

4th October 2025

Blessing

**“Love is the touch of intangible joy;
Love is the force that no fear can destroy;
Love is the goodness we gladly applaud:
God is where love is, and love is of God.”**

Alison M Robertson, *Love is the touch*

Last week my wife and I attended a memorial service for Kathy Galloway. Kathy was a poet, prophet, theologian, activist, inspirer and friend. You'll find details of Kathy's career and tributes to her in many different places. But I want to share a personal thought from her memorial service.

In the 1970s, Kathy was probationer minister in Muirhouse in Edinburgh, while her then husband, Ian, was probationer minister with me in the neighbouring parish. Mid-way through their probationary ministry, Kathy and Ian were ordained in my own church. It was a special occasion – the first time a husband-and-wife couple had been ordained together since the Reformation – marked by a film-crew from Bamber Gascoigne's epic series *The Christians* recording the event. In the Presbyterian way, Kathy and Ian knelt before the Communion Table for their Ordination, with the Presbyters, me included, gathered round, laying hands on them, confirming their new ministry with prayer, blessing and physical contact.

The importance of that contact, that moment of the touch of blessing, took on a new significance for me at Kathy's memorial service. This was my touch, for someone I knew and loved. This was the touch of the Presbytery, in a moment of commissioning. But this was more than human contact. This was the mystery of the touch of God's blessing, a glimpse of the holiness of the divine. Physical, human touch had been gathered up into the wonder of a sanctified presence.

But touch is two-way. In prayerful contact, blessing is also given back. In the intimacy of human interaction, the receiver *and* the giver derive benefit. As I touched Kathy, Kathy also touched me, just as she continued to touch the lives of many people during her years of ministry and service. “Love is the touch of intangible joy”, writes Alison Robertson. As I remember Kathy today, the touch of blessing brings even more joy.

A prayer for today

*Lord, you bless me with your gentle touch.
Let that touch come back to you with purpose,
as this blessing is shared with others. Amen*