

9th February 2022

Doors

**“Let us build a house where love can dwell, and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive;
built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions: all are welcome,
all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.”**

Marty Haugen, Let us build a house

I heard recently of an issue in a rural community that disturbed me deeply. It occurred a long time ago, but it's the fact that it happened in the first place I found quite distasteful.

Two villages, less than a mile apart, shared a church – or at least the church was mid-way between the two population centres so it could serve both communities. But the villagers didn't get on, so, when the church was built, it had two doors, one for the residents of each village. Folk came into the church by their own entrance, sat in their own section, and went out by their own door. “All are welcome in this place”? Aye! Provided you use your own door and don't mix with anyone else.

There are churches in Scotland, particularly those which pre-date the Disruption of 1843, which have a separate door for “The Laird” – a separate entrance, usually a separate stair, and a separate place to sit (often a separate gallery) – so he could slip in and out unnoticed, *and* keep away from the “riffraff”, no doubt. A plague on those who might create and perpetuate such a distasteful parody of the Church's togetherness.

“All are welcome” means just that. No separate doors, no distinction around class, gender, ability, sexual orientation, colour, belief – or village! No separate seating arrangements. *All* are welcome. All are included. All are one under the Grace of God. How dare we cause offence to God by building separate doors into our church – physically and metaphorically – when we are all created equal in the image of the same God.

A prayer for today

*Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to laughter: all are welcome,
all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.”*

Marty Haugen