

Orchardhill Parish Church Quiet Time Evening Service
29 June 2022

Good evening and a very warm welcome to our Quiet Time service coming from Giffnock Orchardhill Parish Church in Glasgow. We are delighted that you are here to join us in this short online service of prayer and reflection and you are all most welcome. We worship together as part of Christ's family taking comfort from God's constant presence. We share this quiet time within the embrace of God's wondrous love, joined together by the Spirit of the Risen Lord.

Let us bow our heads as we begin our prayer with these words from a well-known hymn.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
And companions on the road;
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.

Blessed Lord, into your presence we come this evening for a few moments of quietness. We come before you just as we are, with our own thoughts and feelings, our joys and anxieties, in the highs and lows of life, knowing that we are loved unconditionally by You. As we read Your word and listen for Your voice, open our eyes to Your presence in our lives, and open our lives to Your grace and majesty. May You come to us through the presence of Your spirit, to share in our worship. Amen.

Summer has arrived and the schools are closed. Now is the time when we look forward to a change in routine, perhaps a holiday away with family or friends, or a step ping back from work or duties, to recharge our batteries. It is a time when many will be making a journey. The Bible is full of accounts of journeys: in Genesis, Abraham's calling by God to lead his family and his community in search of the Promised Land; Joseph's unexpected journey as he is sold into slavery by his brothers and forced to travel to Egypt; the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus and the missionary journeys of the apostles recounted in the Book of Acts.

Our reading this evening is from the Old Testament and tells of a family forced by famine to journey to another land. Years later, one member of that family, a woman, seeks to return to her homeland. But will she return alone? The journey reveals an act of true kindness and love - it is the story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth. We read now from the Book of Ruth 1:1-19.

In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land of Judah. So a man from Bethlehem, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite

women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. With them she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go back, each of you, to your mother’s home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband. Then she kissed them goodbye, and they wept aloud and said to her, “We will go back with you to your people.” But Naomi said, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord’s hand has turned against me!”

At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." But Ruth replied, "Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." When Naomi realised that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. Amen

Our choice of music this evening comes from a service held in St Paul's Cathedral in early 2021. It's a musical setting of a traditional Irish blessing, an ancient Celtic prayer. Celtic literature is famed for using images of nature and everyday life to speak of how God interacts with His people. "May The Road rise up to meet you" is about God's blessing for our journey - may our walk be an easy one - with no huge mountains to climb or obstacles to overcome. It alludes to three images from nature - the wind, sun and rain - as pictures of God's care and provision. The "wind" can be likened to the Spirit of God, who came as a "mighty wind" at Pentecost. The sun's warmth in the prayer reminds us of the tender mercies of God, "by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven" (as mentioned in Luke 1:78), whilst the soft falling rain speaks of God's provision and sustenance. Finally, we are reminded

that we are held safe in God's loving hands as we travel on our journey through life. The singers are led by Aled Jones. Let's listen to it now.

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

[Gillian, please note the recording should start at 28 minutes 32 seconds and end on 30 minutes 58 seconds]

Let us come together now in prayer. Let us pray.

O Lord, our God, we come to You with our prayers this evening, as pilgrims on a journey, to thank You for all the ways Your grace and mercy fill our lives. We come in love, in wonder and in praise for You are our strength, our refuge and our comforter.

Almighty God, in these turbulent and uncertain times, we pray for the many peoples throughout the world who are living in war zones, in places of drought, famine, and disease, who have been displaced. Seeking shelter, they have been forced to journey far their homes, leaving behind members of their own families and their communities, uncertain of their own futures. May You watch over them all and comfort them in their time of need. May they receive the aid they so desperately need and may countries - and their governments - do all they can to offer them refuge and not to turn them away. We thank You for all those, especially the organisations and their aid workers, who

facilitate their journeys and help to find them much-needed support, comfort and security.

Heavenly Father, we remember all those close to home and in countries far away who are actively committed to ensuring that the hungry are fed, the sick are treated, the homeless are sheltered and the poor are cared for, those who, in their everyday lives, reveal Your love. Lord, we bring before You the many people who are struggling with the rise in food prices, ever-increasing costs of essential supplies, challenged by how to provide for their families. Thank you for the many food banks which have sprung up to help those in need, to see them through such difficult times. We ask You to comfort the sick, the anxious and the lonely; those who are suffering, mentally and physically at this time and especially those who have lost loved ones. We bring before You those known to us who need Your loving support at this time.

[moment of silence]

May they know the loving touch of Your comforting Spirit, we pray.

Lord, we pray for all the families who will spend holidays with their loved ones this summer, whether in Britain or abroad, after the last few years of restrictions imposed by the impact of Covid. May they enjoy their new-found freedom to explore wonderful places and to relax once again wherever their journeys may take them. We pray for our children that the normal routines of their

everyday lives may return once more, giving them the freedom to socialise together and to form or to re-establish friendships fractured by the pandemic restrictions. We look forward to our church's summer mission in early August when we will enjoy a week of community activities and fun for children and teenagers before they return once more to school and further education. We pray for all those who are already involved in planning our mission and similar activities in other communities.

And finally, Lord, we thank You for our own church, our minister Gillian and her family, our youth and family worker Lorna, the church staff and everyone who helps behind the scenes to allow us to worship and to meet together once more. May You watch over all of us, we pray, and keep us safe. We thank you for Your wondrous love, given to us in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Let us come together to say the Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name;
Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours, now and for ever. **Amen**

**And now let us close this evening's service with this
Celtic Blessing for us all.**

May the road rise up to meet us.
May the wind be always at our backs.
May the sun shine warm upon our faces;
the rains fall soft upon our fields and until we meet
again, may God hold us in the palm of His hand. **AMEN**