

The Arts in Worship St Machar's Cathedral, Aberdeen 2004-2011

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In 2020 the Cathedral Church of St Machar in Old Aberdeen celebrates the quinqucentenary of the completion of its famous oak heraldic ceiling. The Cathedral had been built on the site of an old Celtic chapel after receiving its charter from King David I in 1131 when the See was transferred from Mortlach to Aberdeen. This completed work which had continued over some four centuries. The ceiling displays three columns of heraldic shields, a reminder to the congregation of the wider political and religious context in which they lived and worshipped. The three columns of arms were a reminder to the community of the monarchs of Europe, the nobles of Scotland, and of the Pope, bishops and archbishops of Scotland. All of the columns culminated in an affirmation of Jesus Christ as the Lord of all.¹ The ceiling is a tangible expression of that which the Psalmist enjoins :

Praise the Lord, all you nations!
Extol him, all you peoples!
For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.
Praise the Lord! (Psalm 117)

The heraldic ceiling is a visible reminder that all life points to and is sustained by God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. All creation reflects the love and faithfulness of God. The congregation throughout the ages has responded with praise and thanksgiving. Indeed the very walls and stones of the Cathedral resonate with the strains of the praise of centuries.

As with other places of worship in Scotland, St Machar's has enjoyed a varied experience of Christian worship over the centuries. From the strains of Celtic hymnody and psalm singing to the formal medieval Roman Catholic liturgy, the

1 The central tower of the Cathedral collapsed in a storm in 1688, and with it the representation of the Lordship of Christ. The shields now point to three stained glass windows executed by William Wilson, flanked by smaller windows by Daniel Cottier.

singing of the Reformation, the strains of Anglican worship, of the Reformed and Presbyterian psalms and hymns, the Cathedral has resounded to the praise of God over the centuries. As part of the quincentenary celebrations, a series of concerts has been planned by the Choir and Master of Music, Dr Roger Williams, to present the music which may have been sung in different periods of the Cathedral's life. It thus seems appropriate in this year of celebration to reflect on the worship of the Cathedral in its various aspects. Since I had the privilege of ministering in the Cathedral from 2004 -2011, I will therefore limit myself to that period.

The life and witness of the community is nourished by and through its worship. All the various services point to and culminate in the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. As C. H. Dodd, the New Testament scholar, has written:

In this Sacrament we accept that which God gives, become that which he makes of us and render it up to him. Indeed in this Sacrament the whole of what our religion means is expressed. That which otherwise we would apprehend piecemeal is integrated in a rite which presents it all as the sheer gift of God. On any one occasion we may be conscious only of this or that element in the meaning, but it is all there, because God in Christ is there. In dependence on Him for everything, we render it all back to Him in thankful adoration.²

While the heraldic ceiling points to the Lordship of Christ, all the worship in the Cathedral, in its diverse aspects and expressions, points toward, and is fulfilled in and through the celebration of the Sacrament. Let us explore these different expressions of worship.

Prayers for Justice and Peace

Since the Cathedral is open every day, it has become a place for private prayer. The 40 seat Mitchell Chapel afforded an appropriate space for such private reflection and prayer. Persons of all Christian traditions or none who are facing a period of crisis seek a space of solitude for quiet reflection. The prayers may be occasioned by the cancer of a loved one or of a recent diagnosis, by

2 C.H.Dodd *Christian Worship* cited in F.W.Dillstone, *C.H.Dodd: Interpreter of the New Testament*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1977.

unemployment, family breakdown, or the illness of friends or family. Solace and encouragement to work through a time of angst and pain is needed. Others come to pray for world peace, the care of the environment, or a variety of human rights situations. Yet others come in thanksgiving for the birth of a child, the recovery of one who was sick, or success in completing a degree or finding suitable employment. Many of them took time to write out their issue or prayer and place it on the prayer tree. These were then incorporated in the weekly prayers for justice and peace.

Each Friday lunchtime, a brief service of prayers for justice and peace was held in the Mitchell Chapel. A prayer of John Calvin informed the approach to these prayers:

Save us, Lord, from being self-centred in our prayers, and teach us to remember to pray for others. May we be so caught up in love for those for whom we pray that we may feel their needs as keenly as our own, and pray for them with imagination, sensitivity, and knowledge. We ask this in Christ's name.³

Prayers for peace in a world of wars, for the victims of exploitation or violence, often towards women and children, or, as an eco-congregation, for the environment: these issues regularly provided the themes of the service and prayers. There were local issues too: for the neighbouring parishes, some of whom had been designated by UNESCO and the World Health Organization as among the most deprived areas in Europe. In the course of this service, the prayers placed on the Prayer Tree were incorporated into the prayers of intercession. This time gave us the opportunity to think into situations and offer prayers for justice and peace in an informed and sensitive manner.

On the Sunday following, during the morning service, these prayers were symbolically offered alongside the monetary offering. From time to time some also were integrated into the prayers of intercession themselves.

Sunday morning services

While few churches in the Presbytery held evening services, the Cathedral

3 Dorothy Stewart (compiler), *The Westminster Book of Prayers*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002, 314.

continued its practice of holding services on Sunday mornings and evenings. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated on the last Sunday of each month in the morning, and the first Sunday of each month in the evening. It was also celebrated on the major feasts of the Church – Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

On the whole, for the morning services the Revised Common Lectionary (a three year cycle of lessons) provided the structure for worship. This was modified, however, each September, in common with many other churches throughout the world.

The first Sunday of September was designated as Creation Day. This was proposed by His Holiness Bartholomew I, the Ecumenical Patriarch, in 1989 and taken up by the European Christian Environmental Network. The intention was to draw attention to creation and the threats to the environment. This Sunday also signalled the beginning of the liturgical year for the churches of the Orthodox tradition. Creation Day enabled the congregation to reflect on, and re-commit to, being an eco-congregation.

On the last Sunday of September the service marked the International Day of Prayer for Peace. This was instituted at the request of Kofi Annan when he was Director General of the United Nations. He asked the World Council of Churches and the leaders of other world religions to pray for peace on the day which normally marked the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly. Intercessions for peace in a time of genocide and an increasing number of civil wars, as well as for the work of peace-keepers and those engaged in processes of reconciliation were brought before the One who is our Peace.

On the Sunday closest to the 31st October, we celebrated Reformation Day. This reminded us of our roots in the Reformation and of our fellowship with other churches of the Reformed tradition.

A special service was held each year on the Sunday closest to All Saints Day. Those who had been bereft in the course of the year, along with their family members, were invited to the service, at which the names of those who had died were read out, candles lit, and appropriate prayers offered.

Creation Day, the International Day of Prayer for Peace, Reformation Day, and All Saints Day were affirmations of our bondedness with Christians of different traditions throughout the world – a contemporary reflection of the heraldic ceiling.

Sunday evening services

The evening services afforded a time for thoughtful meditation. The pattern which emerged for these services was the celebration of the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday of the month; a reflection on a prayer by one of the saints of the church on the second Sunday; an exploration of a poem on the third Sunday; and focusing on a piece of music or on the nature of music on the fourth Sunday evening. In a five Sunday month, a painting or icon provided the subject for contemplation.

On each Sunday evening the prayer, poem, music or work of visual art on the whole reinforced the readings or themes of the set lections for the day

Prayers through the Ages

The evening service provided a reflective space and time in which it was possible to draw on the rich vein of prayers offered through the ages. Many of these were prayers asking for discernment – from the pens of, for example, St Ambrose, St Augustine, St Columba, John Calvin, Søren Kierkegaard, Dag Hammarskjöld. Other prayers sought strength to oppose oppression, or face the difficulties of the day. Many of these had been offered in situations of oppression, amongst them were prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, Alan Paton, Desmond Tutu, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, to name but a few. Yet other prayers were prayers of supplication which sought the assurance of the presence of God in all aspects of life – among them those of Philaret of Moscow, John Calvin, St Augustine.

Such prayers reinforced the awareness in the community of their participation in the communion of saints, and of how porous the boundaries of Christian denominations are in the light of a shared spirituality. During the morning service some of these prayers provided the text of the epiclesis prior to the sermon, or as prayers of supplication.

The Church and the Arts

On the other Sunday evenings in this cycle of services the focus was on the Arts. The underlying conviction for such a focus was well expressed by Dag Hammarskjöld in *Markings* where he penned this reflection :

Thou takest the pen – and the lines dance.
Thou takest the flute – and the notes shimmer.
Thou takest the brush – and the colours sing.
So all things have meaning and beauty
in the space beyond time where Thou art.
How, then, can I hold back anything from Thee?⁴

The work of poets, artists, and musicians was seen by Hammarskjöld to be an aspect of God's continuing creativity. Indeed during the 1970s, as the churches were revising the Lectionary, there was a suggestion to add a fourth lesson to the existing ones, from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Epistles, and the Gospels. The fourth lesson was to bear testimony to the continuing work of the Spirit. The proposed lessons were poems, or extracts from literature which resonated with the Scripture Readings for the day. However, for practical reasons, and because of the difficulty of providing a canon for such readings, the idea was set aside. The impulse to celebrate the ongoing work of the Spirit in inspiring poets, musicians and artists nevertheless remains.

Thou takest the pen – and the lines dance

Once a month the evening service focussed on the work of poets from diverse ages and cultures. Some of the poets were consciously focussing on incidents, teachings, or persons in Scripture.⁵ Others perhaps subconsciously drew on their religious background.⁶ Others were not writing explicitly on religious themes, yet their work resonated with themes scriptural themes.⁷

4 Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*, trans. Leif Göteborg and W.H. Auden, London, Faber and Faber, 1964, p105.

5 E.g. poems by John Donne, George Herbert, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Edwin Muir, Czeslaw Milosz, Elie Wiesel, Les Murray, R.S Thomas, George MacKay Brown – to name but a few.

6 E.g. Hugh MacDiarmid *A Child is Born!* (MacDiarmid had been a Sunday School teacher in Langholm), Seamus Heaney, Alastair Reid

7 Pablo Neruda, Osip Mandelstam, Norman McCaig, Vikram Seth, Walt Whitman

One of the most perceptive analysts of the nature of poetry was the Irish poet and Nobel Laureate, Seamus Heaney. Throughout his life, Heaney had reflected on the nature of his art, bringing his insights into sharp focus in his lectures at the University of Oxford, *The Redress of Poetry*, and his Nobel lecture, *Crediting Poetry*.

In the first place, Heaney credits poetry with 'truth to life'. It is a form of art related to our existence as citizens of society. Particular to its time and place, it may yet illumine other times and places. The poem portrays life as it is, revealing the issues facing society, celebrating the identity of the people. They give a glimpse of life as it is.

Secondly, the poem highlights the imbalance in society, pointing to that which needs to be corrected, to be redressed. Heaney goes on to define 'redress' as 'the setting of a person, group or society upright again, raising them to an erect position'.

Thirdly, through this act of redress, the poet crafts a vehicle of and for harmony and unity. The poem becomes an act of integration within a context of division and contradiction. Through the poem a glimpsed alternative is presented.⁸

While Heaney in effect suggests that the role of the poet is that of the prophet, Osip Mandelstam invites us to see the poet as priest, and the poem as an event of the presence of transcendence.⁹

Mary Kinzie reinforces that insight when she writes:

I have frequently experienced the sensation that to study a work, a painting, or poem, was to be studied in return until studying, listening or reading became also a process of being studied, of being read. It may be closer to the truth of art to wait rather than interpret. It may be that if we could restrain our chronic urge to reduce art to something else, we might perceive truths we could not have predicted.¹⁰

8 Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry*, London, Faber and Faber 1995, 15.

9 Osip Mandelstam, *The Collected Critical Prose and Letters*, London, Harper Collins, 1991.

10 Mary Kinzie, *The Cure of Poetry in an Age of Prose: Moral essays on the poet's calling*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1993. Hans Ruedi Weber perceives a similar event when interpreting Scripture – see his *The Book that Reads me*, Geneva, WCC, 1995.

Recalling George Steiner's suggestion that among all the arts the poem uniquely cannot be muted,¹¹ Kinzie described the role of the poet as priest:

It is not accidental that I invoke some terms more familiar in religious circles than literary ones. For the task of the poet in the world is to act as seer while embodying in her own development the confrontation with affliction, or fate, which may approach transcendence.¹²

While the role of the poet is that of the prophet and the priest, in the Epistle to the Ephesians the author provides us with the insight that the church is God's poem. God is the poet. He 'takes the pen, and the lines dance, as Hammarkjöld expresses it.

For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (Ephesians 2:10 NRSV)

Markus Barth comments on this verse:

The translation 'made us what we are' is J Moffatt's. Literally, 'we are his (and no one else's) work'. The Greek noun (*poiema*) ... can bear the connotation of a work 'of art', especially a poetic product.¹³

Through the work of poets, we can be drawn into deeper understanding of God's activity, through a deepened understanding of the transcendent and an account of the world as it is, and the vision of the world as it can be. The poet also draws our attention to the contemporary human predicament, through the naming of the imbalances in society, and the call to re-establish right relations while offering a vision of life as God intends us to be. The poet therefore also invites us to embrace as the church our prophetic and priestly mission. Through patient listening and acting the church may recover her character as God's poem.

11 George Steiner, *Real Presences*, London, Faber and Faber 1989, 138.

12 Loc. cit., xii.

13 Markus Barth, *Ephesians*, Anchor Bible, New York, Doubleday, 1974, Vol. I, 226

Thou takest the flute – and the notes shimmer

For our evening services once a month a local choir, instrumental ensemble, or vocal soloists were invited to participate in the service itself. In most cases they chose the repertoire for the event. The music offered may be explicitly religious – the performance of a setting of the Miserere, the Magnificat, a Mendelssohn psalm setting, a Bach Cantata or the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross. In other cases the music chosen was composed for the concert platform, chamber concert or recital – Beethoven's *Les Adieu* sonata, Schubert's *Klavierstucke* and *Moments Musicaux*, Boyce's *Symphony no. 8*, or Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, to name but a few.

The music played was incorporated into the evening service itself. On occasions the music directly lent itself to reflection on a biblical text or theological idea. On other occasions, it was the nature of performing or of the understanding of music that led to theological reflection.

Alfred Brendel, for example, characterized the task of the musician:

As an interpreter – that is in my threefold function of curator, executor and obstetrician – I am not interested in clichés, but what is special and unique.¹⁴

A lesson learned from a world renowned pianist opened up a reflection on the interpretation of scripture and tradition, and of holding on to the awareness that such leads to new birth, new impulses for understanding and living.

On another occasion this reflection was carried further by exploring the nature of improvisations in jazz.

Daniel Barenboim also provided food for thought in his Reith Lectures of 2006 entitled *Everything is Connected: The power of music*¹⁵. On a number of occasions his work provided a source for reflection in our services. From the notion of music emerging from silence and returning to silence, an exploration of the emergence of creation ensued.¹⁶

14 Alfred Brendel, *On Music: Collected Essays*, London, Robson Books, 2001, 43.

15 Daniel Barenboim *Everything is Connected : The Power of Music* London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2008

16 See also Andras Schiff *Music Comes out of Silence* London , Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2020

On another occasion the nature of music as contrapuntal was explored:

Music is always contrapuntal in the philosophical sense of the word. Even when it is linear there are always opposing elements coexisting, occasionally even in conflict with each other. Music accepts comments from one voice to the other at all times and tolerates subversive accompaniments as a necessary antidote to leading voices. Conflict, denial and commitment coexist at all times in music.

Such led to our awareness of unity in diversity and our interconnectedness as human beings.

Another service explored the story of the creation of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra which brings together musicians from countries in conflict in the Middle East primarily. In music the musicians have to listen to each other. As citizens of Middle Eastern countries in conflict the orchestra provided an opportunity for listening to each others' experiences and stories. It invited reflection on the nature of forgiveness as process.¹⁷ Through dialogue and attentive listening change occurs. As Seamus Heaney writing from a different situation of tension reflected:

So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a farther shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells.¹⁸

The work of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra helped the congregation to explore processes of forgiveness and reconciliation, and to 'believe in miracles and cures and healing wells.'

Exploring music and the work of musicians reinforced our appreciation of the place of music in the praise of God, praise which emerges from silence because words are not capable of capturing the beauty and grandeur of God's activity and creativity. As Archbishop William Temple noted:

17 See Alan Falconer and J. Liechty *Reconciling Memories* Dublin, Columba Press 1998(2nd edition)

18 Seamus Heaney *The Cure of Troy* London, Faber and Faber 1990:77

There is no charm in the whole realm of art so subtle, so intangible, so ethereal as that of music. It is the most spiritual and incalculable of all modes of expression.¹⁹

Thou takest the brush – and the colours sing

The Cathedral Church is itself a symphony of colour through wood, stone and glass. Bearing testimony to the artistic sensibilities of previous generations, it is further enhanced by the work of contemporary artists and seamstresses who have applied their skills to the creation of Pulpit Falls appropriate to the liturgical season.

In months in which there are five Sundays, the evening service explored works of the visual arts. Many of the subjects of the art which stimulated our reflections were interpretations or portrayals of incidents or figures from the Bible.

Thus Velasquez's painting of the Supper at Emmaus expanded the imagination of members of the Congregation. It reminded us of the nature of the Christian life as a journey, a journey accompanied by Jesus Christ who comes to us unrecognised and unbidden. It also brought into sharp relief the presence of Christ in the resurrection meals of the breaking of bread.

Andrei Rublev's Icon on the Hospitality of Abraham and Sarah drew us into a dialogue on the Divine Nature, and that the three figures point to the Tree of Life and the cup of salvation.²⁰ These two works of visible art pointed us towards the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Rembrandt's painting took up the principal themes of the Reformation and led, among other paintings upon which we reflected, to an in-depth study of the parable of the Prodigal Son, with the artist's powerful presentation of the reconciliation between Father and Son.²¹

19 Cited in Timothy Day, *I saw eternity the other night*, Harmondsworth, Penguin 2019:285

20 See Alan Falconer, 'Andrei Rublev's Icon on the Hospitality of Abraham' in S. Smyth and S. Kingston (eds.), *Icons 88*, Dublin, Veritas, 1988: 121-127.

21 Willem Visser't Hooft, *Rembrandt and the Gospel*, London, SCM, 1960. For Reformation art see William Halewood, *Six Subjects of Reformation Art: A Preface to Rembrandt*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1982.

Marc Chagall's 'White Crucifixion', born of pogroms against the Jews, and representing all suffering caused by violence and war, invited contemplation on the Cross. It was a powerful testimony to the Jewishness of Jesus, and a reminder of our Jewish roots. It also raised the question of why Marc Chagall, a Jew, portrayed the Cross in so many of his paintings.²²

In other services, we reflected on the work of contemporary artists such as the Lithuanian artist Mikalojus Ciurlionis, and the Norwegian, Edvard Munch.

The work of artists, as with poets and musicians, adds a new and renewed dimension to the understanding of God and of human nature. Leonardo da Vinci emphasised the awareness of the divine nature of the work of the artist:

We by our hearts may be called the grandsons of God.²³

Through their imagination and skill it is possible to probe further into the mystery of God. This was particularly evident during Holy Week Services.

On each night of Holy Week, the story of the journey to Golgotha was remembered. In 2010, the Passion was viewed through the work of the poets. In 2008, services focussed on various settings of the Passion by composers, ending with the Passion according to St Mark by Osvaldo Golijov, with its haunting ending with a setting of the Kaddish. A third series viewed the Passion through the work of various artists over the centuries.²⁴ These all provided entry points for a deeper appreciation of the journey to Golgotha, and of course led to the Alleluias of Easter Day.

As the St Machar's community looked towards the 2020 Quincentenary celebration it adopted a Mission Statement for that year. This was recited on Pentecost each year, and it included the following:

We celebrate our heritage as we use our historic building, music and the arts as witnesses to the glory of God.

22 Perhaps matching a similar obsession by Chaim Potok in his Asher Lev novels. See Jackie Wullschlager, *Chagall: Love and Exile*, London, Allen Lane, 2008.

23 *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, Richter, 1888.

24 Paintings by Giotto, Tinteretto, El Greco, and Chagall.

The evening services were not exercises in literary, music, or art criticism. Rather, they were explorations of God's activity in continuing the work of creating. They sparked our imaginations, and addressed us as words of understanding and challenge calling us to be as we are called to be.

But the Mission Statement also emphasises the importance of encouraging poets, musicians and artists in their work. We have noted the work of local artists in the provision of pulpit falls and the oak organ screen. But the Cathedral also, with the aid of the interest from a substantial legacy given to it for its musical life, has been able to create up to eight choral scholarships, thus encouraging young people to develop their musical skills. It also made it possible for some years to organise an annual Festival of Sacred Music. The first of these, in conjunction with the Music Department of Aberdeen University, was a centenary celebration in 2008 of the work of Olivier Messiaen. A third initiative was the commissioning of a setting of the Beatitudes by Paul Mealor.²⁵

Ruth Duck expresses this engagement with the Arts well in her hymn:

Moved by the Gospel, let us move
with every gift and art.
The image of creative love
indwells each human heart.
The Maker calls creation good,
so let us now express
with sound and colour, stone and wood,
the shape of holiness.

Let weavers form from broken strands
a tapestry of prayer.
Let artists paint with skilful hands
their joy, lament, and care.
Then mime the story: Christ has come.
With reverence dance the word.
With flute and organ, gong and drum
God's praise be ever heard.

25 Recorded as Blessing: The Music of Paul Mealor – Signum Classics 2020.

O Spirit, breathe among us here;
inspire the work we do.
May hands and voices, eye and ear
attest to life made new.
In worship and in daily life
create among us still.
Great Artist, form our common life
according to your will. ²⁶

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Each of the services we have noted has its own integrity. Just as the columns of Heraldic Arms point to the Lordship of Christ, so the various services and events find their inspiration and culmination in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Sacrament draws all these threads together.

The Sacrament is an event of the presence of God, as C.H. Dodd noted:

That which otherwise we would perceive piecemeal is integrated in a rite which presents it all as the sheer gift of God. ... It is all there, because God in Christ is there. In dependence on Him for everything, we render it back to Him in thankful adoration ²⁷.

In this event, the community is re-membering Christ's presence. He calls the community into being. God's activity in Creation, including the human creativity inspired by God, is celebrated. The plea for forgiveness and God's activity in forgiving us individually and as a community enables the community to be able to approach the Word of God. The community prays for discernment so that it might hear the Word of God. Often this is expressed: through a prayer examined at an evening service thus placing the congregation in the witness of the Church through the centuries; the proclamation and hearing of the Word of God; as the community affirms its trust in God in the words of the Apostles' Creed. A second response is that of the intercessions which include prayers for justice and peace and the names left by visitors on the prayer tree. The prayers of intercession also include those churches and nations in the World Council of Churches Prayer Cycle, thus increasing our awareness of churches throughout

²⁶ Church Hymnary 4:247.

²⁷ Loc.cit.

the world. Those present are invited to share in the meal. To emphasise our unity we exchange the kiss of peace. We are made whole as individuals and community in the remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are then sent out to participate in God's mission and with God's blessing.

This is a community celebration, with the congregation joining in the psalms and hymns²⁸ and in the spoken Kyrie, the Apostles' Creed, the Sursum Corda, Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei. The service itself continued the tradition of the double procession (Lesser and Great Entrances).

While this is a community event, it is above all an event of the Word. In this we are re-membling (anamnesis) the life, the ministry of calling, teaching, healing, forgiving, interceding, commissioning, inviting, and the death and rising of Jesus. The whole drama of salvation in Christ is celebrated every time we celebrate the Sacrament. Christ, we believe, is present among us: calling us, teaching us, forgiving us, making us whole, interceding with us and joining us to himself and each other in his death and rising.

The Church is called to be God's poem, offering a glimpse of an alternative to life as it is, pointing to and righting the imbalances in society, responding to God's word as God addresses the community through the work of artists, musicians and poets – art which draws us beyond ourselves to that which can only be glimpsed, yet which evokes our praise and thanksgiving.

28 The Order of Service used was that of *Common Order* (1994, 1996, 2005) in addition to which, on occasion, the *Book of Worship* of the Presbyterian Church (USA) or liturgies of the Iona Community were pressed into service.