

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

Please note that our Interim Moderator and Locum, Rev. Rona Young, will be visiting those with pastoral needs by telephone during the Covid-19 pandemic. If in need of pastoral care, please contact Rona by telephone on (01292) 471982.

The Minister's Message**Reflection "When the ordinary becomes the extraordinary"**

Often we enjoy watching dramatic events on television and the Inauguration of Joe Biden as the President of the United States is a very good example. During these long, dismal, depressing days, I am sure that many of you, as you watched the programme, forgot the pandemic for a couple of hours.

In 2 Kings chapter 5, we read about a commander of the Syrian army who was called Naaman. He was highly regarded by King Aram and he had power, position and wealth but he also suffered from leprosy, for which in Biblical times there was no known cure.

However, his Hebrew slave girl told him about a prophet called Elisha who was in Samaria and could cure him.

Naaman told King Aram what she had said and the king said to go and he added, "*I will send a letter to the king of Israel.*" So Naaman left taking "*ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing.*" He hoped to impress Elisha with his status, wealth and power.

Bible reading 2 Kings 5: 9 – 14

9 So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, 'Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.'

11 But Naaman went away angry and said, 'I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy.

12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?' So he turned and went off in a rage.

13 Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, "Wash and be cleansed"!' 14 So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

At verse 10 we read that Elisha sends a messenger with the message, "*Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.*"

Naaman was very angry, especially as Elisha did not even go out to meet him, but simply told him to wash himself seven times in the river Jordan.

He knew that the Jordan was a narrow, muddy river and thought he should have been told to wash in one of the two rivers in Damascus, the Abana or the Pharpar.

He was about to go home when his servant said to him, *“If the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?”* ‘The prophet has asked you to do a simple thing. Try it and see what happens.’ So he dipped himself seven times in the river Jordan, as the man of God had told him, and was cured.

Naaman almost missed being cured because he had anticipated that the prophet would do something spectacular. He was looking for an extraordinary answer to his problem. And that can be true of us as well. We may miss God working in our lives at present because we are looking for something extraordinary, dramatic or unusual.

Just as I was typing these words, I suddenly felt the slightly warm sunshine on the right hand side of my face and neck. I gave thanks for the brief moment of sunshine, which points forward to better weather in the spring and summer.

If you are out for a walk, even in these bitterly cold days, you can look for the green shoots of the spring flowers starting to show through the dark earth.

It is so easy to miss the movement of God’s Spirit in our everyday lives, especially with such bad news day after day. If we read our Bibles carefully each day, we may see a word, or a phrase or a sentence that really speaks to us in a new way. God is present in our ordinary world around us each and every day.

It was Naaman’s childishness, immaturity or self-centredness that meant he almost missed God at work. When the instructions from the prophet did not match his expectations, he became angry. He felt he was not being given enough recognition and he almost walked away.

His servant showed more maturity when he suggested that he should not ignore Elisha’s reply, even although it was a simple one.

Because we are human, we can all act at times as if we are still like children. Jonathan Edwards writes in a commentary on 2 Corinthians chapter 3, *“Time and time again, Paul writes about the importance of growing in our faith, and becoming more mature, and here in 2nd Corinthians, he speaks of us changing so we look more and more like Jesus.”*

He points out that we have a long way to go to resemble Jesus, but that is the road we are on. Each day we are to be open to God’s spirit and maturity wanting to serve without recognition.

The title of this reflection is ***“When the ordinary becomes the extraordinary.”*** The river Jordan was a very ordinary river and yet it became the place of healing for Naaman. He thought that the rivers in Damascus were better than the Jordan in Israel, but God uses the ordinary river to produce a miracle.

Keith Miller writes about a friend of his who decided to visit some of the greatest religious shrines to see if he could discover something about their experience with God.

He visited Aldersgate where John Wesley’s heart was strangely warmed by God. He went to Wittenburg and found the spot where Martin Luther had a dramatic experience with God. He visited several others, but could find nothing spectacular about any of them. He found these “shrines” were just ordinary common places.

God used water to heal Naaman. Today, the emphasis is so often on the large and spectacular, although living through the pandemic has shown us that everyone, including the Prime Minister or Prince Charles, can catch coronavirus.

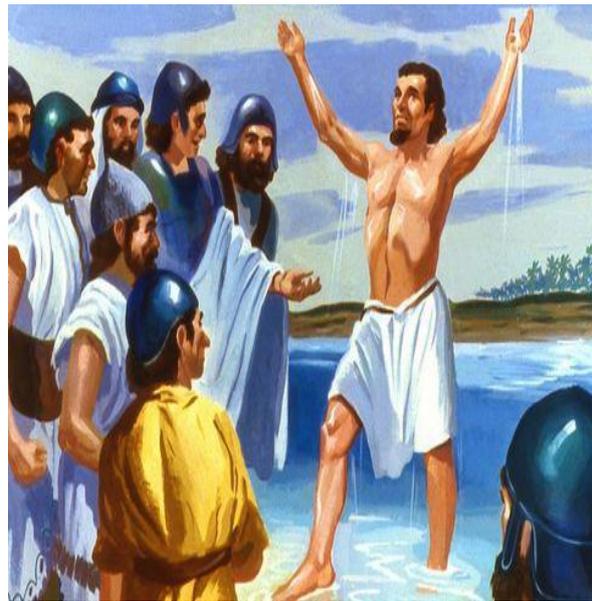
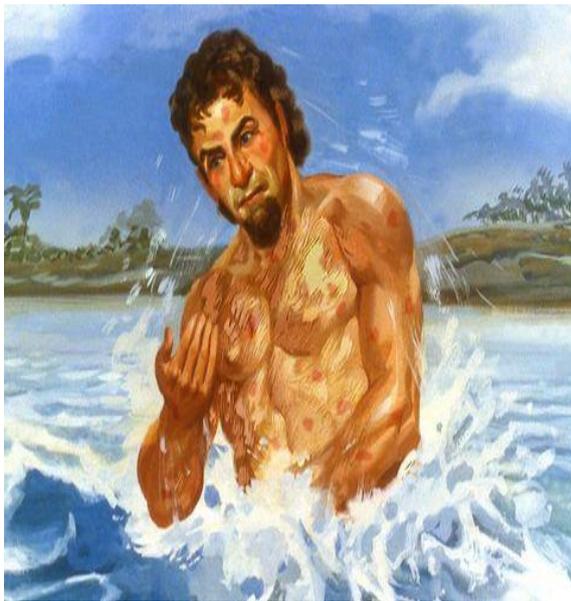
With God, the ordinary becomes the extraordinary. Brother Lawrence, a monk who lived in a monastery back in the 17th century had a very close intimacy with God.

The book, *“The Practice and the Presence of God,”* contains his conversations and letters and it has become a Christian classic. Brother Lawrence worked in the kitchen and said he could see a nobler purpose being fulfilled by bringing God into every task he did.

A modern writer, John Ortberg, wrote the book *“God is closer than you think.”* It is an excellent book and he writes that staying close to God is not just for monks, but for business people, students, busy mums, single people etc. He says God is reaching out to us in every situation in our lives and we can have a vibrant, moment-by-moment relationship with God.

When we are aware of God, then the most ordinary or routine task can become extraordinary. In last Sunday’s service, we heard about how Jesus called ordinary men – Simon Peter and Andrew and James and John to be his disciples.

We may feel that we are just ordinary people doing our best to live through this difficult second wave of the pandemic. **But let us all try to use this time to endeavour to walk more closely with God. He is closer than we think.** Amen. *Rona*



Prayer

Gracious God,

we thank you that you are always with us, even in these dark, depressing days of a pandemic in the middle of winter, your steadfast love never ceases, your mercies are new every morning. Lord of all hopefulness, hear our prayer.

We thank you for the gift of others, people who are there at the end of the telephone, and for members of our extended families whom we see at least once a week.

We thank you too for the way you often call the most unlikely people with different backgrounds, contrasting temperaments and a variety of experiences, to work together in your Church. Above all, we thank you for your love – even although we cannot be together physically, we are united by your love for each and every one of us.

Living God,

help us to know deep in our hearts that you are with us each moment of each day, and that you accept us and love us whatever we are doing.

Teach us that you are involved in every aspect of our lives and in every part of the world and every situation. We ask your blessing on President Joe Biden and pray that there will be a new feeling of unity in the United States of America.

We pray for all those who have had to evacuate their homes due to the flooding in England and Wales and have to face the devastation left by the floodwaters.

Loving God,

we ask your blessing on the doctors, nurses and carers who are looking after people with Covid especially in these difficult days when the virus is still spreading so quickly. We pray that there will be a rollout of the vaccine as quickly as possible, and that people will follow the rules and regulations of this present lockdown.

We pray this morning for Arthur Wilson, his daughter Eleanor and the other members of the family who are mourning the death of Alison on Friday morning.

We pray for all those we know whose family member has died from Covid, and all those we know who are ill at the present time. Bless all those who are most vulnerable and everyone who cares for them.

Ever-present God, help us to find you everywhere, and to walk closely with you in the week that lies ahead.

This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Please remember in your prayers this week all of the people below in hospital, care homes or in their own homes:-

Mr Arthur Wilson	Mr Donald Grant
Mrs Maude Smillie	Mr Michael Whalley (in Bermuda)
Mrs Gina McKnight	Mrs Irene Montgomerie (staying with daughter)
Mrs Nancy McKillops	Mrs Fay Cooper
Mrs May Wilkinson	Mrs Heather McLeod
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs Anna Irving

Please let the Session Clerk know of any member/relative who goes in to hospital or is ill at home. For those in hospital please ensure you have their given Christian name which may not necessarily be the name by which s/he is usually known.

Sad news With sadness, we announce the death of Mrs Alison Wilson on Friday morning in Berelands Care Home, Prestwick. Our thoughts and prayers are with her husband Arthur, daughter Eleanor and all other members of the family at this time of parting. Funeral details are not yet known.

Prayer Chain Anyone having a request for prayer may contact Sheena Hunter on 01292 440804 or e-mail her at seenachunter@hotmail.com

NB. Public worship Due to the current Scottish Government restrictions caused by the Covid pandemic, please note that there will be **no worship in the hall** at least during **January**. You will receive notification via e-mail or telephone of when we will restart once it is clear what will happen thereafter.

Organisation accounts Please could all organisations yet to do so hand in their accounts to the church as soon as possible. They can be brought to the church on a **Sunday between 2.00 and 3.00pm** or delivered to 38 Outdale Avenue, Prestwick, KA9 1BY. *Janis Meredith*, Treasurer

Salvation Army Food Bank Please note that donations can once again be brought to the halls' vestibule in the church drive between **2.00pm and 3.00pm each Sunday afternoon** even when the church is closed due to Scottish Government restrictions. Sincere thanks go to all who bring donations and to those who collect and deliver these each week. While staff at the food bank are extremely grateful for all gifts, at present they have an abundance of soup, beans, pasta, rice and tuna.

Items in shorter supply at the moment include tinned potatoes, other tinned vegetables, tinned stew, mince etc., "goodies" eg. biscuits, coffee, toiletries eg. shampoo and soap, household cleaning products.

Online Donations Do you shop online? If you do please remember that you can raise donations for the church at no extra cost to yourself. All you have to do is go to:-

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> and register Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland as your charity, then shop at the many different retailers who donate through the site. Remember though, that you have to go to the retailer through easyfundraising.

You can also raise donations when you shop at Amazon. Instead of shopping at the usual site, go to <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/> and register Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland as your charity and the business will make a donation to the church on qualifying purchases.

Birthdays Our good wishes for a very Happy Birthday go to the seven people named below:-

24th January Elaine Grant

25th January Rae Beattie and Ella Burns

28th January Jean Allardyce

29th January Ann Shaw

31st January Sheila Macmillan and Hans Miller



Remember **Streaming of our morning service** conducted this week by Pauline Johnston and next week by Gary McCleary will commence at **11.00am** then our prayer time starts at **12.30pm** with the Lord's Prayer followed by our personal prayers. This helps to bring us together to reach out to him in prayer while we are distancing physically.

NB Rona will conduct a short virtual Communion service during worship on Sunday 7th February. Please have a small piece of bread and a small glass of sherry or juice to hand. If you feel uncomfortable with this, please just watch the service.

I am weak but Thou art strong,
Jesus keep me from all wrong,
I'll be satisfied as long
As I walk, let me walk close to Thee.

*Just a closer walk with Thee,
Grant it, Jesus, this my plea,
Daily walking close to Thee,
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.*

Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland

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60 Main Street, Ayr, KA8 8EF

Twinned with Nkhata Bay Presbyterian Church, Malawi

Minister: Interim Moderator and Locum –

Rev. Rona Young tel. (01292) 471982 revronyoung@hotmail.com

Session Clerk: John Bell tel. (01292) 371601 johnbell31@gmail.com

Finance Team Leader: Janis Meredith tel. (01292) 476263 nwc.treasurer@yahoo.co.uk

Organist: Dorothy McPherson tel. (01292) 857429 dotmcphersondot@gmail.com

Secretary: Sheila Innes tel. (01292) 269705 sheilainnes11@gmail.com

Youth & Com. Worker: Phil Hawthorne tel. 07828 866447 phil@room60.co.uk

Student Youth Worker: Pauline Johnston tel. 07908 632260 pauline@room60.co.uk

Church Officer: Steven McTurk tel. (01292) 288942 smcturk40@gmail.com

Halls Manager: Isabelle Allardyce tel. 07583055671 nwc.hallmanager@gmail.com

Family Liaison Officer: Gary McCleary tel. 07931 952497 gary@garymcclearyifa.co.uk

Communications e-mail hub: nwchadlines@gmail.com