**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**Sunday 8th August**

**Gathering**

The book does not contain the story

It holds it there

Waiting

To be set free in the telling

Restless

To be heard in the world

Ready

To renew us through every word

The book does not contain the story

Only the words

Each embrace a promise

Alive in the retelling

Ready to shift the world

Towards the truth they contain

The book does not contain the story

The story is in each one of us

Waiting to be told

**Welcome**

Hello. I’m Roddy Hamilton, the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you for the invitation to join you again today. I wonder how many of us will have a story to tell after the summer, of places been to, holidays made, people met, experiences shared. It is one of the things that seem to be uniquely human in us: the ability to tell stories and find these stories hold meaning for us.

We are people of the story. That is a faith statement. You can lay down creeds and doctrines and we would still be faithful, still find our way, still believe. But if you laid down the story, we would be lost. Our faith is a story and our story is faith, and today, again, we tell it.

**Prayer**

Great storyteller

Great word of life

May we listen

Hear

Reflect

Retell

The story of our faith

May we make room to find

A fresh understanding

A renewed experience

Of who we are

In the great story that is our faith

Dare we let go our presumed creeds

Our unquestioned doctrines

And speak once more

The stories we hold

That they may free us

And you

From the limits we have created

And know a faith

And share a time

And open a space

Where thought is alive

Questions are always ready

Adventures are presumed

And our story is alive

In every retelling

And we might experience love

Afresh

And touch grace

Anew

And find truth

Again

And know forgiveness

Once more

And seek renewal

Here

Among us all

Whoever we are

This holy community

Held together

In the story of love

Your story

And your gift

To us all

Hear us

As we say the global prayer

Our Father, who is in heaven,

Hallowed be your name;

Your kingdom come;

Your will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

for ever

Amen

**Reading (voice 1)**

After the bullrushes

After the Midian wilderness

After the burning bush

After the great I AM

After the hesitation and stuttering

After the Pharaoh’s ‘No!’

After the list of plagues

Comes passover

The unleavened bread

The angel of night

The wailing of the Egyptians

And the memory of the meal

**Reading (voice 2)**

**24**You shall observe this rite as a perpetual ordinance for you and your children. **25**When you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. **26**And when your children ask you, ‘What do you mean by this observance?’ **27**you shall say, ‘It is the passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed down and worshiped.

**Reflection**

Because overseas holidays are not so much in vogue this year… the staycation has come into its own… I’m fairly boring on the holiday front at the best of times… and tend to do staycations anyway… regularly going to the same few places each year…

This year, we broke the mould, and spread our wings a little… and ended up in a few new places… all of them good… One was Jupiter Artland where the whole landscape is covered in installation art from huge landscaped art… to small statues and figurines… With one or two it was quite obvious what they were about… and in many ways these were the least exciting… Most were more ambiguous… You had to read the story behind them… the event or idea, to get a sense of the muse behind what you were looking at, to experience it more fully… Then you shared an experience you would never have had, unless you knew the story of the statue or installation…

Talking of stories and statues… there still is quite a debate about statues more generally… You’ll often find statues with simply a name on them… and that is all you are given… It is presumed the person was influential or famous enough for you to know the story behind the person…

There is a powerful arrogance in that… Those who belong to the culture or tradition know the story… And if you don’t know it… well, clearly you don’t belong… It doesn’t make for a welcoming society…

There are other statues, however… that don’t presume and are focussed on telling a story… One example is Martin Luther King… a person you thought would hardly need explaining… a name, even initials, would be just fine… but on his memorial in Washington there are sixteen quotes from his speeches…

It is a statue that doesn’t presume, but it’s meaning is held within the story, a story that is freshly told by everyone who comes to see it… It does not presume on tradition, or that there are things that are forever known… but relies on the story being told… again and again… a timeless story told afresh in each generation… every time it is visited…

And there is something extraordinary effective about that… the storytelling is essential… not just for our past but for our future too… story telling is essential for our morality… Telling this story again and again shapes a vision for who we aim to be, not who we have been… which is what these other statues are founded on…

Such a means of keeping our morals alive is a faith tradition… It is what our faith is: storytelling… So much is wrong with a church that just presumes people know or understand it’s beliefs… its creeds…

Way back in Exodus… we hear the first insight into this truth… It is Passover and before they have even left their houses and taken the first step on the journey to freedom… Moses reminds the people… when your children ask you about this… tell the story of what is happening tonight…

See what’s happening… Moses is already looking towards the future… knowing that future will be shaped by the stories we tell…

This is the importance of storytelling on our moral life… These stories identify who we are… and who we have a vision of becoming… If we don’t remind ourselves of our stories… then we quickly fall into whatever idolatry is current… populism, idealism, individualism, consumerism…

As a church… in this existential moment… we have a choice to be the statue that bears only a name no one will remember… or a community that tells stories… a choice to presume we are known and have already added all we can add to our community’s life… or remind ourselves of the gift we have for our communities, the moral vision of who we can become… reminding ourselves of samaritans and prodigals, of exodus and prophets, of incarnation and resurrection… and let the retelling of these stories… remind us, renew us and reshape us… let go a tradition that presumes… and open the invitation of a new retelling…

**Prayer**

Loving God

The pause in our worry

And the hope in our anxiety

In all the stories we tell of our world

We trust you hear them all

The stories we cannot tell

The ones we do not know about

The stories that anger us with the injustice

Hurt us with the pain

Confront ourselves with the mirror they hold up to us

Within these stories

We pray

And pause

And let your love and grace

Hold the world

And love it back towards you

May we all find our morals again

That move us towards each other

That shape a space for the diversity of us all

That levels the ground between rich and poor

Powerful and powerless

An ethic that speaks of love

Prioritises a life shared

A planet that is healthy and equal

Communities that are open and generous

And ethic that moves against prejudice

Self interest

Power

And in your love and grace

Holds the world

And loves it back towards you

We bring our families and friends

Those who are unwell physically and mentally

Those we worry about

Who have lost jobs, security, sense of life

Those troubled daily by anxiety

Fearful of life and pandemics

For those in hospital

Those grieving

Those lost and those angry with life

May your love and grace

Hold this world

And love it back towards you

And for all of us

Trying to find a way forward

Confused by where we are and who we are

Unable to see what the future will be

And finding days difficult

Coping with changes

And different needs and attitudes

Worried about safety

And institutions

And community

May your love and grace

Hold this world

And love it back towards you

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**