

# starters for Sunday

## ***Mission is About Good News***

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank the Mission Forum for their thoughts on 'mission is about good news'.

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## Quick Guide...

Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

### [Acts 10: 34-48](#)

#### **Gentiles Hear the Good News**

*Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'*

#### **Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit**

*While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.*

Peter finally gets it. As we've journeyed with Peter since his vision on Simon the tanner's rooftop, we saw his initial aversion to those outside his perception of who God is for, then a willing reluctance to go to with Cornelius' messengers, but now we see an embrace and a



proclamation of Christ's Good News to the Gentiles. “I truly understand that God shows no partiality” - those are strong words that Peter begins his Gospel account with, his sermon. There is humility, “I truly understand” perhaps implying that there was a time (recently) when he did not; there is an openness to “every nation who fears [God] and does what is acceptable to [God]”; and there is the most astounding development of first century religious thought: “no partiality”. No elevated status for Jews, or any other group for that matter.

What follows is a simple succinct account of the Gospel: Jesus came, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit, performed miracles, was put to death, rose again, and commanded that we testify about him and that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins. It is a pithy distillation of “the Jesus story” and its importance for his hearers. Peter's sermon became in concrete reality the Good News when the Holy Spirit came upon all who heard the word. At this point Peter's pioneering example of acceptance towards the Gentiles is echoed by the other circumcised Jews, who in light of the revelation of the Holy Spirit, indicated that a baptism of water should be given to the Gentile hearers.

The result of Peter's mission to those who would hear the Good News was nothing less than the outpouring of the Holy Spirit – the experience of a Christ who lived, died, and rose again for those whom he preached to. The content of the gospel – that Christ is for us – becomes, in mission, the concrete expression of the gospel – Christ with us by the Holy Spirit.

## [Psalm 85](#)

### **Prayer for the Restoration of God's Favour**

*Lord, you were favourable to your land;*

*you restored the fortunes of Jacob.*

*You forgave the iniquity of your people;*

*you pardoned all their sin.*

*Selah*

*You withdrew all your wrath;*

*you turned from your hot anger.*



*Restore us again, O God of our salvation,  
and put away your indignation towards us.*

*Will you be angry with us for ever?*

*Will you prolong your anger to all generations?*

*Will you not revive us again,  
so that your people may rejoice in you?*

*Show us your steadfast love, O Lord,  
and grant us your salvation.*

*Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,  
for he will speak peace to his people,  
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.*

*Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him,  
that his glory may dwell in our land.*

*Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;  
righteousness and peace will kiss each other.*

*Faithfulness will spring up from the ground,  
and righteousness will look down from the sky.*

*The Lord will give what is good,  
and our land will yield its increase.*

*Righteousness will go before him,  
and will make a path for his steps.*

The Psalmist prays for the forgiveness of the sins of the people; precisely what Peter promises that Christ has given believers in the Acts reading. This was the natural result of Peter giving an account of the Gospel – in his missional preaching he is able to offer everything the Psalmist desires in Psalm 85. The Psalmist notes that God has, in the past, been favourable to Jacob, and pleads for a restoration that involves a setting aside of God’s wrath against human iniquity.

By verse 10, we reach a description of how it would look if the plea were answered – a list that could be used to describe some aspects of how later early Christian writers understood Jesus’



ministry. Indeed, themes of what becomes a New Testament theology of salvation are already present in this Psalm: ideas of restoration replacing a judgement on iniquity, of steadfast love, of faith's role in salvation, and of righteousness. There is a very clear sense that the Psalmist knows what it means for God's favour to reign and the peace and wellbeing that brings for God's people.

## Prayers



*Living Stones* is the theme for this year's Pray Now. It is also the theme for Heart and Soul 2015. *Living Stones* will be published on 30 April 2015. Pre-orders and discounts are available from [St Andrew Press](#).

## Collect

Almighty and ever-living God,  
 increase in us your gift of faith,  
 that forsaking what lies behind  
 and reaching out to what is before,  
 we may run the way of your commandments  
 and win the crown of everlasting joy;  
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
 who lives and reigns  
 with you and the Holy Spirit,  
 one God, now and for ever.

## Prayer of approach

Gracious God  
 You say in the Bible  
 "Behold I make all things new".  
 But sometimes , if we are honest,  
 we like things as they are.  
 We have our settled routines  
 our ways of doing things



tried, tested and familiar  
even to the point that we resent  
new ideas, new people  
anything that might upset the applecart.

Yet you call us to be a pilgrim people  
on a journey  
seeing new things  
meeting new people  
open to share good news with others  
and be good news to them

Thank you that we once were the “new people”  
and others welcomed us  
Thank you that when we had new ideas  
others listened to us

Help us today to listen to you  
and learn to be  
a warm people  
a winsome people  
a welcoming people  
for Jesus’ sake. Amen

### **Offering**

You have given us so much  
and have held nothing back  
that we might receive your good news.  
Help these gifts and our lives  
bring good news to others  
so that you may be glorified  
for Jesus’ sake. Amen.



**Prayers of thanksgiving (Prayer based on the [Mission Forum report 2014](#))**

Thank you, Lord  
for calling us like your disciples to follow you  
Thank you that there is no contract to sign  
no small print to examine  
no conditions over which to haggle.

Your call is clear and unconditional  
and your life and death and resurrection  
are our model of mission  
You said “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you”  
and we follow in your steps.

Thank you that you came among us:  
for the way you lived,  
for the message you shared,  
for the call to repentance and faith,  
and the start of a new life of faith.

Thank you that you came  
with open hands of welcome  
open words of invitation  
and an open heart to receive.

Thank you for those who have heard and seen the gospel  
whose lives have been changed  
who have found forgiveness  
who have received mercy  
and been given hope.

Help us to pass on your love to others  
to live it out before them



to share it by the words we speak  
and the lives we lead  
and the people, by your grace, we are becoming.

Thank you for those  
whose hearts have glowed and lit up others  
who have taught and brought out the best in others  
who have just kept on keeping on, despite it all  
who have given service to the community.

Help us to feed the hungry  
to heal the sick  
to care for those who are ill  
to comfort the sad  
to mend broken hearts  
to welcome the stranger  
and make them feel at home  
and so to make Jesus' known.

May we be wherever we are  
the peacemaker,  
the listener,  
the carer  
and the one who prays for others  
and in so doing serve a world in need  
for Jesus' sake.

Amen





**Prayers of Intercession (based on the [Mission Forum report 2014](#))**

Loving God

You call on your church to be  
the salt of the earth  
and the light of the world

We pray for our society  
where those who lack meaning in the present  
and hope for the future.

We pray for those who live in a world of isolation  
discouragement and estrangement.

Show us the way to build communities of faith  
where lives can be rebuilt  
and hope rekindled

God of hope, have mercy on us, and help us bring good news

We pray for our church also  
where congregations have become weak  
and leadership struggles;  
where financial pressures are constant  
and the congregation is ageing.

Help us to hear your call to the adventure of faith  
and respond in glad and willing obedience

God of hope, have mercy on us, and help us be good news

We pray for a climate of honesty and trust  
where we can admit our shortcomings  
and, as fellow travellers, reach out a hand to others  
as you have reached out your hand to us  
so that we can travel in the future together.

God of hope, have mercy on us, and help us live good news



We pray for those on the margins of our society  
thankful that the church is also there  
Help us to be a voice for the voiceless  
and in our vulnerability to show solidarity in our common bond.  
Help us to work together  
for the common good  
and to witness the transformation of lives  
through the power of the gospel.  
God of hope have mercy on us, and may we share good news  
For Jesus sake  
Amen

**Benediction**

May your eyes shine with the love of Christ  
May your hands show the compassion of Christ  
May your lips tell of the good news of Christ  
and all you say do and are be for the glory of Christ  
Amen



## Time with Children

### The purpose

To show that the Christian message shared should be good news because it brings peace to those who hear.

### The object lesson

Collect a selection of newspapers through the week and sit amongst the children or put up on the data projector a selection of articles on the internet from the previous week.

*NB: Ensure that appropriate material is considered as some papers may contain adult issues that parents/carers may wish to pursue at their pace with their children.*

Bring out the point that the pattern of reporting often focuses on the negative/bad news and there is often a plea for a good news story. There is even a [Good News website](#). This website focuses on good news and maybe a source of illustrative information in the lead up to this service.

Ask the children what they feel of the stories you've selected. Ask them why good news is important to hear about?

Explore some of the responses, such as...

- makes me feel happy/good, or sad that we don't think about these good things enough.
- hopeful that things can sometimes get better, wish there were more good news stories
- good things happen too,
- reminds us that people can be good.

### The story

*NB: A visual whether drawn by you or someone in your congregation or sourced on from a website such as [Good Salt](#) which has a vast religious image gallery can add to a child's interest in the story.*

At the end of our story last week we had heard that Cornelius had invited Peter and we find out this week what they talk about when they met. Before we go any further just think about this. Peter was a dropout Jewish fisherman. He was from a poor background and was part of a group where their leader Jesus had ended up in trouble with the Romans. Peter in the past had been so



angry with a soldier he had chopped his ear off. Cornelius was a rich successful army officer in the local headquarters who came from Italy and would not want to be in the same company as a person like Peter. They usually would be two people that would be angry with each other and even hate each other. Peter could have thought that Cornelius should leave his country and go home to Italy and Cornelius could have thought that Peter was a troublemaker that should be in prison. Instead they discovered that God wanted them to meet. What was the only thing they had in common that brought them together? It was this - they both wanted to follow Jesus and that meant they were to be more than friends. Jesus wanted them to be part of God's forever family and be kind and caring and at peace with each other. How could this happen? Both of them knew that Jesus reminded them that God loves both of them and that they should love and care for each other.

Both of them were glad that God brought them together but what would others think when they found out that those who were once enemies were not just friends but part of the same family. God's family.

### **Application**

When you chat about your day with your "grand/parent(s)/carer" at the end of each day this week think about something good that happened during the day and ask them what good thing happened to them? Ask them why it was a good thing? If you have a difficult day share about that too and ask God for help so that something good can come out of it. Let's talk to God...

### **Prayer**

Dear God, please help us think more about the good things that happen to us. We thank you for the good news about Jesus. Thank you that we now know that God's forever family can include so many different people. Please teach us to love each other instead of being angry or annoyed with each other. Help us to think about good things about others even those who have annoyed us in the past. Help us to more peaceful and calm. Amen.



## Additional Resources

### Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

### Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Living Stones](#) is available to pre-order now from [St Andrew Press](#).



### Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

### Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

### Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

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*Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.*

