

Worship for Sunday 20th September 2020

Good morning.

Welcome to our time of worship, prepared by Neil, here as the community of believers meeting at VPBC and welcome also to those who are joining us at home.

We will share words from the Bible, sing songs of praise and take time for contemplation.

Later, we will hear from David Binns speaking from John chapter 3 and Prayers for the World is led by Jane Wright.

Let's pray this prayer of confession to begin our Worship and "Be clean".

We have not always lived in ways that reflect God's love for all. There are times when prejudice and ignorance have caused us to judge others as less important, less capable, less whole than ourselves.

Gracious God release us and grant us mercy.

We have not always lived as people assured of our place in God's heart. There are times when despair has been our refuge and we have turned from God's promises.

Gracious God release us and grant us hope.

We have not always lived as disciples of Jesus. There are times when the paths to wealth and power have been more attractive than the longer roads of justice, peace and tolerance.

Gracious God release us and grant us courage.

We have not always lived as people of the Resurrection. There are times when we have only seen the world as a place of threat and brokenness, forgetting God's creative genius.

Gracious God release us and grant us wisdom.

In quietness we remember those thoughts, actions and words that have marred your image in us, hurt others and damaged the world.

Silence

***God has heard the confession of our hearts and minds.
In Christ we are set free.
Thanks be to God. Amen.***

From the Wild Goose Worship Group (Iona Community)

Now let us "Be Still".

**Be Still and know that I am God, in repentance and rest we will find salvation. In quietness and trust, we will find strength.
May the presence, power and glory of the Lord be with us. If the Spirit is with us, so is the Father and the Son!**

Song: Still – Hillsongs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zcHHp0GTuc>

Be still

Let's spend a few minutes being still and listening to God. Let the words of that song wash over you in the stillness.

“in repentance and rest we will find salvation. In quietness and trust, we will find strength”.

In the stillness we see the light.

The darkness cannot put it out.

In him no sin is found, we stand on Holy ground.

In the stillness we can approach the Holy One.

Let us draw closer to God.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9_0jiO5ZRM

Let us pray together as we say:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:1-6 NKJV

Song: The Lord's my Shepherd

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-elQQayhpak>

**Prayers for the World prepared by Jane Wright
Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe**

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, 42, is an Iranian-British dual citizen who has been detained in Iran since 3rd April 2016. She had been visiting her family, with her daughter, and has denied charges of being guilty of 'plotting to topple the Iranian

government.’ No official charges against her have ever been made public.

She was sentenced, in September 2016, to 5 years’ imprisonment and was temporarily released in March 2020 due to the corona virus pandemic. She is ankle tagged and currently lives with her parents in Tehran.

Last Sunday, she expected to go to court to face new charges but this has been postponed.

Her husband, Richard Ratcliffe, who has been key in keeping her case in the public eye described it thus,

“For Nazanin, the uncertainty is deeply traumatic as we await the next move. This remains a game of cat and mouse between governments, with us living life as a piece of bait.”

He believes his wife, and other dual nationals, are being held hostage because the UK owes Iran £400m, for tanks ordered by the Shah in 1979, and which was never repaid due to the Islamic Revolution. The UK says it will repay but that it cannot do so because of current sanctions against Iran. There is also the issue of the two governments not being in agreement over the role of Iran in the wider Middle East or human rights. Criticism has been voiced about the handling of her case by the UK government.

Nazanin has been subjected to two months of interrogation, according to her husband, is kept in solitary confinement, has developed mental health issues and has been on hunger strike twice. Her daughter, now six, is now in the UK living with her father and one can only imagine the deep distress of this family being separated for so long and in such complex circumstances.

Let’s pray.....

Lord Jesus,

We pray, this morning, for Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and thank you for the way you have sustained her in her unjust confinement.

We ask that you keep her resilient in the demanding circumstances she has faced for the past four and a half years. We give thanks for the fact she is with her parents, at the moment, and pray that she is regaining strength by being with them and being looked after, being fed and enjoying company after so long in solitary confinement. We pray for improvement in her mental health too and for this to become consistent and robust from now on and throughout her future life.

We pray for successful diplomacy between the two countries which will result in her freedom and restoration with her husband and daughter. We ask that justice will be done in regards to the loan and that diplomatic channels will be able to facilitate a quick repaying of this debt by the UK.

We bring her parents, husband and child before you, Lord, and ask that you will give them the resources they need for each day: for themselves, each other and for Nazanin. We think particularly of her six-year-old daughter, Gabriella, and ask that you protect her from the trauma of this situation as she experiences it both privately and publicly.

We pray you will bless Nazanin and her family with your presence and peace.

Amen

Sermon. David Binns

<https://youtu.be/13G1e3DjSMA>

Our final song, I am who you say I am – Hillsongs.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcC1Bp13n_4

An Iona blessing.

May the blessing of light be on you - light without and light within.

**May the blessed sunlight shine on you like a great fire,
so that stranger and friend may come and warm himself at it.**

**And may light shine out of the two eyes of you,
like a candle set in the window of a house,
bidding the wanderer come in out of the storm.**

**And may the blessing of the rain be on you,
may it beat upon your Spirit and wash it fair and clean,
and leave there a shining pool where the blue of Heaven shines.**

And now may the Lord bless you, and bless you kindly. Amen.

Scottish Blessing, author unknown.

Church Members.

Please be ready for the Members Meeting. See the link from Becky