

starters for Sunday

Mission is an Adventure

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank the Mission Forum for their thoughts on 'Mission is an Adventure'.

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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 11: 1-18](#)

Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, saying, 'Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?' Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 'I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. I also heard a voice saying to me, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." But I replied, "By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth." But a second time the voice answered from heaven, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, "Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved." And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?' When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, 'Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.'



The way the Judean believers accost Peter on his fraternisation with Gentiles betrays an element of prejudice against the Gentiles, but perhaps also an element of jealousy. Before they hear Peter's account, they seem both perplexed and offended that Peter had spent his time with Cornelius and his friends. Perhaps it was merely an innocent question seeking a simple explanation, but the depth of Peter's account suggested he knew they would want a very good reason why he had behaved in this way.

This is the way it can be if we receive good things: and the Judeans had received the best of the best in the Holy Spirit. It is too easy to prize the good things in life, not because they are simply and objectively good, but because they are exclusive to us. It seems human nature that exclusivity and value are directly related. Yet, as Peter and the Judeans have found, that is not how God works.

As Peter tells the story of his vision and what happened after he preached the gospel to the Gentiles, there is a pause. A silence. A penny-dropping moment for the Judean believers. It's at that point their perspective changes. They realise that God's Spirit is for all, and that this can only be a good thing. They take another step on the adventure of mission, and go from rejoicing in the goodness of God with them, to celebrating the gift of God given to all people. Their final remark is telling: "the repentance that leads to life". Such is the inevitable momentum of mission, the irresistible drawing forward of God's people towards life- and a life of adventure at that.

[Joel 2: 21-32](#)

Do not fear, O soil;

be glad and rejoice,

for the Lord has done great things!

Do not fear, you animals of the field,

for the pastures of the wilderness are green;

the tree bears its fruit,

the fig tree and vine give their full yield.



O children of Zion, be glad
and rejoice in the Lord your God;
for he has given the early rain for your vindication,
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the later rain, as before.
The threshing-floors shall be full of grain,
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.

I will repay you for the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent against you.

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.

And my people shall never again be put to shame.
You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other.

And my people shall never again
be put to shame.

Then afterwards
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.



I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

The second chapter of Joel is an adventurous read, not least due to the sheer enormity of Joel's vision. Joel's warning, before the words of comfort in this reading, is of devouring fires, rumbling chariots, the onslaught of a cast and voracious army. It is a truly terrifying, almost cataclysmic, description of the judgement of God upon the people. And this comes in contrast to the reassurance and promise contained in the section of our reading.

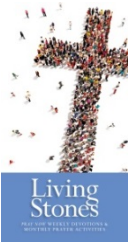
It becomes clear in verse 25 that Joel's apocalyptic imagery was a description of a destructive devouring plague of locusts laying the nation's crop to waste. In answer to Joel's concerns and worries about God's judgement, God speaks reassurance and comfort to the people, and makes a renewed promise for the good times ahead: "You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame."

However, the vivid description becomes far more than a welcome restoration. By verse 28 God promises his Spirit upon all people. The adventure begins. And the adventure looks like sons and daughters prophesying, the elderly dreaming and the young seeing visions. It is striking that this outpouring is universal, regardless of human distinctions: "Even", God says "on the slaves I will pour out my spirit".

Joel returns to the apocalyptic imagery in the closing verses, but this time the drama surrounds the adventure of God's spirit pouring out across the world, not the ravaged destruction of the world.



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 God,
 your servant Abraham obeyed your call,
 rejoicing in your promise
 that in him all the families of the earth
 should be blessed.
 Give us faith like his,
 that in us your promises may be fulfilled;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns
 with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.

Prayer of approach

We thank you Gracious God
 that whoever we are
 whatever our background
 no matter our age, or gender,
 or our place in society
 we can know you for ourselves
 through the living presence of the Holy Spirit
 Jesus' parting gift to us.
 Come, Holy Spirit, Come.



Come to us now
as we gather for worship
cleanse us from all that spoils our life
and keeps us at a distance from you
Pardon our sins
through the death of Jesus for us, in our place
fill our empty souls to overflowing
through the Spirit's power
Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

Come to us now
and help us to dream dreams and see visions.
Help us to marvel at all that you have done for us
and all that you will do , through us for others.
Guide our thoughts and actions.
Bring us closer to you so that we might do your will
and so may be able to witness to your presence
Come, Holy Spirit, Come.
for Jesus' sake. Amen

Offering

Living God
take what we bring, in this and other ways
and use it to advance your mission.
Take our gifts
and use them to help your Kingdom grow
Take our witness
and use it for the spread of the gospel
Take our service
and use it to make known your love
for your glory. Amen



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

Living God,
thank you for the adventure of faith
that we step into an unknown future
believing that you are with us.

You go before us and you walk beside us.
Help us to keep in step with your Spirit
and to respond to where others are in their lives.
and for that we ask for courage.

Lord sometimes your work is hard
it can be exhausting, demanding, frustrating
it can bring us down to our knees in despair and dependence
and for that we ask for grace.

Yet at the same time
here is life in all its fullness
and it can energise us, liberate us, fulfil us
and cause us to worship and wonder
and for that we give you thanks.

Help us to draw closer to you
to know you better
to love you in a deeper way
and to serve you with all our hearts
and for that fill us with your Spirit.

Help us to build bridges
to be agents of reconciliation
to reach out in welcome, kindness
and in giving a helping hand
and for that give us strength.



Make us part of both the church and the community
sharing in the life of each
learning from both
and serving both in turn.
and for that give us love.

May we not be afraid of tears and laughter
of times when we soar and others when we plod
always looking for tokens of grace along the road
and for that keep us faithful.

In all we do
give us clear minds, warm hearts
and a willingness to get dirty hands
so that the “good news” may be shared
and you may receive the glory
for Jesus’ sake.

Amen

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

Living God

We thank you for all the work our Councils and Committees do to advance the cause of mission
and to help us, as congregations, undertake the task of mission

We pray for the Mission and Discipleship Council
as it seeks to develop the whole people of God for mission.

Bless what it does to connect, resource and inspire.

May the resources it produces and the events it runs
help congregations to reach out beyond their walls.

We pray for the task of resourcing resourcefulness
and for equipping leadership in churches
especially for Session Clerks, elders



and those who lead worship or work among the young.
Help us, through them, to see fresh ways of reaching out
and to try “fresh expressions”
of being church in our parish
and so be willing to take risks in the adventure of faith.

We pray for the Church and Society Council
as it raises awareness of issues of justice and peace
and the integrity of creation.
Help it as it engages with political and civil leaders
in debate and discourse
on the social, ethical, economic and political issues of the day.
Help them as they draw attention
to a world suffering from the destruction of natural habitats,
the exhaustion of natural resources and the pollution of soil, water and air,
- the consequences of overpopulation and overconsumption.
Help them to work with others and with us
to protect our world from the devastation
caused by human sin, greed and selfishness
May it play its part in creating a freer and fairer society for all
and ensure that Christian values play their part in the shaping of our land.
Help us through them, to know when to stand up and be counted
and where we can help in the building of community around us
and so be willing to take risks in the adventure of faith.

We pray for the Ministries Council
for the leadership it provides for congregations throughout Scotland.
We pray for ministers, deacons, and OLMs (Ordained Local Ministers)
that you will keep them true to their calling.
We pray for candidates in training
and for the process of Enquiry and Assessment Conferences



that those whom you are calling for vocational service
may be equipped for service for the years ahead.

We pray for the right people to come forward
to meet the forecast shortages and enable our church
to continue to minister to all the people of Scotland.

Help us to recognise where God is calling people into ministry
and to support people as they explore their vocation
and so be willing to take risks in the adventure of faith.

We pray for the Social Care Council
and for the wide ranging ministry of Crossreach
We thank you for its vision to care for people
whatever their need and whatever their situation

For young and old, for lost and lonely,
for battered and bruised, for sick and struggling
we pray that they may help each person
retain and regain the highest quality of life
which each individual is capable of experiencing
at any given time.

Help Crossreach to continue its work
in an adverse financial climate
where the resources needed for the work
do not match the income received for all they do.
Help us to look out for the needy and disadvantaged,
the vulnerable in our midst
and to provide the support we can for them
and so be willing to take risks in the adventure of faith.

We pray for the World Mission Council
and for all our links with the church internationally.
Thank you for the window into the world that it provides.



We pray for the work it does in making connections
between individuals, congregations and Presbyteries
so that we can learn from each other
and walk together in faith and love
and through sharing experiences and resources
we can seek “life in fullness for all”.

Help us through its eyes
to rejoice with those who rejoice
to weep with those who weep
to stand alongside those who are struggling
to learn from those who are growing.
Help us to see in what ways we can forge links
with churches in other lands
and so grow in partnership with them
and so be willing to take risks in the adventure of faith

We pray for the Panel of Review and Reform
that it may keep before us
our vision for mission in today’s world
and prepare us for the challenges of tomorrow
Help us to be open to new ideas
to trying things a different way
if it may advance the gospel
and so be willing to take risks in the adventure of faith.

We pray for the Ecumenical Relations Committee
that it may remind us that the Church of Jesus Christ
is bigger than the Church of Scotland
Help us to pray for the Church in Scotland
as well as the Church of Scotland.
Help us to work in collaboration and solidarity



with churches who share our commitment
to act together in all matters
except where deep differences of conviction
compel us to act separately.
Help us to know and welcome our neighbouring churches
to find ways to working together
for the good of Scotland.
and so be willing to take risks in the adventure of faith.

We pray for Faith in Community Scotland
who partners with our church in mission
who keeps before us the challenge of those
in Scotland's economically poorest communities.
Help them as they work with all
who desire to challenge and overcome
poverty and exclusion.
Help us to hear the voices of the poor
and realise all they have to teach us
when they have nothing but God to lean upon
and so be willing to take risks in the adventure of faith

Here these or prayers for some of the Councils and Committees of our church
for Jesus' sake, Amen

Benediction

Go out into the world.
and in your words and in your lives
bear witness to the Christ who has ascended
to be everywhere present.

And as you come to know him,
may God give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation,



may Christ Jesus lift up his hands and bless you,
and may the Spirit open to you all the riches of Christ's inheritance.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
... In the name of Christ. Amen.

Time with Children

The purpose

To show that mission is an adventure because we go on a journey where we see God at work in different people's lives.

The object lesson

A collection of hats or pictures of people in different jobs. Ask the children to think about who they meet and what job the person has (e.g. teacher, police person, librarian, checkout assistant, shop owner) Ask them to describe what they look like and explore what types of tasks each of these people might do. Some wear uniforms to tell you what they do or they have a badge with their name and job title on it. While they are all different and we may like some of their jobs more than others God still cares for them all. They are all human beings. They are all God's children.

Alternatively, you could think of members in the congregation and the different jobs they have and ask them to bring their uniform or something to do with their work. You explore with them beforehand the question, "does everyone like what you do?"

The link here is that not everyone would like Cornelius because he was a soldier from Rome.

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.

When Peter had to go back to the big church in Jerusalem where the church rulers stayed Peter had to explain what happened with him and Cornelius. They did not understand why he would talk to a soldier about Jesus, especially a soldier like Cornelius. These other followers had avoided talking to people like him because they did not think God was interested or cared for



him. This made them doubt that Peter had done the right thing. When Peter was questioned, he had to be brave and show that God did care for them and say what happened. Sometimes when we care for people different from who we are it makes other people think. We need to help them see that God cares for everyone and that it is ok for us to care for them too.

Mission is like an adventure, it is a journey. When we believe that God loves all it makes other people think if they should love them too. An adventure like that can be scary because you don't know what others might think. So like Peter we have to be brave. These rulers did agree with what Peter said that God does care for everyone and that we should share the good news that everyone can be part of God's forever family.

Application

When we are at school it is important to be kind not just to your friends but to those who are not your friends too. Some of your friends might think that is strange and wonder if you are doing the right thing. Ask them why they wouldn't be kind, ask them if that is the right thing to do. You might even be brave enough to say that to be a Christian You need to try and show kindness to others.

It might be hard to do but it may stop others being nasty in the playground because they are thinking more about what you said.

Let's talk to God....

Prayer

Dear God, please help us to explain other why we believe we should be kind to others, even to those who are not our friends. Help us to be brave like Peter. We want to be on an adventure but sometimes that's scary because we don't know what will happen next. Sometimes we don't know what our friends will think of us if we follow Jesus and be kind to those that are cruel to other people in the class room. Help us to be brave. 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.

