SERVICE FOR THE COMMEMORATION OF BENEFACtORS
WEDNESDAY 16 JUNE 2021, 9.45AM
Welcome
Dame Katherine Grainger, Chancellor

Hello everybody, I am Dame Katherine Grainger, Chancellor of the University of Glasgow and it is my sincere pleasure to welcome you all today to this ceremony of commemoration.

Now, of course we cannot all be together in the beautiful Bute Hall for this moment, but we can still find ways to celebrate the foundation of our wonderful University back in 1451, and to commemorate our benefactors.

Across the centuries, the University of Glasgow has been contributing immeasurably, not just to the city of Glasgow, not just to Scotland or the United Kingdom, but indeed to the entire world.

Our students, our staff, our graduates, have been making impact changing lives, changing the world for the better in areas that range from politics to poetry, from science to sport, and they have been inspiring great actions.

The University has had to constantly evolve and adapt to changing times, and clearly the last eighteen months has been no exception to that. And as the world has become perhaps more restricted in ways of working, the university has become no less ambitious, and I’m hugely proud to say that, despite many of our worlds feeling somewhat smaller, during this pandemic the impact and connections of the university have been as wide ranging and wide reaching as ever.

Now, we will all face challenges, as individuals, as groups, as institutions, as organisations. Challenge is inevitable in life. The most important thing is how we respond to that challenge, and I am very pleased to say that the university and the brilliant, brilliant people that make it what it is, have responded to this challenge, not just risen to the challenge, but have been motivated to find a better way forward because of that challenge.

Ever since 1451, the people at the university have believed in a better future, and not just believed in it, but have committed to working together to be part of that better future. And long may that continue.

Enjoy the ceremony.

Rev Dr Carolyn Kelly, University Chaplain

For all who of their goodwill in time past have thus enriched the University; for all who by their devotion to true learning have increased her fame and usefulness, and have kept her light shining before all people; for all her sons and daughters who have gone out from this place to fulfil in the world the work for which they were here prepared; for all who love our ancient House and seek her good, let us now bless and praise Almighty God

Hello, I’m Carolyn Kelly, Chaplain to the University. Please join me in our opening prayer.

OUR help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Hymn : All people that on earth do dwell (CH4 63)

1. All people that on earth do dwell,
sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell,
come ye before him and rejoice.

2. Know that the Lord is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make;
we are his folk, he doth us feed,
and for his sheep he doth us take.

3. Oh, enter then his gates with praise,
approach with joy his courts unto:
praise, laud, and bless his name always,
for it is seemly so to do

4. For why? the Lord our God is good,
his mercy is for ever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.
Almighty God,
Creator of the universe
By whose hand the stars and planets were formed
By whose spirit life on earth was created
By whose purpose human beings were created in your own image
To be like God
But not to be God
And in whose name we have gathered
In this sacred place of prayer and reflection
At the heart of our ancient University

And as we gather from different traditions and cultures
Bringing our hopes, our aspirations, our thoughts and concerns
We recall how by thought, word, or deed we have failed your purpose

You asked for our hands
That these might be used for your purpose
We gave them for a moment and then withdrew
Because the labour was difficult

You asked for our mouths to speak out against injustice
We gave mere whispers, lest we be accused

You asked for our eyes to see the pain of poverty
We closed them to deny poverty exists in our world

You asked for our lives that you might work
We have given only a small part because we did not want to be too involved

Forgive our calculated efforts to serve
Only when convenient or expedient
Only with those people and in those places we think are safe

Forgive us. Renew us
Send us out
Fit for purpose – Your purpose
Revealed in the Way, the Truth and the Life of your dear Son,
Our Lord Jesus Christ in whose words we pray

The Lord’s Prayer -

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day 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 thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. Amen
Hymn: O for a thousand tongues (CH4 352)

1. O for a thousand tongues, to sing
   my great Redeemer's praise,
   the glories of my God and King,
   the triumphs of his grace!

2. Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
   and bids our sorrows cease;
   'tis music in the sinner's ears,
   'tis life, and health, and peace.

3. He speaks, and, listening to his voice,
   new life the dead receive,
   the mourning, broken hearts rejoice,
   the humble poor believe.

4. My gracious Master and my God,
   assist me to proclaim,
   to spread through all the earth abroad
   the honours of thy name.

Readings

From the book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) chapter 44
Read by Professor Jill Morrison Clerk of Senate and Vice-Principal

Hymn in Honour of our Ancestors

Let us now sing the praises of famous men,
our ancestors in their generations.

The Lord apportioned to them great glory,
his majesty from the beginning.

There were those who ruled in their kingdoms,
and made a name for themselves by their valour;
those who gave counsel because they were intelligent;
those who spoke in prophetic oracles;
those who led the people by their counsels
and by their knowledge of the people’s lore;
they were wise in their words of instruction;
those who composed musical tunes,
or put verses in writing;
rich men endowed with resources,
living peacefully in their homes—
all these were honoured in their generations,
and were the pride of their times.

Some of them have left behind a name,
so that others declare their praise.

But of others there is no memory;
they have perished as though they had never existed;
they have become as though they had never been born,
they and their children after them.

But these also were godly men,
whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten;
their wealth will remain with their descendants,
and their inheritance with their children’s children.

Their descendants stand by the covenants;
their children also, for their sake.

Their offspring will continue for ever,
and their glory will never be blotted out.

Their bodies are buried in peace,
but their name lives on generation after generation.

The assembly declares their wisdom,
and the congregation proclaims their praise.
Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—yours of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Reflection on Readings
Rev Dr Carolyn Kelly, University Chaplain

It’s a pleasure to join you, even in by virtual means, for the University’s Service to Commemorate Benefactors. We were unable to meet last year, and doesn’t that already seem an age ago? Strangely, although most of us have spent much of the last 12 months confined to our homes, so much has changed in our world, our university, perhaps in ourselves, during that time.

Not least, in the way we come together – or not – for such celebrations and special events. But we are grateful that our special buildings and events endure as identity markers and may prompt us to reflect on what we retain, as well as what, or who, we have lost.

I’m here in the University’s Memorial Chapel, a building dedicated for such remembering. Its wonderful stained glass windows have recently been cleaned and repaired, and I want to pay tribute to the team in the University’s Estates and Buildings, and for those contracted to repair them.

So here we are, standing in the enhanced effect – the brilliance - of the light refracting through those windows. Those works of art, beautifully designed, carefully crafted, and now painstakingly restored, are perhaps a metaphor, a prompt for thinking about how we live and celebrate in such difficult times. For the windows and Chapel marked a traumatic collective event, what was assumed to be a once-in-a-generation, once-in-a-lifetime war. Arising from sorrow, this building’s backdrop of art and theology, of learning and history, which the artist and maker drew from and which informed the works, crafted from the finest materials, lovingly shaped and cut into colourful, animated forms. And then the layers of experience, sad and shocking, another world war... but also reflective, and joyful... all these have become the fabric of the building and have in turn, affected the windows themselves.

Now, we stand and we see, a fresh light shining through: a light enabled by the latest technology in cleaning; a light enhanced in its clarity and colour. It’s as if they are saying to us: history is still being written, being crafted there is more to see, to know, and more to do. There are challenges and sorrows we don’t yet imagine – who would have thought we’d be living in such a pandemic? And how did we come to this point of fragility with global warming and the threats it poses?

But there are also celebrations, even in the face of such challenges. There are also possibilities we haven’t yet dreamed of; robust and realistic reasons to hope: hope in the human spirit and collective gathering for change; hope in the impetus for world-changing, life-enhancing research in this University; in the young lives being shaped for good, adapting and reaching forward in activism, energy and knowledge. And there is hope in the presence of a loving God whose Spirit is alive and animating the world we inhabit. And such hope is refracted through the real experiences of loss and of time; such is the Christian story, a hope of resurrection, of new life possible even in the darkest place, where light has been obliterated.

That surely is encouraging in this period of significant change and loss. It is heartening to think about change in that way. That, despite the damage and the brokenness we’ve collectively experienced recently, and in view of the mixed and troubled history we inhabit, we are called forward.

This is especially significant today – because filming here on the 25th of May marks a year since the death of George Floyd. An unknown life to many of us, but that one life matters here, today, partly because Floyd’s death highlighted a dark shadow in our reading of history, our understanding or values - of what it means to be human and to live with one another. And this is rightly critical of the perspective and the lens through which history is recorded and understood. It is shining an intense and awkwardly revealing beam, on events and people in our past. It has even, dare I say it, shone fresh light on some of the money that shaped this University.

But we need not shy away from such critique, we should not be afraid of an honest reckoning of our history and the resources that shaped it. For that will allow us to rightly, to justify, celebrate those people of vision who established and supported this University over these many years. For that will allow its true colours to shine for new generations.
Prayers of Commemoration and for the University
Rev Dr Carolyn Kelly, University Chaplain

Loving and glorious God, this world reflects your beauty and all of life is sustained by your creative Word. Today we acknowledge your goodness and the many gifts and givers who have enriched and sustained this University over the years. We acknowledge the call to seek first the kingdom of God: to listen for, to pursue truth, even when it surprises or shocks us; to live and learn in ways that are just, and loving – caring for our neighbours as we take care of ourselves. In this moment of remembering and honouring the legacies and benefactors of the University’s past, we recognise there are complex challenges facing us in this pandemic. We confess to you some nervousness about the future — but we also hope: that you will speak afresh to us, to the staff, the students and the wider community of this campus and that your Spirit will empower us to seek the common good. We pray in the name of the one who came for the sake of the world, Amen

Anthem: Let us now praise famous men
Granville Bantock (1868–1946)

Let us now praise famous men,
And our fathers that begat us.
Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms,
Men renowned for their power.
Leaders of the people
By their counsels, and by their knowledge.
Such as found out musical tunes,
And recited verses in writing:
All these were honoured in their generations,
And were the glory of their times:
There be of them, that have left a name behind them,
That their praises might be reported.
And some there be, which have no memorial;
Who are perished, as though they had never been;
Their bodies are buried in peace;
But their name liveth for evermore.
(Adapted from Ecclesiasticus 44)

An Address from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to this unique Commemoration Service.
Traditionally Commemoration Day is one of the highlights of the University calendar. A day of celebration and an opportunity to reflect on our history, our identity and our values.

I sorely wish that we were able to spend this day together and I am especially disappointed we can’t be joined this year by the golden jubilee alumni cohort of 1971 and our graduates of 1970 who missed celebrating with us last year. It is not just the Bute Hall that comes alive on such occasions, the entire University pulses with energy and purpose. That’s because, at root, Commemoration Day is about connections. How we connect to our past. How we connect to the City and wider world around us and, crucially, how we connect with each another.

But right now we live in a world which has been forced into silos – one characterised by distance and physical separation. Bridging this divide has been one of the most fundamental challenges we have faced during the pandemic. Sustaining a sense of community when we cannot be together is tough. It demands ingenuity, clarity of purpose and oodles of commitment. Thankfully, Team UoG has each of these in abundance. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, I continue to be inspired by the way our community has pulled together over the last eighteen months. I recognise just how challenging a period it has been for our students, staff and alumni. Personally, professionally all of us have been touched by the pandemic. It has been a year like no other.

And yet, while circumstances have prevented us from being together physically, they have done nothing to compromise our values, weaken our bonds, or lessen our ability to change the world.

Yes, place is important, but it is our people who sustain and nurture it... The amazing talent of our students, our world class researchers, our dedicated staff and generous supporters and alumni — you are the people that make the University of Glasgow what it is — and it is this global community that I want to celebrate today.

Recently, we launched our strategy for the next five years.
At its heart ‘World Changers Together’ has three clear aims:
- Our purpose is to transform lives through ideas and action
- Our mission is to bring our community together
- And our vision is to be the world changing University.

For all the challenges over the last year, the pandemic has proven that we are more than a motto, a crest, or even a tower on a hill — we are characterised by exceptional people who have the determination and the desire to make a difference at home and abroad.

At Glasgow, we strive to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We always have done.
Indeed, the very purpose of Commemoration Day is to celebrate the foundation of the University by an international charter sent from Rome in 1451. 570 years on - and as a globally minded, civic university we are committed to working with international partners on collaborative research, teaching and learning opportunities, as well as staff and student mobility.

This has enabled Glasgow to become an increasingly international campus over the last decade.

In 2016, we had around 2,500 international students studying at the University. By 2018 that number had doubled and since then it has doubled again to over 10,400 students today.

We see a similar picture when we look at our staff profile, and our network of international strategic partners has expanded significantly in recent years.

Globalism is imbued in our heritage, outlook and design and we understand that it is only by working together that we can overcome the greatest and most intractable problems facing society. This was proven emphatically during the development of vaccines against Covid-19.

The first jab to receive regulatory approval in the UK was created jointly by Pfizer and BioNTech. An American multinational and a German start-up – one founded by a husband and wife team who are both the children of Turkish migrants.

Strength in diversity. That’s what this shows - and the development of so many safe and effective vaccines in such a short space of time will go down in history as one of humanity’s great and collective achievements.

Here at the University, we are very proud that two of our world changing alumni played a prominent role in Pfizer’s operations and, more broadly, we are grateful to the world-leading researchers across the University who are working as part of the global effort to tackle COVID-19. In particular, I am grateful to our world-changing team within the Glasgow-MRC Centre for Virus Research for the key role they are playing in global efforts to combat the pandemic. And to our many dedicated colleagues who supported the establishment and operation of the UK Lighthouse Testing Lab at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital.

None of the medical advances we have seen would have been possible without international co-operation. And only a multilateral approach – including to the dissemination of vaccines – will see us beat the pandemic back.

This brings me to a key point: while vaccines must be celebrated as a singular and standalone achievement, the collaborative process behind their development can and must be replicated as we gear up to confront the greatest challenges of the 21st century.

And no challenge is more pressing than combatting the urgent threat of climate change.

As the American environmentalist Bill McKibben has described it: “we’ve been given a warning by science and wake-up call by nature; it is now up to us to heed them”.

This November it falls to Glasgow to take the movement forward.

COP26 is a hugely significant moment and an opportunity to put the world on a more sustainable path.

At the University we are committed to playing our full part in proceedings, hosting high-level events on campus, profiling our wider research and sustainability activities and developing ambitious plans for student engagement and volunteering opportunities.

For us COP is a beginning, not an end.

An opportunity to be a positive force for global change and to add extra momentum to our own push for carbon neutrality.

But, ultimately, the legacy of COP26 is as important as the deliberations themselves.

Rhetoric must always be matched by reality.

Here at the University, we believe it isn’t enough just to state your values. You need to embody them. To demonstrate them. To ensure that they flow through and connect everything that you do.

In recent years it has become fashionable to question the notion of a global community.

Economic nationalism, political populism, protectionism, isolationism – it is these views that have been in the ascendency.

This has posed a challenge to international and forward-looking institutions such as ours.

From America First, to citizens of nowhere, nostalgia for an older order has infected our body politic.

But as a critique this worldview was always paper thin.

While globalisation has its flaws, since 1990 the share of people living in extreme poverty has decreased from nearly half of the developing world’s population to around 14%.

Global hunger has beaten back substantially, and child mortality is down over 60 per cent compared to 1990 levels.

Those of us with a global mindset understand that the threat to this progress isn’t economic interconnectedness or the vagaries of the world trading system, but a loosening of the bonds which bind us, especially when faced with the inequitable impact of the pandemic.

According to the World Bank, Covid will see global poverty rise for the first time in 20 years.

Just think about that.

Hard won progress in the poorest countries around the world reversed in what, historically speaking, is a blink of an eye.

In its own right this would be dispiriting enough. But it would be doubly tragic if we failed to meet this moment and put narrow national interests ahead of the global cause.

Indeed, if there is anything, anything, we can take for the trials and tribulations of the last year, it is confirmation that we are strongest when we harness our collective power and think and act collaboratively.

This, I believe, is something our global University community understands very well. Here at Glasgow, we have been changing the world since 1451 – and as far as we are concerned, we’re only just getting started.
Our mission – now and for the future – is to keep our heads and horizons high and work collaboratively – across disciplines and with our peers and partners around the world – to ensure that what comes tomorrow, exceeds all that has gone before.

Our people remain our greatest asset and our most enduring strength. This last year has proved that, and I want to say a special thank you to those whose names have been added to the Roll of Benefactors this year and those in our 1451 Society who have pledged a gift in their Will to the University.

So while events may prevent us from being together in person, as a part of the University of Glasgow we have a shared stake in something bigger, something transformative and something which will help to shape our collective future.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is our community of world changers.

This is how we will continue to aim high.

This is how we will keep our perspectives broad.

And this is how the University of Glasgow will continue to make its mark on the world – today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

Thank you.

Blessing
Rev Dr Carolyn Kelly, University Chaplain

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, Amen

Choral Amen- Harold Thalange (b.1995)

Processional music
Trumpet Tune in E flat by David Johnson

Silence will be kept for a brief space

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Katy Cooper is conducting the University Chapel Choir

Kevin Bowyer is the University Organist