

## Friday 3 July 2020

Dear Friends,

<sup>10</sup> *David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,*

*“Praise be to you, LORD,  
the God of our father Israel,  
from everlasting to everlasting.*

<sup>11</sup> *Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power  
and the glory and the majesty and the splendour,  
for everything in heaven and earth is yours.*

*Yours, LORD, is the kingdom;  
you are exalted as head over all.*

<sup>12</sup> *Wealth and honour come from you;  
you are the ruler of all things.*

*In your hands are strength and power  
to exalt and give strength to all.*

<sup>14</sup> *“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. <sup>15</sup> We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. <sup>16</sup> LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. <sup>17</sup> I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you. <sup>18</sup> LORD, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. <sup>19</sup> And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided.”*

<sup>20</sup> *Then David said to the whole assembly, “Praise the LORD your God.” So they all praised the LORD, the God of their fathers; they bowed down, prostrating themselves before the LORD and the king.*

I hope this week's letter finds you well.

While the headline news this week of a slow easing of lockdown brings some comfort to many, other news this week is deeply concerning. Job losses are mounting and many lives are being affected adversely. Covid-19 remains a health threat which has to be taken very seriously. Public worship together is still not possible (though what we are offering is likely more accessible given the move to streaming online). Schools are on holiday, so parents and carers no longer have to formally teach, but may be concerned about what a return to school will mean when it happens next month. Emergency services are gearing up for people travelling further and party-ing harder.

I've been dwelling on King David beginning to establish the temple. I know that we often de-emphasise the importance of buildings, but they do have significance to Christians, so long as they do not become the thing to be worshipped. We've been living in a time where we've had many gods to worship. 'Things' have been one of them. And even believers can fall foul of that.

As I entered St T's building more this week than I have since the end of March, I reflected on David's praise and what the Lord might teach us from it.

#### The Importance of Praise (vs 10 & 20)

Not all who go to church do so to praise the Lord. Some go out of tradition or simply to be seen. But praising and thankfulness is key to being God's people. It reminds us who the Lord is and what He has done for us. All the more so in difficult times. For what and how will you give thanks this week?

#### Everything comes from the Lord (vs 11-12, 14, 16)

The believer knows that they would have nothing without the Lord. *"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this?"*, says King David. There is a humility that comes from this realisation. Bowing and prostrating before the Lord is the result. Will I be humbled before the Lord this week as I consider his greatness?

## Long Obedience in the Same Direction should be our prayer (vs 18-19)

Eugene Petersen coined this phrase and it is apt here. David prays that the people and his son, Solomon, will *“keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you. And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees....”*.

We are in this for the long haul. Those of us who have ever had the privilege of flying across the world in economy class will know that long haul flights are not always easy!

Walking with Jesus takes some effort from us and for some that effort is too much – most of us know someone who has given up on God. For some, prayers are not answered as one expected or the Bible has been silent on a subject so they just give up on following Jesus. In church – decisions are made that one does not agree with, or people are put in positions that one thinks does not belong to them, and services are not what we want so we just stop going. Giving up on church. Even ministers can struggle – work is hard, response is not what is expected, and no one seems to appreciate their efforts, so they just stop doing the ministry.

But let's look to Jesus for our example – “Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem.” (Luke 9:51). He took the hard road. For me and you. He is with us and we have one another. Whatever lies ahead, let's walk through it together.

## Church News

**Internet Connection** – In anticipation that we will continue to livestream worship, but from the church building, at some point in the summer, we are in the process of upgrading the internet connection at St Thomas'.

**Website enhancement.** Our website will be changing early next week. You'll still be able to access the same information but it will be within a new template and the layout will be different. We'll send some more information to you by email closer to the switch over. This is ongoing but please do visit <https://www.saintthomas.org.uk>

**Thanks** to those who have been offering the online prayer times over the last few weeks. It's great to have a team of people who are willing and able to do this – Angela & Sandy Benzies, Kerstin & Thorsten Prill and Phil Taylor.

**New email address** – please change the email address you use for me to [david@stt.church](mailto:david@stt.church)

**Building Repairs** – We continue to work on completing the repairs to the stonework and lightning conductor system. Thanks especially to Sandy Benzie and Ian Divine for their efforts on this.

## **EMERGING FROM LOCKDOWN**

We anticipate the Scottish Government will publish guidance this week for faith groups on how public worship can best be offered. Please be aware that there are likely to be restrictions on numbers attending and what can happen during worship together. When we have seen these we will finalise some plans and will let you know what the guidelines are and how St Thomas' will respond.

### **St Thomas' Church, Edinburgh – Open for Prayer & Reflection**

St Thomas' Church building is open for personal prayer and reflection as follows:

Monday 10am-12pm

Wednesday 10am-12pm

Friday 10am-12pm

Though we can pray anywhere of course, we are delighted to open our building again for this purpose and offer a warm welcome to all who wish to visit.

### **What to expect in the building**

The church will be laid out with 14 chairs, some set as singles and others as doubles so that couples can sit together. Each chair, or pair of chairs, will be at least 4 meters from any other. This allows everyone to keep appropriate social distancing. If a family chooses to use the space, a staff member will arrange a suitable number of chairs. You are free to sit wherever you choose, but if the church is empty, please consider using the ones at the front as this makes it easier for others who arrive. The chair used by you will be replaced with another once you leave and set aside for 72 hours.

The disabled toilet in the hall will be available for use. The other toilets are closed in order to restrict how much cleaning has to be done.

We ask that, if possible, you leave via the door from the sanctuary into the organ loft and from there into the front garden.

We will be following strict guidelines to ensure the safety both of those who visit and of our staff.

## **What you will need to do**

Please try to follow on your visit:

1. If you have any symptoms of Covid-19 (a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of taste or smell), stay at home and get a test.
2. Maintain social distancing of 2m at all times.
3. Please wear a mask (unless you are exempt from this for health reasons). We have disposable masks available.
4. Thoroughly clean your hands upon arrival with the sanitiser provided.
5. All doors will be open, so please avoid touching handles if possible.
6. Our church staff may be meeting several different people each day. Please help us keep them safe and protected by maintaining your social distance and minimising any unnecessary contact with them.
7. Follow the signs and any directions of staff.

## **Sunday Online Worship**

### **Bearing Fruit in Hard Times**



*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Galatians 5:22-23

**Sunday July 5      Peace & Patience**  
**Sunday July 12     Kindness & Goodness**  
**Sunday July 19     Faithfulness**  
**Sunday July 26     Gentleness & Self-control**

## **Online Worship, Gathering and Communications**

Please read beyond my signature at the bottom of this letter for details of our online gatherings this week.

We continue to use Facebook Live for much of our online presence. A reminder that you do not need a Facebook account to participate in our live worship times. You simply need to go to <https://www.facebook.com/stthomasedin> and look for a red symbol which says 'Live'.

Online worship is also available live on our YouTube Channel (please subscribe!) at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1r0Eq3PqBmxioDssYXCbGQ>

We are also streaming to <https://www.pscp.tv/StThomasEdin> if you want to try something different!

Our Twitter account has also been reactivated. Search for @StThomasEdin.

If you are interested in taking part in Online Worship on Sundays either with reading or praying, please let us know. You'll have to be able to make an audio recording of your reading or intercessions in advance and then send the file to me electronically.

If you have prayer concerns or needs, please let me have them by email, text or message. You continue in my thoughts and prayers.

All love In Christ,



# **St Thomas' Church Online Week Beginning 5 July 2020**

## **Online Worship & Gathering**

All worship events are available online at:

<https://www.facebook.com/sthomasedin>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1r0Eq3PqBmxioDssYXCbGQ>

<https://www.pscp.tv/StThomasEdin>

## **Sunday 5 July**

**Online Worship @ 10.30am – Peace & Patience**

**6.30pm Prayer Base by Zoom Call**

Join Zoom Meeting – details on church office email

## **Monday 6 July**

**@12pm – Midday Prayer (Facebook only)**

## **Tuesday 7 July**

**@9.30pm Night Prayer (Facebook/YouTube/pscp.tv)**

## **Wednesday 8 July**

**@12pm Midday Prayer (Facebook only)**

**@2-3.30pm Rooted Bible Study**

Contact Kerstin Prill for how to join this 'Zoom' meeting.

## **Thursday 9 July**

**@ 10am - 'Zoom' Coffee Online**

Join Zoom Meeting– details on church office email

**@9.30pm – Night Prayer (Facebook/YouTube/pscp.tv)**