**Introduction**

In a time of increasing division, we at Corrymeela lament that public discourse often escalates into arguments meant to win the day rather than to build a better future. One-way rants online replace meaningful face-to-face exchanges. Polite conversation often implies refraining from discussion about topics of real consequence.

For Corrymeela Sunday this year, we are inspired to **create a culture of courage.**

Although we are in the Lenten season of reflection and repentance, we look through the lens of Easter to the excitement of a Pentecost church courageously engaged in the streets of a dynamic city. In concert with this service, Corrymeela is working with Fr. Martin Magill to launch **Courage Pentecost**. This initiative will run from Easter to the end of May 2020 with the hope of prompting acts of courage in our changing communities. Believing that courage is for all of us (not just the heroic few), we will suggesting acts of courage ‘from private prayer to press release.’ Information will be available on the Corrymeela website soon.

For the 15th March service, we are reflecting on the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. With it, we celebrate the courage it takes to speak out and to learn about matters that affect us all. In the exchange between Jesus and this woman we see the beginnings of a community where difference enriches our unity. The willingness to engage in difficult conversations and the desire to accommodate difference both require courage. Both are needed today.

In Northern Ireland, we find ourselves in a changing context featuring the resumption of Stormont and the implementation of Brexit. Beneath these headlines lie stories of increased sectarian violence, persistent divisions between entrenched communities, and the ongoing tendency to see those who are new or unfamiliar as threats rather than as fellow members of a shared society or as children equally loved by God. As the new government sets priorities, and as we on these islands re-orient ourselves to one another, we seek to create a culture of courage that promotes healthy engagement with those with whom we disagree.

We speak from a particular context, but we recognise that there are similarities between the challenges we face and those in other areas experiencing polarisation, sectarianism, concerns about political dysfunction, and a decrease in respectful dialogue.

We offer these resources – and invite you to join us in #couragepentecost – with faith that more unites us than would divide us. We believe that better relationships transform division, and that the divine and courageous response to human separation is to love others as God has loved us.

Grace and peace,



Alex Wimberly

Leader of the Corrymeela Community

**LITURGICAL RESOURCES for Corrymeela Sunday**

**Calls to Worship**

1. Drawn from many backgrounds and experiences,

**God gathers us as one body.**

Bringing our whole selves before our Maker,

**God transforms us more and more into who we were created to be.**

We stand together as people loved by God**,**

**and who are called to love others in ordinary and extraordinary ways.**

Come, let us worship together.

1. Living for ourselves, we become separated from each other.

**But gathered before God, we are united by Christ’s love for all.**

Come, let us worship together.

**Calls to Confession**

1)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

But when we show the courage to confess our sin, we discover that God has forgiven us

of all our sin and cleanses us of all unrighteousness.

With courage and in humility, let us confess our sins before God and one another.

2)

We are all guilty of many things.

We have hurt others and neglected ourselves.

We have crusaded for causes that are not holy, and ignored God’s call to love.

We have turned our back on neighbours, exploited creation, and denied the truth.

We have failed to act when a small act of courage would make a great difference.

Yet we find forgiveness in God. We find grace in Christ. We find new life in the Spirit.

Let us confess our sin so that we might be able to accept the forgiveness offered,

extend grace to others as we have received it,

and live this new life together.

**Prayers of Confession**

1)

**God of compassion and mercy,**

**We come before you as part of a divided society and a broken world.**

**We seek your healing and transforming grace.**

**We confess that it is easy for us to point the finger at others,**

**yet we know that we all need your forgiveness.**

**So we lift into your presence today**

**not only those affected by our actions**

**but also those we have separated from ourselves.**

**Break down the walls of hatred, distrust and bitterness**

**and open a way for us**

**to reach one another in truth and love.**

**Enable us to build a society where all can belong;**

**where we share our gifts in mutual respect;**

**and where the stranger can find a welcome.**

**Give us the courage not just to talk about people,**

**But to talk to them, and to listen,**

**and to hear your voice.**

**Through Jesus Christ we pray: Amen.**

2)

**Holy and loving God,**

**We are prone to carve the world into us and them, good and bad, in and out.**

**We confess that in fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar,**

**We turn to those with whom we already agree.**

**We fail to believe that to follow you is to become something new,**

**and look instead to ourselves to find something to call god.**

**Give us faith to trust that you will be where you call us to go.**

**Give us the courage to seek you in the unknown,**

**in the face of the stranger, and in what we have yet to become.**

**Lead us into better relationship with those from whom we have separated ourselves,**

**seeking forgiveness whenever necessary,**

**and extending forgiveness wherever possible.**

**Bring us back as one family into your embrace,**

**and allow us to find what is holy and loving in you.**

**Amen.**

**Gospel reading**

**John 4:5-42**

5So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.6Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

7A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” 8(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) 9The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) 10Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” 11The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” 13Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” 15The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

16Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” 17The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’ 18for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” 19The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. 20Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” 21Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. 24God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” 25The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” 26Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

27Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” 28Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 29“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” 30They left the city and were on their way to him.

31Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” 32But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” 33So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” 34Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. 35Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. 36The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. 37For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ 38I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.”

39Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” 40So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. 41And many more believed because of his word. 42They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.”

**Reflection**

A sermon for the day might follow a structure that highlights the following:

the divisions between the Jesus and the woman (male/female; Jewish/Samaritan);

the woman’s courage to speak to Jesus;

Jesus’ honest engagement with her;

*The change that occurs in the woman’s understanding of ‘*the Christ’ *and* ‘us’

*as Jesus’ declares that ‘*I *am he, the one who is speaking to* you*.’*;

the woman’s courage to speak about Jesus in her community;

Jesus’ expansive vision of who is included in God’s work;

the transformation that the woman’s courage brought about in her own community.

Those choosing to join us in the Courage Pentecost campaign may wish to connect the woman’s courage and Jesus’ expansive view of inclusion to the courage of the disciples at Pentecost in *Acts 2.*

**Prayers for the day**

1)

God of compassion and mercy,

We bring to you our divided society and our broken world,

seeking your healing and transforming grace.

It is easy for us to point the finger at others,

yet we know that we all need your forgiveness.

So we lift into your presence today

not only those affected by our decisions

but also those we have separated from ourselves.

Break down the walls of hatred, distrust and bitterness

and open a way for us

to reach one another in truth and love.

Enable us to build a society where all can belong;

where we share our gifts in mutual respect;

and where the stranger can find a welcome.

Through Jesus Christ we pray: Amen.

2)

A Prayer for Times of Lumpy Crossings\*

God of the earth

we were brought to a rocky outcrop,

a place of islands:

Rathlin, Ireland, Britain, Islay, Jura.

The crossings are not wide, but they are deep.

In this in-between place,

this place of lumpy crossings,

we have been formed.

And now we are at a time

where our crossings with each other

are deep, and wide, and fractured:

Britain, Europe, Ireland, Scotland

England, London, Leave, Remain.

May we be sustained by the hope of reconciliation:

may our difficult differences not divide us,

may our encounters with each other be transformative,

may our listening bring understanding,

may our resistance be changed by generosity,

may our love, feeble as it sometimes is, lead to more love.

We ask this

as a people on pilgrimage

towards our deepest vocation,

to be one, as God is one.

Amen.

(\*One possible translation of ‘Corrymeela’ is ‘place of lumpy crossings’ – which may refer to the choppy waters off the north coast of Ireland near Rathlin Island.)

3)

Lamb of God,

you showed us power by putting it to good use,

revealing your strength by empowering others.

May those who hold power

use it not to secure more power for themselves,

but to strengthen the fainthearted,

support the weak and help the suffering.

And may we, who sometimes feel powerless,

honour those in communities who serve others selflessly,

so that the seduction of serving one’s self

will not hold so much power.

Amen.

4)

Eternal and boundless God,

when a clock strikes and a great gong clangs

and a moment becomes symbolic of change,

Remind us that only humans

make sense of life by carving shapeless time

into calendar days and hours and minutes.

Only we impose order by placing borders on a map.

We are still the creatures of an eternal and boundless God,

citizens of a realm without territory,

and companions with one another on a journey without end.

May all our clanging cymbals be resounding calls for love,

the love that remains with hope and faith after all else fades away.

Amen.

5)

God of all nations and no nation,

as we renegotiate treaties and agreements,

and reapportion funds both foreign and domestic,

help us reintroduce ourselves to our neighbours,

near and far – so we can truly meet the people we often talk about.

May the fences we put up and the fences we mend be good for leaning up against,

so we can chat and hear the news and share our separate stories.

And as the talk gets louder with added voices and concern,

May we hear the good news you proclaim of a nation for us all.

Amen.

6)

Jesus of Nazareth,

and Britain; and Ireland; and Europe;

and this small plot; this blessed plot;

this new era we are in:

bless us as we sort out where we are,

and who we are, and how we fit together.

After years of argument and anger,

cobbled coalitions and strange bedfellows,

we have separated ourselves in ways that feel more permanent.

Yet the distance between Westminster and Brussels remains 200 miles,

a train to London leaves Union street at Glasgow Central Station,

the flight from Belfast arrives at Heathrow in just over an hour,

and no one slows down between County Down and County Louth.

Our families and friendships stretch across borders and seas.

And we remain citizens of a boundless realm

where peacemakers are blessed,

the merciful are shown mercy,

and the divine response to human division is unconditional love.

Thank God.

Amen.

7)

Jesus, friend of sinners,

Your perfection reminds us that our faults are a given,

but our broken relationships are not.

Help us to worry less about who’s right and wrong

and more about making things better.

For yours is the only perfect human life.

Ours are of repair and reconciliation,

and therefore of something divine.

Amen

**Blessings for Trust**

For those in positions of power: may we trust that we are supported to do good, and love kindness, and walk humbly. **Amen.**

For those who fear a future where we hold less power: may we trust that those who gain power will use it well. **Amen.**

For those who worry about our ability to govern ourselves in a democracy: may we trust that what has been built on a rock of justice will withstand the coming storms. **Amen.**

For those who live in anxiety over the fate of this planet because of the sin of humanity: may we trust in the presence of divine power alive in us and in rising generations. **Amen.**

For those whose faith in institutions like the church has been severely tested: may we trust in the resurrection of what is true even as we see a body laid to rest. **Amen.**

For those who have been hurt by those we have trusted: may we trust ourselves to know when and where to trust again. **Amen.**

And for those who must regain the trust of others: may we trust that reconciliation is possible. **Amen.**

**Prayer for Courage**

Courage comes from the heart

and we are always welcomed by God,

the Croí of all being.\*

We bear witness to our faith,

knowing that we are called to live lives

of courage, love and reconciliation

in the ordinary and extraordinary moments

of each day.

We bear witness, too, to our failures

and our complicity in the fractures of our world.

May we be courageous today.

May we learn today.

May we love today.

Amen

\*Croí is Irish for heart. It is also the name of the worshiping space at Corrymeela.