**New Kilpatrick**

**19th September 2021**

**James 3:13—4:3, 7-8a**

**Podcast**

**Gathering**

May there be Peace within us

Peace between us

Peace around us

Peace maker

May we shape a space today

To be filled with holy peace

That it might flow

And bring us together

Into one community

Named by love

**Introduction**

Hello! I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you for the generosity of allowing us to find you wherever you are right now.

By the miracle of technology we are here today. Of course, that’s not the only miracle that got us here: there’s life, there’s creation, there’s love, etc. Quite a few miracles. When you think of it like that there is something astounding and special in what we do.

However, the human miracle is the bits of software that some extraordinary humans have brought together to make up an operating system that lets our computers and cameras and phones, bring me from my home into yours.

It’s not the only operating system at work today. What is it James the letter writer says: purity, peace, gentleness, willing to yield, impartiality, mercy. That’s the operating system of the church, and every word written about ourselves, in every bulletin, website, newsletter, window or noticeboard, comes from that operating system. That determines what we communicate. And if we don’t look after that operating system, then when there is a glitch, a gremlin, an outage, then our ability to communicate is hit. And that is what we explore today: communication.

**Prologue**

Six words round which to build a church: Welcome, Families, Welfare, Creativity, Relationships, Communication.

St Francis said: Preach the Gospel always, use words if necessary. The words we use, are only a fraction of the ways we communicate. We are communicating all the time with our body language, our clothes, our buildings, our church furniture, our pews etc. Everything speaks of us, some in ways that make us accessible and understood, some sowing confusion and perhaps even a little fear. So let us gather and communicate with the love which all these things, for us, point to, and found in God, where we do not need to fear or even have the words, but are invited in the presence of that love. Let us pray

**Prayer**

Holy breath of life

May you breathe through us

Your peace

Your compassion

Your forgiveness

That we might be renewed

Pause

May we find in you

The mingling

Of the different colours of our voices

Holding us

Keeping us

In each other’s nearest presence

Pause

And for that presence

And for that grace

And for the love

For that gift of community

That promises a space for us all

We give thanks

Pause

Yet it has been hard to find at times

You know we have felt lost and lonely

We know of fear and restlessness

Pause

And we have wondered

And we worry

And we struggle with the words

And the faith can be difficult

But this is our honest prayer

With pretence that faith is an answer to everything

Just the truth of our humanity

Pause

Beloved Creator

Holy companion

May we find that place

Deep within us

That holds a light

Fed by your promise

That comes alive with your possibility

And calls our names

Loving the sound of them

And we are known

Pause

Holy God

Present with us now

May we be ready for all this time will bring

In prayer

In hope

In love

Hear us

Lifting each other in 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

**Scripture Introduction**

Many of us have become a lot more familiar with our computers over the last year or so. And we have become quite familiar with the icons on our screens that instantly communicate what that app or programme does… Beside that, we have designed integrated webpages, sent image filled emails, weekly bulletins to communicate with everyone that we are still here, doing what we can.

None of that is possible without the software behind it, the stuff that has to be designed and come together to make all these messages understood. All our bulletins and webpages, everything we communicate comes from our own operating system which is what James is talking about in our passage this week: gentleness, wisdom, peace, ability to yield, mercy, impartiality. Imagine that operating system working fully, not just in the church but in in all our institutions…

**Scripture Reading: James 3:13—4:3, 7-8a**

**13**Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. **14**But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. **15**Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. **16**For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. **17**But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. **18**And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? **2**You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. **3**You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

**7**Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8**Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

**Reflection**

We’re very busy trying to get our message across. We feel we may have got somewhere with YouTube, instagram, Facebook, websites etc all of which we use. The jury is out on whether we have made inroads.

But I wonder if we should take a step back from that, worry less, and grow in confidence with what we know best. We’re storytellers: we communicate in story, the paths of life are woven into these ancient tales we have been brought up on, and discover, are ever new.

Perhaps our vision should be to be a faith community so familiar with these stories again, that they become our skin: that surface that is in constant touch with the world.

These narratives are how the faith has always been shared. It creates pictures of people through which to engage the world with Jacob and Esau, Moses and Abraham, David and Jesus, Peter and Paul. It’s not about understanding doctrine: how often has that been said here, but simply and honestly telling stories: some we understand and find connection with in this moment, and some we don’t yet. Some are still waiting to be found again in an experience we haven’t had. But they are alive and we are alive in the telling of them.

Yes, we have technology and newsletters and the everyday task of communicating what we are doing is always the top of our agenda, but underneath that, and perhaps too deeply at times, is a lack of confidence in remembering the stories we gather round, not just what they mean, because stories are meant to mean different things to different generations, but just the familiarity of them: the feel of them in our souls, in our throats, on our lips: gifts to give the world, to help guide it and love it and move it and challenge it.

We are story tellers and that is our singular communication tool: it is where God lives, in the stories of love and grace and hurt and dysfunction and stammering patriarchs and immoral kings. They are all there. They are stuff of our faith. And we can identify with them.

So if story telling is our gift of hope to the world, how might we create the space to do that, shape not a place, because place is fixed and owned, but shape a space that is open for listening.

And if we can shape a storytelling space, if we can shape our worship again round the telling and listening to stories rather than model a place of learning, might we also have a space open to listen to the stories others tell?

Are we set up wrong? Can we read the bible without thinking of it as a school book but one to get grubby with use and familiar in its telling. Set up the story telling so that it is done by those who have shared that very story, who can call us and gather us round it, physically and emotionally, and listen?

And communicate, set free the story of grace without being worried about how people will interpret it. It has been around for 4000 years. It’s quite safe. The danger is when we fix a meaning, lock in an understanding, interpret in only one way. Dare we reimagine how, and what, we communicate, reimagining worship as a story telling space, sharing the ancient stories, listening to new ones from others that invites us all to listen to each other again.

**Music**

**Reflection**

What story shall we tell of this place? How might we communicate the hurt and confusion we feel for the world and our neighbours as much about the alleluias of life?

I was reading some stuff about LGBTQ community and faith and how we have been so bad at communicating our love, that this is no welcoming space. But, when we confess that, and speak of the honest human messiness of our faith, we begin to communicate love again. And that can be equally said of mental health, refugees, women and children, single parents, all of whom invite us to communicate differently.

We communicate with an invitation: rather than state here’s what we believe and if you agree, then join us, but more: please tell us what life is like for you, where might we accompany each other, here’s what we need to experience from you, here’s where our faith needs to broaden. This is our operating system and it isn’t always intuitive, but it is human.

Admitting this messiness, makes us uncomfortable, but do we not wish to build relationships with those who have found church difficult? But that is where we begin next week: relationships.

**News**

**Prayers**

Holy God

May we find our place in the world

Can be a place of love

And peace

Where life finds new growth

And our dreams can take root

And in the living of our lives here

In community with each other

May we speak of

And witness to

And communicate fully

The breadth of your love

And the depth of your grace

And your hope for humanity

May our language and lives

Communicate that pain you have

For those in conflict

May we draw attention

To your agenda for compassion and peace

In Afghanistan’s conflict and hunger

In Syrias pain and fragility

In Yemen’s famine and vulnerability

May how we live here

Communicate your longings and love

For a world that is fair and balanced

Where vaccine sharing comes out of our humanity

And not from our power

Where the least are made important

And are the measure of our humanness

Where our environment is not a product

But a wealth we can all share

Holy God

May all we are

Speak of you

May our conflicts cease

Our prejudice break

Our fears reduce

Our love increase

Without words

But within our lives

As we gather those whose names we speak

And those whose names we do not know

In our families and friends

In our community and nation

Those grieving and hurting

Those worried and forgotten

Those physically and mentally ill

Those whose lives are broken

May we pause

And let the speak into our prayer

Pause

Hear us

And may we live

Beyond the words we use

And open the gospel of love

In our lives shared

And relationships open

To each other

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**