



**CHALMERS**

CHURCH EDINBURGH



# **THE VISION OF ISAAH**

**for choir and orchestra  
music by Nigel Don**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2019  
7.00 pm**

## **A welcome from Robin Sydserff, the minister**

It's my privilege as the minister of Chalmers to warmly welcome you to this concert. We bought the building from Napier University in 2017. They continue to use the building on weekdays until summer 2020 when we will have full occupation of the building. A beautiful church building, prominently located in a vibrant part of the city, back to its original use as a church.

Chalmers is a church of 350-400, including 80 children and youngsters. There is a broad range of people: students, young workers, families, retired and internationals. Our commitment is to the community of Morningside and the many people who come and go enjoying its coffee shops, restaurants and culture.

Music is a powerful way to connect churches to communities and we'd love this building to be a place of worship on Sundays and a venue for concerts like tonight. Last year we were delighted to have a string quartet from the RSNO perform at a 'Passion for Life' weekend along with a dramatic production of Mark's Gospel. Tonight's concert premieres a substantial work by Nigel Don, a musician and member of Chalmers. *The Vision of Isaiah* is based on a book of the Bible. *Isaiah* is a prophecy that has inspired some of the best loved music including Handel's *Messiah*. The Prophecy of Isaiah is a message of judgement and hope from God. God will judge his people because they rejected him. Yet the glorious hope is promised restoration through the Lord's Servant. This Messiah will reconcile humanity to God and bring in a new heaven and a new earth. Nigel's music, which I have had the privilege to listen to in its writing is both dark and glorious. He writes from the heart as someone who believes in the vision of Isaiah. Enjoy the evening.

Robin Sydserff  
Minister, Chalmers Church

## **The Vision of Isaiah**

I have endeavoured to capture both the essence and the sweep of the Old Testament prophet's vision. I have therefore omitted the sections of historical narrative of a kind found in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and the many sections which are effectively "woe to this or that nation", people groups now dispersed.

And in order to keep the whole work within the scope of a single concert I have been forced to be selective, for example leaving out "the song of the vineyard" in chapter 5.

I have created the text from a range of translations with the intention of putting together words which give us the sense of Isaiah's vision in modern English.

### **No.1    Isaiah ch 1-4**

It's around 740 BC. Assyria is the current world power. Egypt's empire is a thing of the past, and Babylonia will in time overrun all. Isaiah is addressing a people who have been given the moral law through Moses - a people who have chosen to ignore what they know about God's ways – a people whose society is characterised by idolatry and injustice.

He leaves them in no doubt why they are in such a sorry state.

You my people are rebellious and destructive, loaded with guilt, and abandoned;  
your fields and towns have been laid waste; your capital alone remains.  
Your offerings are useless, I take no pleasure in your bloodshed;  
your sacrifice should be justice - slaughter no more; I don't want your food and drink –  
still you flout my law, and I will have no more.  
Stop doing wrong and learn to do what's right. Seek justice; support the oppressed;  
protect the orphan and plead the case of the powerless.

But you have abandoned the Lord's law and he will remove your leaders.

Hide in the rocks from the dread of the Lord as he rises to judge his people.

Stop trusting in man – of what account is he?

Nonetheless Isaiah can see that redemption will come – in due course.

Though your wickedness is dreadful, and your crimes have stained like blood,

they can be bleached like cotton and sparkle like the clean fresh snow.

Obey with a will and eat the best of the land. Rebel and be devoured by the sword.

Many people will turn back and seek the Lord's ways; for the guns will fall silent and warfare give way to peace.

Obey with a will and eat the best of the land. Rebel and be devoured by the sword.

## **No.2   Isaiah ch 6: 1-12 Isaiah's commission**

Accompanied narration of the Revised Standard Version bible text as written.

## **No.3   Isaiah ch 8:6-10 You have rejected - “march of the Assyrians”**

You have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah – gently flowing See now the flooding waters in their glory – overwhelming – up to the neck – at God's command.

You make your cunning plans; you arm yourselves for war - little knowing

See the trampling armies bring destruction - your plans foiled – you will not stand – at God's command.

#### **No.4 Isaiah ch 9:2-7**

Who knows the way from here? The darkness wraps our fear.  
Pundits' thoughts and fake news are all we seem to hear.  
At a loss and quite alone depression holds my hand.  
It's time to stop now; let me try to understand.  
Tomorrow brings another day with all its cut and thrust.  
But mostly I am powerless; which leader can I trust?  
Now for us a boy is born – and for ever he will reign.  
He is the light that will shine eternally.  
He will lead; he will guide.  
His light is peace and there is justice at his word.  
Now for us a boy is born – and for ever he will reign.

Isaiah's message to the leaders is that they have turned from God's law and that they support injustice. This was addressed centuries earlier in Psalm 11.

#### **No.5 Psalm 11 re good leadership and justice**

I take refuge in the Lord; for there's nowhere to run to when the evil attack in their devious ways.  
And our nation is sick; its foundations are crumbling; wicked men conspire to reject the Lord's ways.  
What can the righteous person do?  
Yet the Lord is still enthroned. He is Lord of creation, and he's watching mankind; no one hides from his view. He considers the heart of the faithful believer. Wickedness he hates, and his judgement is due.  
Turn to the source of righteousness. The Lord loves justice; we will see his face.

#### **No.6 Isaiah ch 34:1 – 35:10 desert and garden**

There will be a day of anger and destruction against the nations.  
The sword of the Lord appears in heaven.  
The universe will crumple. The heavens are rolled up like a carpet.  
Stars will fade away; the final fuse is blown.

A burning desert lying waste for ever; desert creatures call it home;  
the jackal, the rattle snake, the sand grouse and desert owl patrol the  
thorns and briars. No man goes there again.

Blind eyes will see; deaf ears will hear; the lame will leap like deer, as  
the voiceless sing for joy. And there will be a highway; the way of  
holiness, the ransomed will return, the redeemed are coming home.

### **No.7    Isaiah ch 40:1-11**

The voice of the Lord speaks gently to his people: your suffering is  
over; the penalty is paid in full.

A voice is heard to cry: Prepare a way in the wilderness, a desert road;  
Clear a highway in the desert; a road in the wilderness;  
Fill in the valleys and shift the mountains; prepare the way.

The Lord's glory is revealed, and all mankind shall see it.

The voice of the Lord speaks tenderly: we are all like grass, we quickly  
fade and wither.

Beauty comes and goes, but the word of the Lord is true for ever.  
He will tend his flock. He will gather them in. He will carry them; he  
will lead them to a place of safety.

### **No.8    Isaiah ch 40:12-31**

All we sense points to God the Creator. Who can grasp his majesty?  
He sets mountains high whilst our empires crumble.

We are like dust; they are like sand and the Lord is master of the wind  
and tide.

Which of us conceived of our creation? Who shared their wisdom  
with the Lord?

All-discerning, nothing escapes his gaze.

Though we are weak and quickly fail he will strengthen those who  
put their hope in him.

The Lord revives the weary and exhausted; those who look to him  
renew their strength.

They will grow wings like eagles and soar to new heights; they will  
march and run yet never tire.

## **INTERVAL**

### **TALK: The message of Isaiah**

#### **No.9   Isaiah ch 42:1-9 Servant Song 1**

The Lord reveals his servant, his elect and his delight.  
He will not cry out, nor shout aloud though he has the Lord's spirit.  
He will not be discouraged, but he will persevere. He brings justice  
and truth to all nations on earth.

The Lord has spoken; creation is his witness.  
All that lives and breathes in heaven and earth praises its maker.  
Idols stand silent; the Lord will not share his glory. His plans and  
purposes will surely be worked out.

His servant is called in righteousness. The Lord sustains his promise: a  
light to all the peoples.  
So blind eyes will see, the deaf ears hear; And captives will be set free.  
The darkness will pass for the light has come.

#### **No.10   Isaiah ch 42:10 – 48:22**

Have no fear: I have paid your ransom. When you pass through deep  
waters I will be with you.  
I will gather your children from every nation, everyone called by my  
name  
You, my servants, you are my witnesses. I will make a way through  
the wilderness;  
There will be flowing water, rivers flowing in the desert.  
But it is not what you have done. I alone, for my own sake, choose to  
remember your sins no more.  
Have no fear. I will remember no more.

## **No.11 Isaiah ch 49:1-6 Servant Song 2 and Is 50:4-9 Servant Song 3**

The Lord called me by name from birth; he protected me in the shadow of his hand.

The Lord taught me to listen and to learn. He gave me a tongue sharp as a sword.

I am his servant; and he will display his splendour in me.

I listened and did not rebel. I offered my back to the lash. I let my beard be plucked.

I did not hide from spitting and insults. No insult can wound me for the Lord stands with me, and I know he will clear my name.

It may seem that I have laboured in vain but my cause and my reward are in his hands.

And now the Lord calls me to be a light to all nations so that his salvation is known everywhere.

## **No.12 Instrumental interlude 1.**

## **No.13 Isaiah ch 53:2-8 Servant Song 4**

No beauty here, no majesty; tormented and disfigured he was counted worthless and despised;

the one who bore our sufferings, rejected as we hid our eyes.

For he was pierced and broken for our sins; the punishment he bore brings health to us.

Through him the Lord restores the light of life.

No justice here, no thought or care:

so we like sheep with minds elsewhere have wandered off on our own whim.

Yet he became the one to pay; the Lord has heaped our guilt on him.

## **No.14 Instrumental interlude 2.**

## **No.15 Isaiah ch 55:1-13 Come you thirsty**

Come if you're thirsty, here is water, come and drink. Why put your effort into things that will not last?  
Listen to my message and find life.

I will make a covenant with you and the nations will come running to your witness.

Call on the Lord while he is near, for he most freely will forgive.  
The Lord's thoughts; they're not our thoughts; His ways are not our ways.

Just as rain falls to the earth where it brings new growth, so his word will always be effective.

## **No.16 Finale Isaiah ch 56-59**

Isaiah's message does not change and speaks to every generation of leaders: maintain justice.

Stop doing wrong and learn to do what's right. Seek justice; support the oppressed;  
protect the orphan and plead the case of the powerless.

The voice of the Lord speaks gently/tenderly to his people: your suffering is over; the penalty is paid in full.

A voice is heard to cry: Prepare a way in the wilderness, a desert road;  
Fill in the valleys and shift the mountains; prepare the way,  
Clear a highway in the desert; a road in the wilderness.

The Lord will not be angry for ever. The Lord's glory is revealed and all mankind shall see it.

I will not be angry for ever. I will heal the penitent, but there will be no peace for the wicked.

There will be a day of anger and destruction against the nations.  
The sword of the Lord appears in heaven. The universe will crumple.  
The heavens are rolled up like a carpet. Stars will fade away; the final fuse is blown

## **Isaiah ch 60-66**

Now the darkness is banished, the Lord's light has dawned; all nations will come to your light.

Now good news has come; freedom for captives of the darkness, comfort for those who mourn.

O Lord our God we will praise you. You are faithful to your plan.  
Wicked men will come to acknowledge you.

You are a refuge for the needy, a shelter from the storm, and the song of the ruthless will be stilled.

I will prepare a banquet for your children. Death will be defeated.  
Open the gates and let a righteous people in.

I will create a new heaven and a new earth. Old things will not even be remembered.

I will delight in my people and there will be no more tears or crying.

Blind eyes will see, deaf ears will hear, the lame will leap like deer as the voiceless sing for joy.

This is the one I will honour; a person who is humble in spirit and responds to my word.

And there will be a highway, the way of holiness.  
The ransomed will return, the redeemed are coming home.

There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Old things will not even be remembered.

The Lord will delight in his people and there will be no more tears or crying.

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### **Special thanks**

to David Laing, our rehearsal pianist

to Kevin Lamb, Colin Lamont and Colin Bellett for the battery of percussion

## **Choir**

Sopranos	Marian Aldhous, Frances Cossar, Rebecca Dodds, Wendy Don, Alison New, Sue Smith,
Altos	Marilyn Burton, Catherine Gibb, Liz Jameson, Claire Percival
Tenors	Colin Fischbacher, John Landon, Iain McIntyre, Ian Smith
Basses	Duncan Brown, Ali Crichton, Robert Davidson, Ken McAra, Eric Robertson, Alex Warren, Sam Wilson, Jonathan Wright
<b>Narrator</b>	Allan Dunn

## **Orchestra**

Violins 1	Jane Hume , Malcolm McKitterick, Laura Ferguson
2	Janet Parry, Elaine Rumney, Cathy Scrutton
Violas	Julian Marshall, Elizabeth Mathison
Cellos	Martin Graham, Rafal Zywotek, Jane Chisholm
Double bass	Margaret Graham
Piccolo	Sophie Howieson
Flute	Julie Crombie
Oboe	Helena McIntyre
Clarinet	Sheila Barker
Bass clarinet	Eileen Brown
Horns	Suzanne Jackson, Rebecca McKinley, Clay Young
Trumpets	Bill McCance, Richard Murray
Trombones	Marcus Price, Brendan McGrory
Piano	Linda Waugh
Percussion	Colin Lamont, Colin Bellett, Laurie Don

# SUNDAY SERVICES AT CHALMERS

You would be very welcome at Sunday services at Chalmers. During term-time there are three services:

- 9.30am service with programmes for children & young people
- 11.30am service, followed by student lunch
- 6.30pm service

These services are at the heart of the life of Chalmers Church. People meet to hear God's Word, praise him and encourage one another. They're a great way to investigate who Jesus is and why he came. We hope you'd find Sunday services both welcoming and helpful.

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For more information about Chalmers please get in touch:

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