



Good morning and welcome. Today we will close the doors of Carnock Church after worship for the last time. It is a sad day and the thought of it has been hanging over us like a dark cloud for some time now. In order to acknowledge the pain and sense of loss that many are feeling, I'd like to begin with a reading from Psalm 102:

'Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you! Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call! My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass.

But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever; you are remembered throughout all generations. You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come. For your servants hold her stones dear and have pity on her dust.

Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.

Amen.

Prayer of approach and confession (by Sandy Muirhead)

Loving and faithful God,
Despite challenging times,
We come into your presence rejoicing,
We come to sing your praises,
We come to hear your words of power
We come to share your all-embracing love.
Be with us, Lord, in this time together as we worship
you... we come offering ourselves and seeking Your
words of comfort and wisdom at a difficult time in the life of
our church at Carnock and Oakley.

Living Jesus, we praise you because you show us that
God is Love; love which reaches out to all people; love
which does not count the cost of loving; love which never
ends. Forgive us, Lord, when we love ourselves and not
you.

We praise you, living Christ, because you are the Way: you are the way to God; you lived the way that we want to live; you guide us on God's way of life. Forgive us when we take our own way and not yours.

We praise you, Word of God, because you are the Truth: you are the truth about God; you show us the truth about ourselves; you show us how we should live as true human beings. Forgive us when we think that we know better than your truth.

And we praise you, loving Saviour, because you are the Life: you lived life perfectly, without sin; you give us the example for life; you help us to live our life to the full. Forgive us when we live for ourselves and not for you.

Loving God, help us to respond positively to your promises, and to your challenge of discipleship. Renew us in your service to this community in Carnock. Help us in the knowledge that Your true Church is found wherever Your people are praising, not cast in blocks of stone. Guide us, Lord, in your true way towards your true life.

In Jesus' name we ask all these things

Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx1eMwIDFb8>

Mission Praise 560

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like thee His praise should sing?
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise the everlasting King.

Praise Him for His grace and favour
to our fathers, in distress;
Praise Him, still the same as ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Glorious in his faithfulness.

Father-like He tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows.
In His arms He gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Widely as His mercy flows!

Angels, help us to adore Him;
ye behold Him face to face.
Sun and moon, bow down before Him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise Him! Praise Him!
Praise with us the God of grace!

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 15: 1-11

The Seventh Year

“At the end of every seventh year you are to cancel the debts of those who owe you money. This is how it is to be done. Each of you who has lent money to any Israelite is to cancel the debt; you must not try to collect the money; the LORD himself has declared the debt canceled. You may collect what a foreigner owes you, but you must not collect what any of your own people owe you.

“The LORD your God will bless you in the land that he is giving you. Not one of your people will be poor if you obey him and carefully observe everything that I command you today. The LORD will bless you, as he has promised. You will lend money to many nations, but you will not have to borrow from any; you will have control over many nations, but no nation will have control over you.

“If in any of the towns in the land that the LORD your God is giving you there are Israelites in need, then do not be selfish and refuse to help them. Instead, be generous and lend them as much as they need. Do not refuse to lend them something, just because the year when debts are cancelled is near. Do not let such an evil thought enter your mind. If you refuse to make the loan, they will cry out to the LORD against you, and you will be held guilty. Give to them freely and unselfishly, and the LORD will bless you in everything you do. There will always be some Israelites who are poor and in need, and so I command you to be generous to them.

2nd Reading: Matthew 26: 1-13

The Plot against Jesus

When Jesus had finished teaching all these things, he said to his disciples, “In two days, as you know, it will be the Passover Festival, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

Then the chief priests and the elders met together in the palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest, and made plans to arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death. “We must not do it during the festival,” they said, “or the people will riot.”

Jesus Is Anointed at Bethany

Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon, a man who had suffered from a dreaded skin disease. While Jesus was eating, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar filled with an expensive perfume, which she poured on his head. The disciples saw this and became angry. “Why all this waste?” they asked. “This perfume could have been sold for a large amount and the money given to the poor!”

Jesus knew what they were saying, and so he said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? It is a fine and beautiful thing that she has done for me. You will always have poor people with you, but you will not always have me. What she did was to pour this perfume on my body to get me ready for burial. Now, I assure you that wherever this gospel is preached all over the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”



God is a realist and he expresses the reality, in the final verse of our first reading, that there will always be poor and needy people. We see that reality depicted in the South facing window of Carnock church. There we find the hungry, the thirsty, the naked; the sick, the stranger, and those in prison. It is a depiction of Matthew 25: 31-46, where we find Jesus telling his disciples that ministering to the needy is like ministering to him. In our reading, which immediately follows those verses, it is not surprising that the disciples complain about the 'waste' of expensive oil, that could have been sold and the money given to the poor. No doubt they thought they were claiming the moral high ground. But Jesus commends the woman for her act of devotion; he says, quoting Deuteronomy 15:11, that the poor are always with you, but I will not always be with you.

The woman made use of a unique opportunity to show her love and devotion for Jesus.

For 181 years Carnock church building has given the people of the parish an opportunity, every Sunday morning, to express their devotion to Christ; a gathering in which he promises to be present. We have filled that space many times with the sweet fragrance of our praises. But that opportunity has not been taken from us; we can still meet in our Oakley church building and fill that place with our praises. The building itself is not important, it's what fills it that is. The building that our reading takes place isn't the temple, a synagogue, or some fancy house, it is the house of Simon the leper. For many it would have been a place to avoid like the plague, but it became a sacred space because of the presence of the Son of God and the devotion offered by that dear woman.

Mission Praise 708

To God be the glory!
great things he hath done;
so loved he the world
that he gave us his Son;
who yielded his life
an atonement for sin,
and opened the life gate
that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord!
let the earth hear his voice;
praise the Lord, praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice:
O come to the Father
through Jesus the Son
and give him the glory:
great things he hath done!*

O perfect redemption,
the purchase of blood!
To every believer
the promise of God;
the vilest offender
who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus
a pardon receives.

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord!
let the earth hear his voice;
praise the Lord, praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice:*

*O come to the Father
through Jesus the Son
and give him the glory:
great things he hath done!*

Great things he hath taught us,
great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing
through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher,
and greater will be
our joy and our wonder,
when Jesus we see!

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord!
let the earth hear his voice;
praise the Lord, praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice:
O come to the Father
through Jesus the Son
and give him the glory:
great things he hath done!*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CeBoSQsBR0>

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will. And may then blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.