

**Service Liturgy Holy Communion
Aberlady and Gullane Parish Churches October 2020 Online**

This is the liturgy used by Brian Hillsley in his final Service of Holy Communion which is recorded and available on You Tube in three separate parts. The link address for each video is given at the appropriate points.

You are warmly invited to share in the Sacrament of Holy Communion and may like to prepare in advance with a small piece of bread and some wine or other suitable drink of your preference.

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GO TO VIDEO 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1JSXi7iFDg>

Welcome and Call to Worship

Scripture Sentences from Psalm 27

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

One thing I asked of the Lord,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the Lord,
and to inquire in his temple.

Teach me your way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the Lord!

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Gathering Prayers

God of Abraham, in whom alone the generations have found life and purpose; hope and fulfilment, we join with the Psalmist of old to proclaim your greatness; the rock of our salvation and the light which the darkness cannot overcome. There is no temple of human construction which can contain your majesty, but you have decorated the universe with splendour beyond imagining and in reflection of your glory. In the fellowship of faith which transcends time and place we gather, united by your Holy Spirit to which no barrier is an obstacle. We seek the renewal of your assurances of grace as we dare to celebrate the holy sacrament of communion; sharing in obedience to Christ, the gifts of bread and wine which you have provided. We do so in humility and in the full recognition of our unworthiness. In your mercy cleanse us of our sins and make us whole, once more, that we may serve you as children of the light, through Christ our Lord.

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Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Ghost, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy Holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible passage: Luke 2: 1 - 20

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so, it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will*

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toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

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GO TO VIDEO 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9IV3d02TKM>

Reflection

Here in East Lothian there is exceptional beauty all around us – in so many manifestations. After a lifetime of visiting here and five and a half years living here, I still find myself stopped in my tracks by that beauty as I turn a corner or crest a hill. When I came to minister here, I discovered that each of the two church buildings in my charge is also beautiful, not least as a result of its stained glass.

Here in Aberlady Kirk the crowning glory of the windows is that in the east elevation; the one immediately behind me as I speak. I never cease to marvel at this representation of the Nativity created around an exact replica of the Madonna and Child as painted by Sandro Botticelli in the 16th century. That painting, once in Gosford House, is now part of the National Collection of Scotland.

Look at the bottom of the central panel of this window and you will see a climbing rose, its pink blossoms full of life. It is positioned just above the head of the sleeping Christ and in front of the kneeling Virgin Mary. This rose is, of course, a stylised reference to the mediaeval descriptions of Jesus as The Spotless Rose – the one foretold by the prophets and springing from the root of Jesse – the father of King David. The anonymous Germanic author of the hymn The Spotless Rose penned that metaphorical description sometime in the 14th century or earlier and it was clearly known to Sandro Botticelli. After his death, Botticelli and his early renaissance style went out of favour for quite some time; really until he was restored to prominence by the pre-Raphaelite artists of the later 19th century as part of the romantic movement in the United Kingdom. That same sensory romanticism of the nativity is found in the French 19th century carol “*Whence that goodly fragrance?*” or “*Quelle est cette*

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odeur agreeable?" In the visual perfection of the blossom and the sweet fragrance of the rose there is double metaphor which highlights the beauty of the Incarnation; a beauty which extends far beyond the rational capacity alone.

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The crowning glory of the windows in Gullane is, in my view anyway, to be found in the roundel at the top of the west elevation, perfectly positioned to catch the rays of the setting sun which it depicts. All three windows on that wall capture elements of the natural beauty of East Lothian and right at the very top of the roundel, flying across the evening sky, are some wild geese, making their way back to Aberlady Bay for the night. As well as being part of the natural beauty of East Lothian, the artist's portrayal of the wild geese is a reference to their romantic and symbolic importance in Celtic spirituality where they are representative of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God flies over us as it did in the moment of creation, and we are reminded of that with every annual migration of the geese.

As we gather to worship and celebrate this Holy Sacrament of the Church, we are not all present in one place: not even in the two church buildings of our parishes. Most of us will be in our own homes; surroundings which are everyday in their appearance; practical, functional – far from what we might ordinarily consider sacred. Yet to limit them and to limit what we do in them to the ordinary or the purely functional would be a big mistake and an insult to God, who is in all of creation. The Spirit of God does not hover or fly over our church buildings any more than it does over our own homes for it is universally encompassing. And as we celebrate our faith together; declaring our love for and our need of God, so we transcend the ordinary and the prosaic, entering into and affirming that deeper space, that deeper reality which is most readily touched upon by those senses in us which go beyond the purely rational. There is mystery here, right now, in your living room, beauty here, right now, under the roof of your house or your flat or your cottage. It is the mystery and the fragrant beauty of the Spotless Rose, of God who enters into our world and takes flesh in Jesus for our salvation; that we might know God in whom alone is true life.

This use of the commonplace to be in our midst is of the very nature of God and so Jesus can take the ordinary bread and wine of the table and transform it to our blessing through the divine grace. The divine bursts through as bread is broken, wine is poured, and Jesus is honoured. We are drawn into holy communion with God and with one another. These, of course, are the very things of which the heavenly chorus sang to shepherds on a hillside, long ago.

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Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

May that be the song in your heart and in mine, today and always.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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GO TO VIDEO 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSNnYS8GuBk>

Invitation to The Table

Christ Jesus lived and died and rose again that you and I might know that there is a seat for us at his table; a place always open and to which we will always be welcome. It is here and it is now and the word of Christ to you is this:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Enter then, brothers and sisters, into that place which Christ has opened for you and let us joyfully share in the gifts which he has prepared. Grace and mercy and peace to you, from God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Amen

On the night of his betrayal, gathered at a table of remembering, our Lord took bread and wine from the table and when he had blessed and given thanks, he shared them with his friends, saying

Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me.

This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

I take this bread and this wine set before each and all of us to be set apart for this holy use and mystery and in obedience to Christ and following in his example I invite you to join together in thanksgiving to God and in seeking that outpouring of his Holy Spirit in which we will be blessed to find holy communion with God and with one another in him.

Let us pray.

It is our duty and our great privilege at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise, most holy God, for great are your blessings. In love you create all that exists; bringing beauty and order from the chaos; light and purpose to the darkness. And because, in our weakness, we are so easily led from the way of life which you have declared through the prophets and patriarchs you have sent even your

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very Son, Jesus Christ, that he might conquer sin and death for us, opening the gates of your Kingdom that we might enter in. Glory be to you, O God most high. May your name be praised forever and forever.

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It is to that holy communion of perfect love that Christ has called us, and it is that which we seek as we gather in his name to share in this sacred meal which he has instituted for our benefit. Before us, O Lord, are your gifts of bread and of wine; the fruit of the earth, pour out your Holy Spirit upon them and all who gather to receive of them that through your act of grace we might be fed and nourished to your service; agents always of your kingdom. Bind us in holy communion with you and one another in you that the storms of life might never prevail over us; according to your mercy and your purposes.

In the name of our Saviour we are glad to lift up before you this world, seeking your richest blessing upon our brothers and sisters around the globe of whatever race, colour or creed. May the light of your justice and of your peace shine brightly as you endow the leaders of nations with wisdom and humility, compassion and grace. Bless those who are close to death and those who watch and wait with them; uphold the lost and the lonely; the powerless and the oppressed; the stranger and the outcast. Move us with your compassion, encourage us with your Spirit and envision us with the eyes of faith for the sake of your kingdom.

Remembering, O Lord, all who have journeyed through this life before us and who, have been gathered by you into the joys and blessings of your nearer presence; we thank you Father that we remain bound for eternity to them so long as we remain in you. Keep us in the way of Christ, that we too might enter into his glory as sheep of the Good Shepherd and children of the living God. All this we pray in the name of Christ as together we render to you that prayer which Christ himself has taught us, saying Our Father -----

Bread is broken for the life of the world.

The cup of salvation; it is raised to God's glory.

The Breaking and Sharing

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world

have mercy upon us.

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Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world

have mercy upon us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world

grant us your peace.

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Draw near and receive of the grace of God. Take that which Christ's self-offering in remembrance that he lived and died and rose again for you. Feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The Bread of life

here take and eat the bread

The Cup of salvation

here take and drink the wine

The Peace is shared

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Father, your steadfast purpose is the completion of all things in your Son. May we who have received the pledges of the kingdom, live by faith, walk in hope and be renewed in love, until the world reflects your glory, and you are all in all; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dismissal and Blessing

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord:

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen