

**Enduring Principles**  
**#5 RESPONSIBLE CHOICES**

*(based on the five statements associated with this Enduring Principle)*

**INTRODUCTION**

The Enduring Principles describe the personality that the church aspires to. Responsible choices is one of our Enduring Principles.

**PLAY COFCHRIST YOUNG ADULT SOCIAL MEDIA POST – RESPONSIBLE CHOICES**

<https://youtube.com/shorts/aNYyYMBlr2l>

**HYMN CCS 597 - Make Me A Servant**

**OPENING PRAYER**

**STATEMENT 1**

**God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve.**

- What choices have you made today?

Our choices say a lot about what is important to us.

**SCRIPTURE**

**2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 (NRSVUE)**

*This section of scripture is entitled "Warning against Idleness."*

**<sup>6</sup> Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister living irresponsibly and not according to the tradition that they received from us. <sup>7</sup> For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not irresponsible when we were with you, <sup>8</sup> and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labour we worked night and day so that we might not burden any of you. <sup>9</sup> This was not because we do not have that right but in order to give you an example to imitate. <sup>10</sup> For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: anyone unwilling to work should not eat. <sup>11</sup> For we hear that some of you are living irresponsibly, mere busybodies, not doing any work. <sup>12</sup> Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.**

For many of us, our lives are so busy that idleness is not the issue but how to make best use of our full lives. The final verse says, "Brother and sisters, do not weary in doing what is right." Maybe the challenge is determining what is right.

**Joshua 24:15 (NRSVUE)**

In this Scripture Joshua gathers the Israelite tribes together and invites them to make a choice.

**<sup>15</sup> Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living, but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."**

Are we willing to make that choice? And what does that mean?

## **STATEMENT 2**

**Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.**

some people are not free to make whatever choice they want.

## **SCRIPTURE**

**Luke 17:11-19 (NRSVUE)**

**<sup>11</sup> On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup> As he entered a village, ten men with a skin disease approached him. Keeping their distance, <sup>13</sup> they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" <sup>14</sup> When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. <sup>15</sup> Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. <sup>16</sup> He prostrated himself at Jesus's feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. <sup>17</sup> Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? So where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Did none of them return to give glory to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."**

*Lepers had to keep a distance from all others.*

All ten lepers were faithful and obedient. They did as Jesus commanded and showed themselves to the priest. And they were healed. But one of them made a further choice, to show gratitude.

## **DISCIPLES GENEROUS RESPONSE**

*I'd like to tell you a story about sharing that really stopped me in my tracks.*

## **STORY – Mary's Meals**

**Earlier this year, Mary's Meals, the international school meals charity named after Mary, the mother of Jesus, launched an emergency appeal for Ethiopia, where drought, climate change and conflict have wreaked havoc on the landscape and many people are going hungry.**

**In order to prepare for this appeal, founder Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, travelled to the Tigray region to meet the charity's partners and those in need.**

**Whilst there, he visited a school and got chatting to two 10-year-old girls in the playground. Their school had just started to receive Mary's Meals – a daily, nutritious meal in school for every pupil. In Magnus's words, "They told me they were only in class because of Mary's Meals. I was heartened to see that the meals were having the desired impact. And then my heart broke when I learned that those same two girls had been sharing their school meal each day with hungry children begging at their school gate – despite their own uncertainty about whether there would be any food at home later that day."**

**Despite having very little in their lives about which they could make a choice, they chose to give what they had to feed those who had even less.**

Like these two girls, we have an opportunity to give. What would it mean for us to choose to give as generously as the two 10-year-old girls?

COLLECT OFFERING

### **STATEMENT 3**

**Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.**

**HYMN CCS 305 – We Are the Ones the World Awaits**

### **STORY - Rose**

**Rose is part of the Clay Cross congregation. For 30 years she was a pub landlady.**

**When she was a landlady, Rose noticed that there was little for the teenagers in her village to do. So, once a week, she closed her pub to her regulars for an hour or so and opened it for the teenagers to play pool and chat while she supplied them with soft drinks.**

**Recently, Rose's husband Peter collapsed in the street. Rose jumped into her car and took Peter to A&E. They were there for 8 hours. Rose had no food and no money to even get a drink for her husband. Eventually, she stood up in the waiting and said loudly to her husband, "I know you need a drink but I have no money." Most people put their heads down but one woman, probably the only one in the room who spoke little English, came to Rose and handed her money for a drink.**

**Each day, we encounter situations where we could make a choice for good. We can put our head down, thinking it is someone else's problem or we can make a choice that benefits others.**

- When have you seen someone make a choice that has contributed to good?

### **STATEMENT 4**

**Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.**

### **STORY - Refuge**

**War Child is a charity dedicated to helping the most vulnerable children in the world's worst war zones, providing children with something priceless – a future. Several years ago, War Child published a wonderful book entitled 'Refuge' which, with a few simple words and some beautiful pictures, tells the Christmas story in a way that was inspired by refugee children.**

**Following the birth of Jesus, and in fear of their lives, Mary and Joseph and their young child, fled their homeland to seek sanctuary in a new country. I find it hard to imagine the terror this young couple must have felt as they made this arduous journey, knowing all the time that people were in pursuit, intent on killing their son.**

And still today, in many places of the world, families have no choice but to flee their country, in fear of their lives, to seek sanctuary in new and strange lands. The hardships these refugees must face are beyond my imagining. Yet many of those who make it to a new country are greeted on arrival with hostility, prejudice and anger. Some of those who treat these refugees in such a way would profess to be Christians. I wonder if their actions would be the same if they took time to reflect on the fact that the one they claim to follow started his life as a refugee.

The words of the final pages of the 'Refuge' book are spoken by the donkey who journeyed with Mary and Joseph. "And I kept walking, carrying my precious load, and the woman held the baby close to her heart, and she and the man talked, about journeys, and dreams and warnings, and the love of a baby, and the kindness of strangers...And when we rested, and they were frightened, they took hope from each other, and from the baby's tiny first smile...And we entered into Egypt...and we found refuge." As we approach the Advent season may we welcome the refugee as Jesus, Joseph and Mary were welcomed all those years ago.

#### **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

*(light peace candle)*

Almighty and merciful God,  
whose Son became a refugee and had no place to call his own;  
look with mercy on those who today are fleeing from danger,  
homeless and hungry.

Bless those who work to bring them relief;  
inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts;  
and guide the nations of the world towards that day when all will rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and of peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*(Prayer For Refugees from CofE website)*

#### **STATEMENT 5**

**We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God**

We witness the purposes of God in the life of Jesus who said he came to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind.

Jesus didn't say he came to be in church (important as that is). He came to be out in the world making a difference.

But we might look at the plight of the world and ask what is it we can do with all our imperfections?

#### **STORY – The cracked pot**

An elderly Chinese woman completed a daily trek to the stream past her home and back to supply her family with fresh water. In order to do this, she fashioned a heavy pot on each end of a long pole, which she carried across her shoulders.

One of the pots was in perfect condition and always delivered a full portion of water. The other had a deep crack in it, causing water to leak out. At the end of the long walk, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

This situation occurred daily for two years, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the cracked pot was ashamed of its imperfection and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it had perceived to be bitter failure, the cracked pot spoke to the woman by the stream. "I am ashamed," it said. "This crack in my side causes water to leak out. You work so hard and yet have little water once you return home."

The old woman smiled and replied, "Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path? I have always known about your flaw, so I planted flower seeds on your side of the path. Every day, while we walked back home, you watered those seeds and helped them to grow. For two years, I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table and give to neighbours. Without you being just the way you are, there would not have been this special beauty to grace our homes and lives."

Sometimes, it's our "cracks," or what we perceive as imperfections, that can create something unexpected and beautiful. These "cracks" allow something to change and ultimately make the whole much richer and more interesting. We each have a unique purpose and destiny to fulfil.

May we make responsible choices that make the world a more beautiful place.

**HYMN 307 – Let There Be Peace on Earth**

**CLOSING PRAYER/ SENDING FORTH - D&C 161:7.**

The Spirit of the One you follow is the spirit of love and peace. That Spirit seeks to abide in the hearts of those who would embrace its call and live its message. The path will not always be easy, the choices will not always be clear, but the cause is sure and the Spirit will bear witness to the truth, and those who live the truth will know the hope and the joy of discipleship in the community of Christ. Amen.