

The Lord, be with you.



As I write this I am aware that we are almost through the first month of the New Year, and by the time you read this we will be in the second month, nevertheless, I would like to take this opportunity to use my ministerial office to accord you God's blessing this New Year:

“May God's mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.”

Having briefly mentioned January and February, I'd now like to focus on an event that takes place at the beginning of March. The World Day of Prayer is celebrated annually in over 180 countries, and over 1000 languages, on the first Friday in March. It is a time when across the world people are encouraged to come together to join in prayer and action for peace and justice. Each year the service is prepared by a different country and this year The World Day of Prayer Service has been prepared by the women of Slovenia. The theme of the service is 'Come - Everything Is Ready', and they encourage us to reflect on the barriers they have faced since the end of the Second World War when their country was a part of Yugoslavia, a Marxist socialist republic. They share the challenges they have met and the hopes they have for the future.

This year the service will take place in Pitlochry Church of Scotland and will be co-ordinated by members of the Guild – please come along to pray and to support not only the Guild but the people of Slovenia.

Of course prayer isn't limited to one day a year; prayer is something we are called to do on a daily basis. Paul thinks it is so important that he encourages the people of Thessalonica to “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). To help give us focus a Prayer Diary is produced and included in the Torch to encourage us as a congregation to join together in daily prayer.

Prayers can be found all through the Bible. From the time of Seth, when we are told “Men began to call on the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:26), to the time when the people of God pray in the book of Revelation. In nearly all these prayers, we get the strong impression that prayer is like a conversation with God, and it is shown to be a key dimension of the relationship between God and us.

Joseph M Scriven (1820-86) in his well-known and much loved hymn “What a friend we have in Jesus” seems to catch the essence of God’s love for us and the consolation which he offers when we call on his name.

***What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!***

Joseph was a man who was writing out of his own personal experience of life and prayer. He was born in Dublin, and as a young man hoped to pursue a career in the army, but ill health put a stop to that dream. He emigrated to Canada when he was 25 years old in a bid to distance himself from memories and sorrow - his fiancée was drowned the day before they were due to be married. He became a teacher and worked among the poor and destitute in Ontario. After a while he found love again, yet pain and sorrow continued to follow him, and after a short illness his second fiancée died. Shortly before he himself died, Joseph told a friend that he had written the verses of this hymn for his mother at a time of great sorrow. When he was asked if the words were his alone or if he had help with them, replied “The Lord and I did it between us”.

*Until the next time: **The Lord bless you and keep you.***

Your minister ... *Mary Haddow*