

Gathering of God's People

Time when we greet one another and prepare for worship.
Those who are able please stand for the entry of the Bible.
Words of welcome and announcements.

Worshipping God Together

Call to worship

Minister: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful
songs.

Know that the Lord is God.

All: **It is he who made us, and we are his, we are his people,**
the sheep of his pasture.

MP 49 Be bold, be strong

Opening prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Let us pray:

Lord of the Church,

we recognise that you have given each one of us a part to play in your body.

We thank you that you believe in us and have a vision for your Church.

Strengthen us where we are weak, guard us where we are strong, give us humility
where we are proud, and in your patient love continue to call us to serve you in the
places of your choice.

Give us grace to grow in faith that we might step into new situations with joy.

Give us courage to use our gifts that others may hear the good news of the
kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And
forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever.
Amen.

Children's address

MP 13:1,2,4 All hail the power of Jesus' name

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Exodus 17:8-16 (OT page 75)

Reader: Janice McFarlane

Background to the reading

The author tells us a few interesting things in this chapter. First that the people of God was on the move out of the Desert of Sin and they camped at Rephidim. Rephidim is traditionally thought to be present-day Wadi Refayld near Jebel Musa, the supposed site of Mount Sinai. There was no water and the people of God complained against Moses and blamed him for taking them out of Egypt. This was worse than their murmurings of distrust at Marah or in the Desert of Sin, for here they quarreled with Moses and were about to stone him. Such quarreling, Moses said, was putting the Lord to the test, that is, they were challenging the Lord or trying His patience rather than trusting Him.

But God was patient with His disobedient and grumbling people. He told Moses to take the staff with which he had struck the Nile River and to strike a rock at Horeb. This "staff of God" was a symbol of power; holding it was a sign of dependence and trust in God. "Horeb" can mean the Sinai region. Rephidim was close to Sinai so that the mountain slopes reached there. In Moses' striking the rock, the Lord was pleased to satiate His thirsty people with an abundant supply of water. So the Lord provided for them through another miracle. Because the people had tested the Lord there, Moses called the place by two names: Massah ("testing") and Meribah ("quarreling").

At Rephidim the Lord also gave His people a military victory. The Amalekites were nomads in the desert south of Canaan. They were descendants of Esau. They apparently were attempting to dislodge the Israelites from this pleasant oasis and to secure their territory from intrusion. In this crisis Moses called on Joshua, who is mentioned here for the first time. Though Joshua entered into battle with zeal, the victory was secured in a unique fashion in order to demonstrate God's power. Moses' holding the staff of God above his head with both hands symbolized Israel's total dependence on the power of God. When Moses lowered his hands, a picture of lack of dependence, the enemy was winning. With the assistance of Aaron and Hur Moses' hands remained uplifted and a great victory was secured. Hur also helped Aaron to rule the people while Moses went up into Mt Sinai. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Hur was the husband of Miriam, the sister of Moses, but there is no biblical proof. **Aaron was** the eldest brother of Moses, who was born in Egypt three years before Moses, and a number of years after his sister Miriam.

The defeat of the Amalekites was something God wanted Joshua to remember. The Amalekites remained a persistent, harassing enemy of Israel until they were finally destroyed by King David. Moses commemorated the victory in his day by building an altar which he named the Lord is my Banner.

So what was the meaning of the text to the first listeners?

The author of Exodus emphasized to the people of Israel to trust God. God works in many mysterious ways. He is and will always remain in control. He is the loving and caring God who made sure his people have water to drink, despite their bad attitude. He even protected them from the foes the Amalekites. He worked through Moses but also other people. He worked in the hearts of Aaron and Hur. Although

Aaron and Hur were not strong fighters like Joshua, they still performed a very important task. By helping to lift Moses' arms, they played a big part the providence of God and in the victory.

And this is the message to us as well. We are all part of God's plan, as long as we are willing to offer ourselves to God.

Amen

MP 640:1,4,5 The Church's one foundation

Reading 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 & Sermon

You and I form the church. We are the church everywhere we go. A church is much more than a building. It is much more than an individual person. The church is about God and His presence among us. And just like Aaron and Hur, we all have a part to play, just like Paul wrote to the Corinthians in chapter 12:12-31:

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by^[a] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. ²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues^[b]? Do all interpret?

³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

To understand our reading we need to know where Paul was coming from. He was a Jew and as a Jew boundaries and rules were very important to him just as the categories of clean and unclean, whole and brokenness. In our reading he is emphasising and making the point that there are no such thing as one body part being lesser in importance. All body parts form one whole body. And a body can only work when all the body parts work together.

Paul was making the point that we all form together the body of Christ on earth. Everyone of you that is sitting here with me this morning, are important to God. He has a special role and plan for you and me. We cannot be all ministers, We cannot all be elders or board members. We cannot all be on the Guild committee. We cannot all be working with the Youth. But equally we cannot say that I am too weak or too inadequate or too busy or too frail or too old or too young or too poor or without any gifts. No that is not what is expected of us. Whatever and whoever you are, just make yourself available and God's Spirit will do the rest. We have all received the same Spirit! And we do not need to be the same, and have the same personalities. We can be different and diverse as long as we know we belong to ONE body.

Last year we were on the brink of cancelling the Holiday club because of a lack of volunteers coming forward and then once an urgent appeal were make, the Holiday club went ahead and what happened? The Lord blessed the week in abundance as 40 to 50 children turned up every day and some of the children decided to come to Sunday school afterwards. Some children even motivated their parents to become involved. The Lord let a miracle happen in our midst once we offered ourselves to His service.

The same happened with the Kozy Kaff. Once we decided to cancel it – the community in Kirknewton missed it so much and nominated it in the category for the best community project. And you all know the result. Kozy Kaff was awarded the best community project and we could be a witness to the Lord's loving care.

And I am sure this pattern will keep happening until we realise what the Lord can do despite our unwillingness, stubbornness, lack of commitment and apathy.

After our last ASM meeting it dawned upon me how grateful we must be – grateful of how the Lord is blessing us as a fellowship. We have nothing to worry about. And still there is so much we can do, not only in our fellowship but for our communities.

We can start shaping the church of tomorrow by coming forward and offering our services/talents/money/gifts/enthusiasm/time to start projects for our youth especially those who are in Secondary school. We have a wonderful opportunity to do something great for our youth in both villages. All we need is you. Maybe you have a brilliant idea. Maybe you have a night available to help. Maybe you are sitting here and are feeling the call of the Lord. Please do not neglect His call. And this is only one area where we need help!

You and I can hold the hands of the leaders of our communities. You and I can make such a difference – we have faith, we have love, we have hope and we have the assurance that God’s Holy Spirit is with us. Why should we be afraid? Why should we not offer ourselves? Jesus Christ gave us so much.

I can tell you one thing – I know how it feels when people are lifting your hands when they are getting wearied and tired. I feel it almost all the time in my ministry with people lifting my hands to do the work I was called to do and it is a wonderful feeling and experience to know that God is taking care of you. I have also lifted the hands of many other people struggling and suffering and again it is a humble experience to see how the Lord changes lives for the better. And I must admit there were times when I was called to lift the “hands” of others, that I was reluctant and hesitant to go, thinking of each and every excuse not to go – and every time I did go, I saw miracles that I cannot comprehend or describe in words.

If you are sitting in this church, and you are sure God is calling out to you, do not hesitate. Kirknewton and East Calder fellowship need your expertise, your personality, your time, your gifts and your talents. Why? If one body part is not working properly, the other parts strain and suffer.....

Let us pray:

We thank you, our God, for our unity in diversity:

different kinds of gifts,

but the same Spirit;

different kinds of service,

but the same Lord;

different kinds of working,

but the same God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen

Responding to God’s word

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MP 442: “Lord of the church”**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Cicely Abraham

MP 543

Onward Christian soldiers

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

Christ Jesus has made you his own.

Forget what lies behind

and strain forward to what lies ahead.

Press on towards the goal

for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

The blessing of God almighty,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Be with you all

Now and for evermore

Sung Amen