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# March 2022 Prayer News

## PRAYER TOPICS FOR THE MONTH

This month trust God and pray that he will take us through the present shaking

Week start	March prayer topics
6	Pray for all those congregations in Presbytery and across Scotland who have, or will possibly see their church buildings close in the present circumstances.
13	Pray for a trusting engagement by all the churches in the Presbytery and throughout Scotland in the shake up taking place just now.
20	Ask for help for our communities to understand that although changes to the churches' situation seem drastic nowhere are they being abandoned, but rather under God the church will better serve them.
27	Ask our heavenly Father to give us the good things he has for us, and to help us trust him about what seems so awful to us now he will turn around for our benefit and good.

Contact [inverness@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:inverness@churchofscotland.org.uk) with your prayer news for next month. Tell us answers to prayer as well as requests for prayer

## Try Trusting Our Father

Recently, earthquakes have been recorded along the Great Glen and off-shore to the east. Many have felt or heard the movement of the earth. Being in an earthquake, as many around the world have experienced, must be very frightening. The earth—the bedrock we expect to be solid—suddenly moves, and everything we think will stand sure, falls.

The Psalmist in Psalm 20 speaks of the Lord being a firm rock upon which to stand. When all around us is shifting, an immovable rock is welcome stability.

What the Church of Scotland is having to do just now is frightening, too. All we have known and thought secure is changing—Assembly reform, Presbytery reform, new mission planning. Everything that we thought stable is being shaken and is uncertain. It follows a distressing couple of years when the pandemic lockdown has already severely shaken what we thought could never happen. Churches were closed, services stopped, and the people of God could no longer meet together face to face. Now the Church has to make that a more permanent loss in some cases and a severely changed circumstance in others. We wonder what is happening and it has gripped us with fear. Has God

gone and abandoned his church, just as many in the church seem to have abandoned him?

The Psalmist, again, in Psalm 46, knew a time like we are going through as he writes, “though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging”—what?—“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear”.

In recording the unfolding of the renewed heaven and earth at the end of time, Revelation 21 and 22 gives us one of the clearest glimpses of the future we have. They highlight a great shaking, too:

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (21:3–4).

When at school we were bullied—the bully might have “beaten us up”—and we would run home crying. Our mother would be in the kitchen, and she’d have her apron on, and she’d say, “Come here.” and she’d lean over and wipe away our

tears with the edge of her apron. When our mother wiped away our tears, we were truly comforted, and encouraged to go back into the battle. She would have to wipe your tears away again and again. But when God wipes away our tears, they will never flow again for all eternity.

Right now we live in the “vale of tears”, but that situation is not permanent because God will wipe away our tears. But it hurts just now!

John also says, “Death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying” (verse 4). Death, sorrow, crying, pain will pass away. Imagine someone saying to you in the new Jerusalem, “Remember the pain we suffered with what we went through with the Church?” We will say, “I hardly remember what that was.”

Then, in verse 22, we read about something else that will be missing. Not only will there be no sorrow or death, but there will be no temple in the new Jerusalem. John means that there will be no temple building. There will be another kind of temple, he says— “the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” The most beautiful earthly sanctuary in this world will be *passé* in the new Jerusalem because we’ll be in the presence of God and of the Lamb. Our buildings will not matter then.

We don’t ever want to downplay or deny the pain that the changes we face bring. Christianity isn’t a system of Stoic denial where we pretend that everything is okay, even when we are enduring the worst things. At the same time, we dare not forget the Christian hope that one

day all suffering will be gone forever. When we deal with suffering, we tend to have our gaze completely locked on the present, but the Christian answer to suffering, while making it incumbent upon us to alleviate present pain as much as we are able, looks beyond the present to the future.

With today’s secularist thought is the notion that the here and now, is all there is. There is no eternal realm. But as Christians, we believe that the present is in the light of the eternal. This is what Jesus taught again and again. “What does it profit a man if in this time and in this place he gains the whole world, but he loses his own soul” (Luke 9:25)?

Scripture tells us that the end says why the beginning is significant (Ecclesiastes 7:8). Only God knows the end from the beginning comprehensively, but in his Word, he gives us a glimpse of the end toward which we are moving. If we can focus our attention on the end and not merely on the now and the pain we experience here, we can begin to understand our pain in the right perspective.

Then we get the highest hope, the most incredible promise in the New Testament—we will see God’s face (Revelation 22:4). All our lives here we can come close to the Lord, we can sense his presence, and we can talk with him, but we cannot see his face. But if we persevere through the pain and the suffering of this present world, the vision of God waits for us on the other side. Can you imagine it? Can you imagine looking into the unveiled glory of God for one second? It will make every pain

we’ve ever experienced in this world worth it for that.

“These words are trustworthy and true” (verse 6)—not salve or opium to dull our present pain but the truth of Almighty God, who made us, who knows us, who by the suffering of his Son has redeemed his people. He has now guaranteed that if we are in Christ by faith alone, we are bound for glory, and nothing can derail that train. So these former things that cause us so much grief will pass away, and he will make all things new.

From the very beginning, Satan has pushed the idea of God as a miser who says no all the time because he doesn’t want us to be wise or happy or fulfilled. He ignores our prayers because he isn’t good and he doesn’t love us.

Jesus attacks this lie head-on in verses immediately following those unblushing promises in Matthew 7:9–11. Jesus basically asks, Do you have kids? OK. Do you love seeing the smile on their faces when you surprise them with a gift? Does it warm your heart when they ask you for something good, because they trust you and believe you’ll give it to them? If you answered yes to all these, it’s because you’re a good dad or mom. But here’s the rub: there is a Father in heaven who is infinitely better than you. Compared to him, you are evil (Matthew 7:11).

That’s why he loves to give good gifts to his children. Because he’s the good Father *par excellence*. Trust him that the present shaking is for our good, the present pain will end in joy.