

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE

25 December 2020

GREYFRIARS 2020

Celebrating 400 years this Christmas

COMMUNITY
HISTORY
ENLIGHTENMENT

CELEBRATE

400

GREYFRIARS 

Friday 25 December 2020 – Christmas Day

You are warmly welcomed today at Greyfriars on this Christmas Day, the Kirk's 400th anniversary. Whether you are watching online or in person, thank you for joining us today. During in-person services, please ensure that you are following the one-way system, adhering to a two-metre distance from others and staying seated as much as possible in order to create plenty of space between one another. We know things look a little bit different than usual, and we are grateful to you for your adherence to the rules to keep us all as safe as possible. All services are available in our online library for viewing at any time at greyfriarskirk.com/online-services.

Organ: "Ricercar pro Festis Natalitys" by J. C. F. Fischer

Welcome and Call to Worship

Hymn 306:

1. *O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels;
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.*
2. *God of God, Light of light, lo! he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created; O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.*
3. *Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation; sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
'Glory to God in the highest': O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.*
4. *Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given:
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.*



Prayer: Rev Richard Frazer

Collect for the Day:

God of love, Father of all, the darkness that covered the earth has given way to the bright dawn of your Word made flesh. Make us a people of this light. Make us faithful to your Word that we may bring your life to the waiting world. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen

The Word of God

Joshua 4: 1-8

Jo Elliot, Session Clerk

And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command ye them, saying, take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night. Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the Lord spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

This is the word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Sermon – What mean these Stones? Rev Richard Frazer

A Celebration of Greyfriars 400

Poem: “Sky Burial (Christmas Day 2019)” by Angela McSeveney

In an otherwise empty church
There's just me and the Host left,
And that slightly deflated feeling
That sometimes comes after a party.

As I wash the communion silver
The kitchen still smells of mulled wine
From last night's Christmas Carol Service,
But today I'm rinsing away the Blood of the Lamb.

Then I gather into a paper bag
The broken bread that minutes ago
Was cradled in our minister's hands.

When I lock up and leave
There's one last task:
To distribute this leftover element
To the Earth and the air
And the graveyard's bird life.

A scatter of crumbs for the sparrows,
Then I heave lumps of crust
At the blackened gravestones
And their chiselled inscriptions
Begging for resurrection.

Pieces land among tombs where
Some nights the homeless sleep
And ghost tours tell their stories
Of horror and witchcraft.

A tourist points her phone at me
And I consider making a gesture
That would confirm her impression
Of a batty old fat lady in a daft hat
Flinging bread to the seagulls.

But now here they come,
Treading the air like renaissance angels,
Wings outstretched to bear him away
In a frenzy of feathers and excitement.



Organ: Two old French carols, "Sing Lullaby" and "Adam e sa coumpagno", by César Franck

The Word of God

Luke 2: 1-14

Gillian Couper

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

Hymn 316:

1. *Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love Divine;
Love was born at Christmas, star and angels gave the sign.*
2. *Worship we the Godhead, Love Incarnate, Love Divine,
worship we our Jesus: but wherewith for sacred sign?*

3. *Love shall be our token, love be yours and love be mine,
love to God and all men, love for plea and gift and sign.*

Christina Georgina Rossetti

Pastoral Prayer – Rev Philipp Ross

Christmas Affirmation:

We welcome Jesus, child of God, gift of joyfulness in a world of bleakness.

We welcome Jesus, child of God, gift of peace in a violent world.

We welcome Jesus, child of God, gift of hope in a despairing world.

We welcome Jesus, child of God, gift of wisdom in a foolish world.

We welcome Jesus, child of God, gift of justice in a world of unfairness.

We welcome Jesus, child of God, gift of forgiveness in an unforgiving world.

We welcome Jesus, child of God, gift of love in a bitter world.

Amen



Holy Communion

The Lord be with you. *And also with you.*

Lift up your hearts. *We lift them to the Lord.*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. *It is right to give our thanks and praise.*

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessèd is he, O blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.*

The Lord's Prayer

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, grant us peace.

Partaking of the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Blessing: Rev Richard Frazer

Organ: Allegro assai vivace, from Sonata No.1 in F minor, by Felix Mendelssohn.

Your offering for the work of the church
will be gratefully received by the door
on your way out.



Pictures contributed by Clem Bradley (Advent Candles), member of Greyfriars Kirk congregation,
and John Bann (various), member of the Grassmarket Community Project.

In 2010, the minister of Greyfriars, Richard Frazer, was challenged to write a New National Covenant for Scotland. The question posed was, 'what kind of society should we build in the 21st century?'



The signing of the National Covenant in Greyfriars Churchyard

The original, signed and adopted in Greyfriars in 1638 marks a significant moment in Scotland's unfolding story.

The Covenant might be described as one of the earliest declarations of human rights, making a virtue of the exercise of individual conscience. However, it also arrives at the conclusion of what is 'true' religion as opposed to 'false' religion and is therefore a document that leaves no room for diversity of views or plurality of belief.

The challenges of the present day, from the Climate emergency to ongoing injustice and intolerance led us to invite people to consider what we might feel called to say were a new National Covenant to be written.

Below, is the text produced by Richard, and it attempts to nod to the original.

A New National Covenant for Scotland

We and everyone of us underwritten are resolved and believe in our hearts that the times in which we live demand of us that we affirm together our aspiration for the land we love, its people and our common humanity within the family of nations.

We covenant together to work for the good of all people in Scotland. We welcome particularly those on the edge, the asylum seeker, refugee and all who feel they do not belong. We believe that the ancient tradition of open-handed hospitality to brings its own blessing.

In a world where divisions run deep we affirm our intent to act to build a fairer society in which those who are disadvantaged are lifted up and not swept aside. We call upon those in power to heed our nation's story in its struggles for freedom and humanity, liberty and democracy and pledge our support to all who labour for a renewed, spirited and passionate, creative energy in our life together.

We covenant together to undertake the costly, Gospel work of peace making and the ministry of reconciliation. We are chiefly beneficiaries of globalisation but we know that its relentless march can hurt the poorest. So we will seek to be sensitive to all who struggle for a better life whilst cherishing their own culture and we commit ourselves to the cause of fair trading, debt relief for the poorest and respect for International Law. We affirm our right to legitimate self defence but reject the use of military might as a tool of foreign policy. In an unequal world we affirm that we must be prepared to make sacrifices that others might simply live.

We covenant together to work for the good of the land of Scotland and all the earth. We have squandered our riches and used the earth harshly at times, but we commit ourselves to sustaining what is left of our wild places, to supporting local, healthy agriculture and to genuine land reform that will revitalise rural communities.

We are committed to conserving energy, developing renewable energy resources and to a just transition to a low carbon economy. We know we must learn to touch the earth more lightly. We acknowledge that those who shape our laws must be supported in working for long term good, not short-term gain.

We covenant together, with the guiding light that we follow, to respect the faith traditions that are represented in Scotland. We affirm that whether people choose to live by faith or another path, all expressions of belief that bring people more fully to life, affirm tolerance and mutual respect for persons and respect for the earth contribute to the rich diversity we cherish.

We remember that the wounds of our history run deep whilst the pace of change is fast and so we affirm our respect for the past and our commitment to nurture wholesome cultural identity. We deplore the culture of hedonism and selfishness that threatens to steal away the essential dignity of every individual and affirm that there is fulfilment to be found in rediscovering simple pleasures.

What would your New National Covenant look like?

Next November welcomes the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) to Glasgow. The Kirk's Festival of Science, Wisdom & Faith in October will reflect on reverence for the natural world and how we can all work together to sustain the earth community in all its diversity. We hope you will join us throughout 2021 as we seek to contribute in the search for the forward, toward a flourishing world for us all.

To find out more about our plans for next year, through the Kirk's 400th year, join us on social media or keep on the website. Rescheduled plans coming soon!

www.greyfriarskirk.com/400years

