

Sanctuary First

A PLACE TO BE

‘Follow me!’ *Listening to the voice...*

May 2019, (05 May - 01 June)

During the month of May we are going to explore the theme ‘*Follow me!*’ Those who are familiar with scripture will recognise this short phrase as one Jesus used when calling his disciples. It has become a summarising theme for the whole of the *Church Without Walls* movement within the Church of Scotland. You can find out more about [Church Without Walls here](#) and about our recent [Re-Imagining Church theme](#) that built on those foundations.

Over the next few weeks we are going to take this phrase and overlay it across the stories of the early church and see how following Jesus shaped that early church movement, turning the most unexpected of people into followers of Jesus.

Our last theme, over the end of Lent and Easter, invited us to *Behold The Man*, now we are inviting you to behold where he is calling you to go...

Each week of the theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and thought triggers.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
05 May	Voices in the head...	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts 9: 1-8 2. Acts 9: 11-18 3. Acts 9: 19-22 4. Revelation 5 5. John 21: 1- 8 6. John 21: 9-14 7. John 21: 15-19 	<p>We are asking our prayer writers to write seven prayers and reflections on the theme <i>Voices in your head</i> with the over arching theme of the month <i>'Follow me!'</i> Listen to the voice... The readings skip from the conversion of Saul, to the heavenly choirs, to return to the first followers facing disappointment. In all these readings "Follow me" speaks across the years of faith.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The voice of internal struggle to change. Reflect upon what it mean to face the internal struggle of 'dying to self' in order to heed the call to follow Jesus? Saul's struggle - was it instant? Could Stephen's death have had an impact? See Acts 7:54 - 8:3. Can you think of people, places and incidents that helped shape your struggle? 2. Internal struggling, Voice of obedience. And what might it mean to obey the call to a life spent in service to others? Consider Ananias's struggle to bless Saul. Think of the issues of forgiveness and trust this aspect of the story raise. What might our internal trust issue be? 3. A voice that can't be silenced - Saul's testimony. Saul speaks out sharing his story. Reflect on the impact dramatic stories of faith have on people. Which has the greater impact: the dramatic or the daily constant life lived faithfully? 4. The heavenly voices that retune your soul. In this passage heaven's door is opened. Reflect upon how important music and communal singing are in tuning our hearts to God and one another? 5. The voice of disappointment, "I'm going fishing." Reflect upon the internal disappointments we can face in our Christian walk. So often we are let down badly. So we return to what we know only to find we have moved on. Once a person starts following Jesus, if they turn back to an old lifestyle often they discover their face no longer fits. 6. The voice calling you back to first love. Reflect on this passage as Peter sees the fish he once again hears the call. While Jesus cooks fish and old friendships are rekindled Peter discovers a new kind of fish to catch. 7. Voice calling from heart to heart. Reflect on this famous heart to heart conversation which Jesus has with Peter; that indeed resonates with every believer because Jesus confronts us all in our place of disappointment with the invitation to "Follow me!"

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
12 May	Do it in my name - Follow me in the present	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts 9: 36-43 2. Psalm 23 3. Revelation 7: 9-12 4. Revelation 7: 13-17 5. John 10: 22-27 6. John 10: 28-30 7. Matthew 11: 28-30 	<p>We continue the theme "Follow me!" from the internal struggle of call and service to a more practical challenge: Go out into the world and do it in my name.</p> <p>The readings this week invite us to become the verbs, 'the doing words of the Kingdom.' Raising, leading, living, surviving, believing, belonging, behaving. These words ask us to follow Jesus not in the 'then' of the past but in the 'now' of the present. As part of the doing words we could also add 'praying'.</p> <p>As we engage with this idea we begin to recognise people who we want to introduce to Jesus. This is in keeping with the international call of "Thy Kingdom Come" for Christians throughout the world to pray for their friends to come to know Jesus (for more info go down to the introduction to Week 4 <i>Thy Kingdom Come</i>).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raising the dead. Literally raising the dead in today's world is a challenging issue. Yet it is still reported as happening in parts of the world. Living out our lives to heed the voice calling us to action is the teaching of this verse. Can we raise the church to new life by speaking words of hope? 2. Leading from the front. The shepherd always led from the front in the eastern tradition. Those who follow need to know the leader's voice and trust her/his lead. 3. Living in heaven. Learning to live out heaven's values. Working out and praying what it means to seek God's will on earth as it is in heaven. 4. Surviving through suffering. Honouring those who have given everything up for the cause of Christ. Surviving has been a speciality of the Christian Church in days of great persecution. When is discretion the better part of valour? 5. Believing through voice recognition. Believing comes through revelation? 6. Belonging means secured for eternity. Living out our lives in clothes that are too big for us prepares us for a time when we will grow into them. Living with eternity in our heart gives us a hope that we will find belonging. 7. Behaving through belonging and then believing. Perhaps we need to understand that the change in our hearts comes about through grace which draws from us a responsive gratitude.

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
19 May	Changing your mindset - Follow me	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts 11: 1-18 2. Psalm 148 3. Revelation 21: 1-4 4. Revelation 21: 5-6 5. John 13: 31-35 6. I Corinthians 13: 1-10 7. I Corinthians 13: 11-13 	<p>When people look for the coming Kingdom of God their mindset is changed for ever. We begin to think in a different plane. This week we are inviting the writer to show how the Signs of the Kingdom change the narrow thinking of Peter.</p> <p>Look at the psalm and see how the psalmist invites us to look beyond creation itself. See how the resurrection changes our view of death. See how there is an end view and a completeness to all that God starts. Leading us to have a view of love that stretches into eternity. Finishing with the encouragement to grow up in practiced love!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Follow Me - Start thinking, differently. Today is Heart and Soul Sunday, an annual outdoor event of the Church of Scotland. Many will walk around the gardens in Edinburgh and see a church struggling to come to life. Peter realises in this passage that the Gospel is for everyone that means those who are outside but looking in. 2. Follow Me - Start thinking, out of this world. Reflect on the psalm. The writer suggests worship is for everyone, including creation, all life itself. How are we including the outsiders and creation and the animals and the birds in our acts of worship? Perhaps we have become too constrained to a place and a certain practice. 3. Follow Me - Start thinking, death is not inevitable. When it comes to the things we think are inevitable perhaps our belief in eternity invites us to change our way of thinking about all kinds of things. Can we love someone into eternity? If God can love us into eternity can we love one another into eternity? What would it mean to love into eternity? 4. Follow Me - Start thinking, it's complete at last. So you change your way of thinking, and the next thing you start thinking is can anything be complete? And then you are faced with Alpha and Omega - God's beginning and end - but how can we have an end if we are eternal? 5. Follow Me - Start thinking, love one another. Reflect upon how love changes our way of thinking. 6. Follow Me - Stop thinking - start living it. Reflect upon the idea that love invites us to stop thinking about love and start doing it. 7. Follow Me - It's time to grow up. So when does thinking become part of loving?

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
26 May	Thy Kingdom Come	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acts 16: 9-12 2. Acts 16: 13-15 3. Psalm 67 4. Revelation 21: 10, 22 through to chapter 22:5 5. Matthew 6: 9a + John 14: 23-29 6. Matthew 6: 9b + John 5: 1-9 7. Matthew 6: 9c + John 14: 26 	<p>During this week and over the following month Sanctuary First is going to be supporting the “Thy Kingdom Come Project”, a global prayer movement, which invites Christians around the world to pray between Ascension and Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus Christ. What started out as an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 2016 to the Church of England has grown into an international and ecumenical call to prayer. Susan Brown, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, has called for all the congregations in the Church of Scotland to participate in the project. The hope is that the community of Sanctuary First:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will commit to pray with God’s world-wide family - as a church, individually or as a family; • support and help us hold prayer events, such as 24-7 prayer, prayer stations and prayer walks, across the UK and indeed in other parts of the world; • and that people will be empowered through prayer by the Holy Spirit, finding new confidence to be witnesses for Jesus Christ <p><i>Days 5-7 invite us to read the opening lines of The Lord’s Prayer alongside three extracts from John’s gospel.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Catching the vision. Reflect upon the place of vision casting in the church and also leadership being open to the will of God. Could it be that God speaks to us in our dreams and visions and we choose to ignore them as our own passing thoughts? 2. Prayer is never exclusive. Reflect upon the idea that God is at work in hearts all over the world. Prayer is not exclusive to a certain kind of believer. Prayer is open to all peoples to participate in. 3. Praising God is never exclusive, it belongs to all in creation. Reflect upon the idea that creation has plants and trees birds and animals all in some way must be tuned into the majesty of God. We can only see so much. There is so much we can’t see or hear in our world. 4. See the Kingdom is coming. Reflect upon the movement of time into eternity. God’s new creation is on the move. 5. Our Father... We have been reflecting upon the mystery of the unknown in the past few days, now we concentrate on what it means to know God as our Father. 6. Who art in heaven... Jesus brings heaven’s healing to earth. What would it mean to bring the designer language and street furniture of heaven into our world of violence and mistrust? 7. Hallowed be your name... Let’s dig into this richly evocative word ‘Hallowed’ alongside our advocate, the Holy Spirit.