

starters for Sunday

Moderators' Worship Notes: Very Rev John Christie

Stewardship Season

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank the Very Rev John Christie, Interim Minister and former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, for his thoughts on the stewardship of time.

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Introduction

Christian Stewardship is a fundamental part of Christian Discipleship. It is concerned with the gifts of God and the way we use these gifts. It is concerned with the love and commitment of God to the world and its people, and with our response to God's love and God's commitment.

Worship has a pivotal role in any consideration of Christian Stewardship in the life of the Church. In worship we give thanks for the gifts of God; we confess our failure to use these gifts as God expects them to be used; we explore the pages of the Bible and engage in theological reflection on God's giving and our response; we offer to God our time, our talent and our money to advance the kingdom.

Three former Moderators of the General Assembly kindly agreed to take us on a journey through some of their personal thoughts about the stewardship of time. They offer us prayers, sermon notes and hymn suggestions, however it is up to the reader to adapt these as he/she sees appropriate.

I wish to express my gratitude to the contributors for their time and assistance in writing this material which can be found on the Church of Scotland [Starters for Sunday pages](#) and on the [Resourcing Mission](#) website, where additional archive material can also be found.

Edith Scott

Acting Team Leader – Stewardship and Finance



Use [Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8](#) a Gathering reading (or on the Order of Service if you use one.)

‘There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.’

Theme: ‘Have you got a hand to help?’

Gifts from God¹

When we think about gifts from God, we should begin at the beginning. The fundamental gift we receive from God is life in God’s world. This gift includes the gifts of space and time which provide us with many opportunities – to enjoy the beauty and wonder of creation, to work, to rest, to give, to receive.

God’s gift of life is the gift of unique life: each one of us is different, with his/her own strengths and weaknesses. To some extent we develop these strengths and skills. To some extent they are part of our unique personalities. God’s gift of life includes the gift of talent.

No Christian understanding of gifts from God would be complete without reference to God’s gift of new life in Christ. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus signify God’s intervention in the life of the world– an intervention occasioned by God’s love for his world and its people, and God’s commitment to his world and its people. The supreme gift from God is the gift of love. This supreme gift continues to come to us through the presence and power of God’s Spirit, working through people and events.

Key themes²

- Time for God
- Time for work and time for leisure
- Time for other people
- Time for the Church

¹ See http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/8838/Worship_Resources.pdf ‘Stewardship Worship Resources’ page 3

² See http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/8838/Worship_Resources.pdf ‘Stewardship Worship Resources’ page 10



Scripture readings

[Joshua 24: 14-15](#)

Joshua's time is nearly done. Gathering the people of Israel who he'd led into the Promised Land first he rehearses what God has done for the people. Joshua's message is reflective and challenging, concluding with the challenge 'Choose yourselves this day who you will serve but as for me and my household we will serve the Lord'.

[Psalm 65](#)

The psalm is song of praise of promises made, forgiveness given, hope provided, creation nurtured which is enfolded in a bright vision of joy and song.

[Luke 5: 1-11](#)

Luke's account of Jesus' call to the first of the disciples. The fishermen give Jesus their time in response to Jesus giving them his time. Read through the 'lens of time' this section offers some helpful starting thoughts. The disciples were tired they're last task of the night and the first task of the day washing their nets so that they're ready for coming night's fishing. Time was asked by Jesus and was given. The result astonishing.

[1 Corinthians 12: 4-6](#)

Paul has worked his way through the difficulties which were being experienced by the members of the Church in Corinth. Chapter 12 sees a change of mood and challenge to the all the members of the Congregation. No two of us are the same, everyone has different gifts but these gifts flow from the same source which us God's Spirit, the Creator. The mystery deepens as life is described in its fragility when compared to the infinity of life and power of God.



Some initial thoughts

Time is the indefinite continued progression of existence and events that occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future³. Another definition the insight of which comes from the wisdom of a Church member in Zimbabwe: *'When God made Europeans God gave them watches, when God made Africans God gave them time'*

Belonging in Christ's Church derives from the saving grace of Christ experienced at our Baptism and affirmed in the Confirmation question:

*'Do you promise to give a fitting proportion of your time, talents and money for the Church's work in the world'*⁴

We belong in the Church as our response to God's love in Christ Jesus. We have chosen to follow Christ and have promised to give our time. There is a sense in which the gift of time is a priority. We may be talented in so many ways but if we do not take time to use our skills and talents in the life of the Church then our Christian life, Congregational life and Mission life is diminished.

It is essential to acknowledge the amount of time given freely to the Church. For example, my attendance at the General Assembly is part of my working life. I don't have to take time off work to be a Commissioner. I recognise that Half the Commissioners to the General Assembly in any year will have given of their time and, many will have given a week of their annual leave just as they do in their home congregations. That represents a lot of hours!

One of the insights which I had arising from my year as Moderator was a new understanding of 'the last first and the first last'. Everything I did in that amazing year was a first and it was also the last. There were no second chances. It is a parable for life - we get one chance to use our time. We have a choice to use it wisely, well and generously or to waste it frittering it away.

George Matheson's hymn 'Make me a captive Lord'⁵ uses the imagery of a clock in the second verse.

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time>

⁴ Common Order 1994 page 117

⁵ Church Hymnary 4 number 534



My heart is weak and poor
Until it master find;
It has no spring of action sure
It varies with the wind⁶
It cannot freely move
Till thou hast wrought its chain
Enslave it with thy deathless love
And deathless it shall reign.

John Harrison used his enormous skills of engineering genius and carpentry to solve one of the ‘thorniest dilemmas of is day’ - the problem of Longitude. Latitude is comparatively easy to measure but longitude can be measured only if a person knows the time at departure and present time too. He devised. Harrison dared to imagine a mechanical solution (as opposed to an astronomical one) a clock that would keep precise time at sea, something no clock had ever been able to do on land⁷.

It took him 40 years to build his perfect clock – known today as a chronometer. Now there’s commitment!

The disciples were thirled to time. The routine of fishing – always a physically demanding and dangerous occupation – was interrupted by Jesus. He wanted to borrow their boat as a pulpit. They gave their time. Net-washing suspended and, despite their reluctance, having fished all night, they did what Jesus asked. They were rewarded by a huge catch they would have to begin again. They gave their time and for the rest of their lives they continued to give their time and with it their skills and talents too

Have you a hand to help?

Conclude with, for example, ‘The Dash’ by Linda Ellis © 1996⁸. Copyright permission is not required to read or recite the poem.

⁶ The word ‘wind’ refers to the winding of a clock spring.

⁷ Longitude, Dava Sobel published by 4th Estate London

⁸ <http://www.linda-ellis.com/the-dash-the-dash-poem-by-linda-ellis.html>



For the younger people

A wind up clock would be useful to illustrate 'Time'.

Alternatively, there are several helpful websites available⁹.

John Harrison's Chronometer could be discussed¹⁰. There are some interesting stories about shipwrecks which would hold the interest (as well as serving as an introduction to the sermon).

Perhaps, a general theme might be Children and Young people have something to offer too. The gift of their time when, for example, they go to visit grandparents.

Some suggestions for Praise¹¹

CH4 210, CH3 42, MP 804	Awake, my soul, and with the sun
CH3 684, MP 55	Beneath the cross of Jesus
CH4 755, MP 48	Be still and know that I am God
CH4 189, MP 50	Be still, for the presence of the Lord
CH4 577	Christ be beside me
CH4 213	Every new morning
CH4 567	Focus my eyes on you, O Lord
CH4 107	Give thanks unto the Lord our God – Psalm 107
CH4 538, CH3 433	God be in my head, and in my understanding
MP 228	Here from the world we turn, Jesus to seek
CH4 1	How blest are those who do not stray – Psalm 1
CH4 84	How lovely is thy dwelling place - Psalm 52
CH3 364, MP 397	King of glory, King of peace
CH4 93	Let us with a gladsome mind - from Psalm 136

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHIVeWhCMU8>

¹⁰ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/john-harrisons-longitude-clock-sets-new-record-300-years-on-10187304.html>

¹¹ See http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/8838/Worship_Resources.pdf 'Stewardship Worship Resources' page 9 (with the addition of some Psalms)



MP 419	Like a mighty river flowing
CH4 237	Look forward in faith
CH4 159, MP 428	Lord, for the years
CH4 166, CH3 92, MP 882	Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy
CH4 782	Lord of life, we come to you
CH4 536, CH3 432, MP 463	May the mind of Christ my Saviour
CH4 534	Make me a captive, Lord
CH3 680	My times are in thy hand
CH4 214, CH3 47, MP 480	New every morning is the love
CH4 644, CH3 434, MP 501	O Jesus, I have promised
CH4 100	O Lord thou art my God and King – Psalm 145
CH4 552, CH3 663, MP 494	Oh, for a closer walk with God
CH4 160	Praise my soul the king of heaven
CH4 221, CH3 649, MP 584	Saviour, again to thy dear name we raise
CH4641, MP 590	Seek ye first the kingdom of God
MP 620	Sweet is the work, my God, my King
CH4 501	Take this moment, sign and space
MP 625	Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord
CH4 220, CH3 646, MP 641	The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended
CH4 194, MP 691	This is the day
CH4 392	When I survey the wondrous cross
CH4 737, CH3 412, MP 770	Will your anchor hold in the storms of life



Prayer

God our Creator before time you are and after time you still are.

We bless you for your gift of time:

expressed in the magnificence of the Universe its darkness lit by Galaxies and Stars and planets;
in the beauty of the Earth and in the splendour of the diversity of life.

We thank you for the time you have given each of one of us
whom you made in your own image
and for the gift of time in which we can glorify your name.

We bless you, Eternal Father, for your love shown to us
in the life and death and resurrection of your Son Jesus whom you sent when the time was right
to be our Saviour and our Redeemer.

We are well aware that we have not offered you our time as we should,
We admit to you the time which we've not used well when we have been unkind and uncaring,
when we have been selfish and self-centred when we have hurt others and when we have hurt
you.

We ask that you will forgive us enabling us better to use the time we have
in life and work of Christ's Kingdom as we commit ourselves to use our time wisely and well
in our family lives, our working lives, our church lives
so that skills and talents you give us will be directed by the Holy Spirit
and enhanced in the love and light of Christ Jesus our Lord
in whose name we offer our prayer. Amen



Further Advice

For any advice or ideas on Stewardship Programmes for your church, please contact:

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Additional Resources

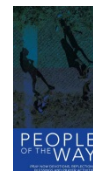
Resourcing Mission



[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. [People of the Way](#) is available 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.

