICES IN LENT
EVENING PRAYERS: SERVICE FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE
March 4, 2020 ~ 7:00 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

CALL TO WORSHIP

congregation sings two times



The God of Heav'n is pre - sent on earth



in word and si - lence and sha - ring, in face of doubt,



in depth of faith, in signs of love and ca - ring.

OPENING RESPONSES

Just and merciful God, you speak through the prophets,
challenging us to seek peace rooted in justice.

Help us to hear your urgent call.

Loving God, in Jesus who change our lives for good,
challenging us to work for reconciliation.

Help us to see your way of truth and love.

With-us God, your Holy Spirit moves us to action,
challenging us to live the Good News.

**Help us to respond wholeheartedly,
here and now – to say Yes!**

Amen!

*Congregation to rise in body or in spirit

Bold type indicates congregational response

SONG

congregation sings two times


Je - sus Christ, in - ner light, let not our own dark - ness con - quer us.

Je - sus Christ, in - ner light, en - a - ble us to wel - come your love.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

**Just and merciful God,
we glimpse your presence in the world you have created
its power and its beauty, music and poetry,
its diversity, fertility, the possibility of food for everyone,
the dream of fullness of life for all your children:
Yes, God, you are with us in this world.**

Yet we see that power misused, beauty marred,
discord and lies dividing humankind,
failure to share, causing many to go hungry or die.
Where are you God?

**We hear the Good News that Jesus brought,
the affirmation of the value of every human life,
the Gospel that commands us to seek peace with justice;
we understand that costly reconciliation is at its heart:
Yes, God, you are with us in this world.**

Yet we see that good news denied by apathy, mocked by prejudice,
hatred and refusal to forgive, and we feel helpless in the face of suffering.
Where are you, God?

**You are present where women and men of good will
still choose to live in your way, caring for creation and for each other,
courageously speaking truth to power.
You are there when elderly people share their wisdom.
You are there when street children dance in the rain.
You are present wherever, in this broken world, hope is alive.
Thank you, God, for being present with us now. Amen.**

READING FOR CHALLENGE AND REFLECTION: Luke 4.14-22a

¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' ²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

RESPONSE: WITNESS TO CHRISTIAN PRACTICES

Reflection by Deirdre Johnston: Gospel Calling to Justice

Iona is an island off the West Coast of Scotland. Many of you at Hope Church have been to Iona, or are familiar with it through the music and prayers that often appear in our worship. The island is 3 miles long and 1 mile wide, and the most important part of the island is the 10th century Abbey that was rebuilt in the 1930s. The Abbey is the heart of the Iona Christian Community today. Iona has a fascinating Christian history, from the arrival of St. Columba, who brought Christianity to the wild Hebrides Islands, on the north side of the bounds of civilization in 563, to the sixty-eight monks who were massacred by Vikings on Martyrs Beach in 806, and the Augustinian nuns who established a convent in the 1200s. There is some evidence that the famous illustration of scripture in the *Book of Kells* was created at the Iona Abbey. George MacLeod, the founder of the Iona Christian Community in the 1930s called the island "a thin place" where God seems ever-present and nearby.

When I was asked to reflect upon the gospel's call to justice, I immediately thought about the Iona Christian Community, a group of people who are near and dear to my heart and an inspiration for many answering the gospel's call to justice. Today

the Iona Christian Community is an ecumenical dispersed monastic community of about 350 members who lead their regular lives scattered around the world, but reside primarily in the UK and Europe. Members of the Iona Christian Community must commit to 5 vows. The first two are pretty straightforward: to faithfully support the Iona Christian Community, and to have a daily practice of prayer and contemplation. Then it gets interesting. The third rule is to be accountable for how you spend your money. Your regional group reviews your accounts and guides you. Are you spending too much on clothes? Buy resale. Are you taking too many flights? How do your consumer choices uphold the dignity of people who labor, sustain the integrity of the environment, and promote the wellbeing of others? You must also be accountable for how you spend your time. Working too much or too little? Too many hours wasted on Netflix? Are you spending your time in service to yourself, rather than in service to others? The fifth rule challenges Iona Community members to respond to the gospel's call for justice: "What are you doing to promote peace and social justice in your community?" Each member of the Iona Christian Community has a dedicated social justice action plan.

Sally. Sally is in her late 80s, and Sally takes in asylum seekers. People show up on her door, illegally, through some secret network – she doesn't know their name, their country of origin, their language or their story. They stay an indefinite amount of time in Sally's home, and Sally fights like a Rottweiler to get them an asylum hearing. Much to the delight of my Hope College students, with gentle persuasion Sally may tell you the stories of how she has been arrested numerous times.

Norman. Norman chains himself to fences at nuclear facilities. If global politics is not your thing, people like Susan find scraps of land along creeks, or behind parking lots to plant urban gardens to feed the food insecure. Philip responded to a community need when a young woman froze to death when she left a bar inebriated in the cold of winter. He collects coats. He goes out at midnight on weekends with a team of volunteers to pass out warm coats and to ensure that young people get home safely in cabs.

I've had the privilege of taking students to Iona each year and I've learned a lot from Iona Community members over the past decade. I've shared a few examples of how Iona Community members inspire us to hear the call of the gospel to do justice and to be peacemakers. I want to also explore our motivations in answering this call, and our sustenance in persevering in pursuing this call.

Iona community members have also helped me to reflect upon our motivations for engaging justice work. I teach a research article that breaks these motivations into three categories: self-interest, altruism, and social justice motivations. Sometimes we are motivated by self-interest; sometimes, our own woundedness is even used

to undermine others working for justice. A wise friend writes, “Sometimes people who have fought hard for what is right and don't feel they made headway, will, unfortunately, undermine the work of others who come after as legacy protection. It's a response that comes from passion and sometimes internal hurt - not a bad place - but it can do tremendous damage.” Sometimes our powerful egos convince us that what we're doing is necessary and even good. As 1 Corinthians 12:10 reminds us, we must continually discern our motives.

Sometimes we engage social justice work motivated by and dependent upon affirmation and recognition for our efforts. We feel superior and we take on the ‘white savior role.’ “I'm so smart I can fix *your* problems *for you*.” Good work can come from altruistic motivations, but the Iona Community helps us see a higher calling, and that is engaging in justice work motivated by love. That's the message of Christ, the heart of the gospel, is it not? We are called, motivated by LOVE. When we are motivated by love, our social justice work is not *about us*, or *for us*, or focused on *our needs*, it is *about others*, *for others*, and focused on the *needs of others*.

Even when we are inspired by others and motivated by love, it may be challenging to sustain our work for justice. If we engage in justice work we are going to be (at least metaphorically) beaten and bruised. One of my favorite stories of inspirational justice work, motivated by love and sustained through trial and tribulation is the story of Neil and Criena Alcock, as told in Rian Malan's book, *My Traitor's Heart*.

Neil and Criena bought land in Msinga, South Africa with a plan for sustainable development. They dreamed of a community with schools, health care, irrigation, and flourishing agriculture. Malan writes that they were not entirely naïve when they entered the black community of Msinga. “They wanted to live among Africans, like an African, until they saw through African eyes, until Africans' problems became their problems and Africans' pain became their pain.” Yet, the pursuit of their dream was fraught with nightmares. They bought 90 head of cattle – they were stolen. They turned to agriculture – there was drought. Eventually, they did succeed in building a successful community led by local leaders that was economically sustainable. For a time, missionaries, NGO organizers, and development researchers visited Msinga to see and learn from this flourishing community. Unfortunately, the South African government and the Alcock's white neighbors were less enthralled with their success. During this time of apartheid, the Alcocks became the targets of government harassment and violence, and their white neighbors issued death threats. Around and within the community there were Zulu uprisings, inter-tribal violence and wars, and retributions from racist whites. Neil is tragically murdered, but Criena perseveres. Older now, living alone as a white

woman in a black community and near angry white farmers, Criena decides to stay in Msinga.

In reflecting on her decision, Criena writes about her motives of self-interest and altruism: “I thought if I loved Africa, Africa would love me back.” In time, she realizes the calling of the gospel, the example of Christ, and that love, true love, is *self-sacrificing*. “*Love is worth nothing until it has been tested by its own defeat...I was being asked to love enough not to be afraid of the consequences. I realized that love, even if it ends in defeat, gives you a kind of honor; but without love, you have no honor at all. I think that is what I had misunderstood all my life. Love is to enable you to transcend defeat.*”

So our calling to justice and peacemaking is one inspired by the examples of others, motivated by love, and sustained by the realization that Christian love is self-sacrificing. As you think about our country, our world, the challenges before us, and our defeats behind us, reflect upon Criena’s words: “You [referring to the author, Malan] said you could be deformed by this country [South Africa], and yet it seems to me one can only be deformed by the things one does to oneself. It’s not the outside things that deform you, it’s the choices you make. To live anywhere in the world, you must know how to live in Africa. The only thing you can do is love, because it is the only thing that leaves light inside of you.” In our difficulties, in our challenges, even when we feel defeated in our work for peace and justice, the choice is ours; we can choose to fully live into Christ’s calling, leaning in to the light, leaning in to love. Love, when it has been tested by its own defeat, rises again.

SILENT MEDITATION

SUNG RESPONSE Purple # 773 *Heaven Shall Not Wait*

HEAVEN SHALL NOT WAIT

Heaven Shall Not Wait 773

Capo 1: (D) (G) (A) (A7) (D) (Bm7) (Em) (A)
 E^b A^b B^b B^b7 E^b Cm7 Fm B^b

1 Heaven shall not wait for the poor to lose their pa-tience,
 2 Heaven shall not wait for the rich to share their for-tunes,
 3 Heaven shall not wait for the dawn of great i - de - as,
 4 Heaven shall not wait for tri - um - phant Hal - le - lu - jahs,

(D) (G) (A) (A7) (D) (G) (Asus) (A)
 E^b A^b B^b B^b7 E^b A^b B^bsus B^b

the scorned to smile, the de-spised to find a friend:
 the proud to fall, the e - lite to tend the least:
 thoughts of com - pas - sion di - vorced from cries of pain:
 when earth has passed and we reach an - oth - er shore:

(Bm7) (Em) (F#m) (Bm7) (D) (Em7) (A)
 Cm7 Fm Gm Cm7 E^b Fm7 B^b

Je - sus is Lord; he has cham - pioned the un - want - ed;
 Je - sus is Lord; he has shown the mas - ter's priv - ilege:
 Je - sus is Lord; he has mar - ried word and ac - tion;
 Je - sus is Lord in our pres - ent im - per - fec - tion;

(D) (G) (A) (A7) (D) (Bm) (Em)
 E^b A^b B^b B^b7 E^b Cm Fm

in him in - jus - tice con - fronts its time - ly
 to kneel and wash ser - vants' feet be - fore they
 his cross and com - pa - ny make his pur - pose
 his power and love are for now and then for

1-3	4
(Asus)	(Asus)
B ^b sus	B ^b sus
(A)	(A)
B ^b	B ^b
(D)	(D)
E ^b	E ^b

end. ev - er - more.
 feast.
 plain.

This stirring, prophetic hymn is organized around two recurring four-syllable phrases, the first of which introduces an idealized scenario of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer would call "cheap grace," while the second announces the "costly grace" of God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We believe in God in whom is power and compassion.

**We believe in the Creator
who gave birth to the universe,
set solar systems dancing in space,
shaped molecules and mountains,
and conceived beauty beyond our imaging.**

**God's power topples tyrants,
and brings down walls of separation;
God's love embodies the tenderness
of a mother and father,
encouraging and caring for each of us.**

**We believe in Jesus,
born in obscurity in an occupied land;
a human being, vulnerable to hunger, thirst,
persecution and grief.
He understood the power of love
and confronted the powers of evil,
spoke the truth with courage and clarity,
forgave his enemies and changed lives.
In his living, dying and rising again
he showed love strong enough to save the world.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit
who sustains, comforts, and empowers us,
opens the scriptures, opens our minds,
and illuminates earth's darkness. Amen.**

***SONG**



Let jus-tice flow down, down like a riv-er, down to the val-leys
where the help-less cry, Let right-eous-ness flow through us for-ev-er,
lead us to the stream that will nev-er run dry.

*BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

**May the God of Peace inspire us,
may the God of Justice empower us,
may the God of Hope encourage us,
to live the Good News.**

Go, in the power of the Spirit.

Go, and do not try to separate politics and prayer.

Go, not to escape, but to engage with God's world.

Go, to live hopefully, as people of resurrection.

And as you go, the peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

People depart sharing a sign of peace with one another.



Participating in worship: Pastor Jill Russell, liturgist;
Witness to Christian Practice, Dede Johnston;
Rhonda Edgington, Gary and Ellen Rizner, musicians.

