

# 19 Mar 2023

## **Worship Sheet for Sunday 19 March      Jesus at the centre**

Jesus gets a night time visit from Nicodemus, a religious leader, who probably wanted to keep his interest under wraps from the authorities. In an age where people are increasingly sceptical about the Christian faith, we need to find ways that allow people to enquire, put their toe in the water – but eventually there comes a time when Jesus has to be at the centre.

Call: God so loved the world with the love of a Creator. God so loved the world with the love of a Redeemer. God so loved the world with the love of an Advocate. Come in love, strengthen by Creator, Redeemer and Advocate to worship God who love you.

Pray : Gracious and loving Heavenly Father, thank you that you delight to receive our praise and to receive us, your children. We praise you for your openness and acceptance, your readiness to forgive and restore – to love us without limit. Open our eyes to see the wonder of your love and grace, the depth of your commitment to us, the altogether goodness that is you. We praise you for all that you are, for all that you have done. We rejoice that we can call you our heavenly Father. Thank you that you are here and want to be in our hearts always. Lord, you are able to receive us whether we are full of joy and delight or weighed down and heavy of heart. You are able to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep. You are big enough to embrace us all. Draw near we pray to each person here, to those whom we hold in our hearts. God of compassion and kindness meet the needs of each and enable us to respond appropriately to your Spirit's touch. As Easter draws closer, remind us of the extent to which Jesus went to demonstrate his love for us, to forgive us, to draw us back to you. Empower us that we may respond in heartfelt gratitude - that we may praise you with our lives as well as with our lips and demonstrate the power of the gospel of love in our day and age. Hear us, as we pray together the Lord's prayer saying: Our Father...

Reading John 3: 1-21      Jesus and Nicodemus.

Thought It's fair to say that most people these days have a lot less to go on in terms of understanding of Jesus and the Christian faith. Long gone are the days when Sunday Schools numbered dozens, if not hundreds. There is a great variety of online resources being made available by churches but rather like Nicodemus many find it quite hard to openly voice their interest. Maybe we underestimate how difficult it is for someone without any background of faith (and even with it) to put their head above the parapet. Alpha courses have been a means of allowing this for many (and allows for informal engagement not least over something to eat) but I suspect we need to be more imaginative in finding alternatives that are seen as less threatening. I'm not talking about watering down the faith until there is nothing left. At the heart of God's plan is Jesus – and the theme today is Jesus at the centre, so at some point that needs to be addressed. Yet, Jesus was very patient with Nicodemus – he allowed him come privately and away from the public eye, he listened to his questions and comments. He was approachable (and we need to be too) but he didn't allow Nicodemus to stick at the level of unengaged chat – Jesus pointed out that a personal response was needed. We can't rush people into that but we can point it out and we can continue to support and pray for them, continue to give them time and listen to their questions and seek to answer them. Let's create the opportunities, be patient with enquirers but at the end of the day point to Jesus as centre.

Praise CH4 567      Focus my eyes on you O Lord.

Pray    Loving God, on this Mother's Day we pray for mothers – those who have brought young lives into the world and in many cases gone on to give themselves to their children throughout their lives. We ask a special blessing on those for whom today is their first mother's day – may they enjoy the day and give thanks for the child or children you have given them. We pray for those who never knew their mum; for those whose memory of her is distant or troubled; for those who still feel the pain of loss. Lord draw near and bless. We pray for those who would dearly have loved to be mothers but who did not have children of their own; for those who have given their lives to caring for others' children; for those who

later became “mum” to youngsters not through birth but in other ways not forgetting dads who have found themselves having to be mum too. We pray for those who mourn the children they lost or did not have, who well remember the hopes that were dashed, for the joy that did not materialise, for those who have had to bury their children. Lord, all is not sweetness and light. Bring peace to those who find today so hard. Draw near and bind up broken hearts. We pray for those who are expecting – may they know the joy of your presence through the troubles of pregnancy, your peace amid the concerns and questioning and your hope for the young lives to be brought into the world. Easter points us not just to mourning and sorrow but to the joy and hope of life beyond the grave. Help us, whether we have cause to weep or laugh today, to remember that we have cause to rejoice in the life that you offer us in Jesus your Son. Help us to be supportive of parents and children, to pray and to seek the spiritual well being of families– to encourage them to meet Jesus and know his love in their homes. Lord, we pray for young and old, whether on their own or in families; For those who are lonely and those who would dearly love peace and quiet. For those who enjoy life and those who struggle to make anything of it. Lord, draw near to each and bless, and make us alert to how we might be a channel of your blessing too. In our prayer walk we pray for those who live , work or use Trail Drive, Caravan Park and Seafront. SILENCE Continue to work in us, that we may be open not just to seeing the answers but to living them out in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Blessing      May the Lord bless you. Amen.

#### Notices

- Coffee Morning Sat 18 March 10-12 Montrose Stroke Club
- Session Meeting Tues 21 March 7.15pm
- Song Shop youngsters are putting on Aladdin Jr in the Church Thu 23-Sat 25 £10
- Schools Instrumental Charity Concert Tues 28 March 6.30pm in the Church
- Coffee Morning Sat 25 March 10-12 1<sup>st</sup> Montrose Scout Group
- Lego Church Sunday 26 March 4pm – 5pm.

To assist those unable to access material via the internet we have established a phone line where people can phone in to hear the mini service or sermon.

**01674 902624.**

To hear the mini service people just need to dial in and wait. To hear the sermon, after dialling you need to press 1 then #. In either case there is a few seconds delay while the message loads so tell folk not to hang up! If folk press 1 for the sermon before the intro finishes the system doesn't pick up on it and it defaults to the mini service. The message now says wait until after the tone before pressing 1 but give it a few seconds after that and do press # after pressing 1.

**Sermon, prayers and news (or links to them) will be uploaded to our website [www.oldandstandrews.com](http://www.oldandstandrews.com) and the Old and St Andrew's Facebook page. Feel free to copy this and pass it on to Church members or friends who might not use the web or social media**

**Please continue to pray for one another and support where you can and remember that the congregation is united in love wherever we are and however we are worshipping.**

**Stay safe! May the Lord bless you!**

**Ian**

*Rev Dr Ian A McLean*