

# QUEENSFERRY PARISH CHURCH

## MIDWEEK SERVICES

### FEBRUARY 2022

This material is adapted a little from the material used last February. It is amazing how relevant the themes are a year on. The overall theme is **“Hope and Renewal in times of Change.”** We are in a time of uncertainty in our country and there is still a degree of fear regarding Covid. In the Church of Scotland Presbyteries are undergoing major structural changes. There are also structural changes in the central administration of the Church. Congregations are facing changes because of Presbytery planning. We also face a shortage of Ministers and many congregations find it difficult to recruit office-bearers and other leaders.

### **Week 3 – Desert**

#### **Leader:**

The Lord says: When the time comes, I will answer the prayers of my people.

#### **Opening Responses**

I will betroth you to myself forever

**WITH INTEGRITY AND JUSTICE, WITH TENDERNESS  
AND LOVE**

I will betroth you to myself with faithfulness

**AND YOU WILL COME TO KNOW ME**

I will say: You are my people

**AND WE WILL ANSWER: YOU ARE OUR GOD**

For once you were outside mercy

**BUT NOW YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN MERCY**

**THIS IS OUR HOPE, OUR LIVING HOPE. WE SHALL BE GLAD.**

**Leader:**

The Lord says: I will woo you, and lead you into the wilderness and speak to your heart.

**Read:** Exodus 16 verses 1 – 6 and 35 – 36 and/or 17 verses 1 - 6

**Here include a hymn or song or other music about desert or travelling – or perhaps about Jesus in the desert being tempted.**

**Read:** Psalm 136 verses 10 - 16

**Prayer**

Lord God, often we do not understand your will for us; indeed sometimes we find it strange. We bless you for enticing us to the last place we want to be, the place where we can hide no longer and where we must face our own emptiness. In these places we see how futile it is to put our trust in anyone or anything but you.

We bless you that even in the driest of desert places we find the miracle of survival, and we give thanks that you come to us in unexpected guises.

**BLESSED ARE YOU LORD GOD WHOM WE FIND IN UNEXPECTED PLACES**

But if we have turned in upon our emptiness and refused the risks you require of us; or if we have idolised our self-sufficiency and clung to our captivity  
**HAVE MERCY ON US, GOD WHO WRESTLES AND EMBRACES US. SHATTER OUR ILLUSIONS; FEED OUR HOPE AND OUR HUNGER WITH THE ADVENTUROUS FAITH OF YOUR SPIRIT UNTIL GRACE IS OUR ONLY SUFFICIENCY.**

And now hear us as we pray in Jesus' words, saying:  
**OUR FATHER**

**Read:** Luke 4 verses 1 - 13

**Reflection**

This should take the form of a short introduction from the leader.

You might reflect on what the idea of "desert" means to you; or perhaps what it means to be deserted. This could be either a personal reflections or on the Scripture passages.

This part of the service might involve music; it might involve the use of something visual; it might involve silence. **Props could be sand, weeds, something broken or rusted etc.**

## **Prayer**

This is a time for prayers for the world, for the communities in which we live; for the Church and in particular things going on in our congregations; **for those who are lost or without meaning or value in their lives**; for those known to us to be in particular need of our prayers; for ourselves.

## **CLOSING RESPONSES**

The desert will sing and rejoice

**AND THE WILDERNESS BLOSSOM WITH FLOWERS**

All will see the Lord's splendour

**SEE THE LORD'S GREATNESS AND POWER**

Tell everyone who is anxious

**BE STRONG, AND DON'T BE AFRAID**

The blind will be able to see

**THE DEAF WILL BE ABLE TO HEAR**

The lame will leap and dance

**THOSE WHO CAN'T SPEAK WILL SHOUT**

This is the promise of God

**GOD'S PROMISE WILL BE FULFILLED**