



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on January 14th 2024 at 10:45, meeting at Bethesda Chapel.

Whilst some are able to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Our service today is led by Alec. With rev or playing the piano, Pael W the double bass, Kate the violin and Judith the flute. Nigel is at the back looking after the technology!

Alec welcomed us all: saying Good morning, on this bright and sunny day. We have the freedom to come and worship the true and living God, God of mercy and grace who lives in our hearts. He introduced the theme of today's service as the Kingship - who is the King of our lives.

He invited us to sing our Opening hymn

O worship the King, all glorious above! O gratefully sing his power and his love!
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days, pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.

O tell of his might! O sing of his grace! Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

The earth, with its store of wonders untold, Almighty, thy power hath founded of old,
hath 'stablished it fast by a changeless decree,
and round it hath cast, like a mantle, the sea.

Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite? It breathes in the air; it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail, in thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;
thy mercies, how tender! How firm to the end! Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!

O measureless Might, ineffable Love, while angels delight to hymn thee above,
the humbler creation, though feeble their lays, with true adoration shall all sing thy praise.

Authors :Robert Grant, William Croft CCLI SONG #808775 Copyrights: words and music Public Domain, CCL no 5664

Tony shared our Notices, reminding us of our Church Members meeting following this service, Tuesday is Ladies afternoon, Wednesday is Tiddlywinks, Thursday is the beginning of the week of prayer for Christian Unity, Friday we have an insurance inspection, New Life International church meets as usual on Friday and Saturday, and next Sunday our morning worship will be led by Tim Doggart, followed by our Church lunch - a full week!

Alec invited us to join in
PRAISE SONGS

The splendour of the King, clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light and darkness tries to hide,
and trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice.

**How great is our God,
sing with me: how great is our God,
and all will see how great, how great is our God.**

And age to age He stands, and time is in His hands;
beginning and the end, beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One, Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb,

How great is our God....

Name above all names, worthy of all praise; my heart will sing: how great is our God.
Name above all names, worthy of all praise; my heart will sing: how great is our God.

How great is our God....

Authors: Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves and Ed Cash, CCLI Song 4348399; Copyright © 2004 worshipstogether.com songs/Six Steps Music/
adm. by Kingsway Music CCL no 5664 "HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD" (Chris Tomlin) VIDEO OR MUSICIANS LIVE (the splendour of the king)

Next and shown on the screen:

In the darkness we were waiting without hope, without light,
'til from Heaven you came running, there was mercy in your eyes.
To fulfil the law and prophets to a virgin came the word;
from a throne of endless glory to a cradle in the dirt.

**Praise the Father, praise the Son, praise the Spirit, three in one;
God of glory, Majesty, praise forever to the King of Kings**

To reveal the kingdom coming and to reconcile the lost,
to redeem the whole creation you did not despise the cross,
for even in your suffering you saw to the other side,
knowing this was our salvation, Jesus, for our sake you died.

Praise the Father, praise the Son....

And the morning that you rose all of Heaven held its breath
'til that stone was moved for good for the Lamb had conquered death.
And the dead rose from their tombs and the angels stood in awe,
for the souls of all who'd come to the Father are restored
and the church of Christ was born. then the Spirit lit the flame;
now this gospel truth of old shall not kneel, shall not faint
by his blood and in his name in his freedom I am free
for the love of Jesus Christ who has resurrected me.

Praise the Father, praise the Son....

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OnfQpZr030>

And finally:

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne,
while heaven's eternal anthem drowns all music but its own!

Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died to be
your saviour and your matchless king through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of life triumphant from the grave,
who rose victorious from the strife for those he came to save:
his glories now we sing who died and reigns on high;
he died eternal life to bring and lives that death may die.

Crown him the Lord of love, who shows his hands and side
those wounds yet visible above in beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright.

Crown him the Lord of peace his kingdom is at hand;
from pole to pole let warfare cease and Christ rule every land!
A city stands on high, his glory it displays,
and there the nations 'Holy' cry in joyful hymns of praise.

Crown him the Lord of years, the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres in majesty sublime:
all hail, Redeemer, hail, for you have died for me;
your praise shall never, never fail through all eternity!

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Graham was invited to share our Bible reading 1 Samuel 8 AND Romans 12: 1-2

Israel Asks for a King

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have."

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."

Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle and donkeys he will take for his own use. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his

slaves. When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day."

But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles."

When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord. The Lord answered, "Listen to them and give them a king."

Then Samuel said to the Israelites, "Everyone go back to your own town."

A Living Sacrifice

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will

After praying, Alec then gave his Message: Jigsaw puzzles

The pieces of this puzzle are the New Year's Eve Sunday morning service message on the beginning of 1 Samuel, especially 1 Samuel 7: 1-12; the reflections from the same chapter at the communion table last week based round the words, "up until now the Lord has helped us" and last but not least the message this morning from 1 Samuel 8 which is entitled

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS 1 Samuel 8 BBC 14.01.2023

We are in a kind of liminal space. We have left how we were and we are moving towards what we are becoming. We are in an ongoing transition period.

It is like this too here in 1 Samuel from which Graham read. Chapter 8 is a chapter of transitions. It is in this chapter that we see the transition from Samuel to Saul, from judgeship to kingship, from Israel as a theocracy with God at the helm, to Israel as a monarchy with human kings at the helm, from the kingship of God to the kingship of man. And it is in this chapter that we learn some very important principles about prayer and praying according to God's will and in particular about who is the Lord of our lives and the Lord in the church.

How did the transition come about? How did they make the transition? There were elders in Israel who were looked at to advise and lead the people. These elders had been thinking a lot about what was going on and decided to go visit Samuel the prophet whom God had appointed. What the elders of Israel did in going to Samuel was really good.

They went to Samuel and said 3 things to him.

Samuel, you are old.

Samuel, we do not accept the corrupt character and behaviour of your sons whom you appointed as judges; your succession plan has failed miserably.

Samuel, give us a king LIKE ALL THE OTHER NATIONS

For 400 years Israel had been without a king

God had plans for Israel to have a king and described his character and role. These plans were set out carefully in Deut. 17: 14-20 (The King)

14 "When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," 15 be sure to appoint over you a king the Lord your God chooses".

Well the elders get like 2 out of 3 points right. But in their drive, in their insistence, in their plea to Samuel to give them a King they are right off line, completely wrong. It is a bit like putting a socket into a plug instead of the other way round-it doesn't fit, it doesn't connect, it doesn't function, there is no power and movement and we don't know why it doesn't work and create energy but it is because it is not linked with the source. The form is right, the parts are right, but the process, the procedure is wrong. You put the plug in the socket not the other way around. The elders are on a different wavelength to God at least as far as the appointment of a king is concerned. First connect directly with God, and then do what He says. This is completely different from going to God in prayer and saying this is what we want you to do for us.

God's timing is perfect. But the elders are ahead of God. Paradoxically in this case being ahead of God is being out of line with Him.

What had motivated the people of Israel to persuade the elders to ask God through Samuel for a king? Their motivation was primarily, was basically to be like all the other nations. You see the Amorites, Edomites, Egyptians, the Assyrians all had kings. The people of God wanted to be just like all the other nations. They had an almost unbelievably low vision of God's goals and purposes for them.

God had a higher call for them. God said He wanted them to be a holy priesthood, a chosen nation.

God has a higher call on your life and our life as a church than to be just like everybody else.

We say we just want to be like everybody else. God says no; He wants us to be transformed into the image of Christ, to stand out as lights in the darkness of a dark and ever-darkening world. Where there is darkness how great is that darkness.

It was right for them to want a king but they wanted one for the wrong reasons.

Samuel was displeased with this so he went to the Lord. But just wait a minute. What do we do when we are displeased with something? Do we go first of all to the Lord with our displeasure, our complaint and our dissatisfaction? Or do we maybe post it on our X or other social media accounts? Do we maybe send off a string of emails to give vent to our thoughts and feelings? When Samuel was displeased with what was going on, that the people of God were asking for something out of harmony with the Will of God, he went directly and personally to God Himself and shared it with Him.

What did God then say to Samuel? He puts His arms around him and assures Him of His love. The people of God were against the Lord's working IN Samuel's life. God tells Samuel that His people were not rejecting him, the leader God had appointed, but were rejecting God Himself.

The people are saying, what we really need is a king; you know that would solve our problems. We have political needs, we have national needs, we have economic needs and we have social and of course massive individual needs.

But the people of God are blind to the fact that they need just to obey the heavenly King they already have; they do not need an earthly king at this point. What we really need is to get right with God.

Israel had rejected God.

John 19:15 "They cried out, "Take him away, take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

Jesus is wearing a crown and being mocked and scorned in a kingly role. They rejected Jesus as their king.

Do you want Jesus as your King? Do we want Jesus as Lord of the church? Whose church is it anyway?

In verse 9 God says to Samuel give them what they want but warn them what will happen, what it will cost them, (1 Samuel 8: 11-17).

Your king, says Samuel, will be a taker not a giver. You will be his servants; when you see how you are suffering as a consequence of the choice you yourselves have made, you will cry out to the Lord.

“And the Lord will not hear you”

In 1 Peter 2:9 we read that we, the people of God, are a royal priesthood serving the King.

Yet in verses 19 and 20 we read, “But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”

1 Samuel 7 God just won a spectacular battle for His people. But God`s people have short memories.

They disregarded God`s warning.

They don`t care if it is right or wrong, everybody else has a king so they want one. They just try and force through what they themselves want.

They had a king already but they wanted the IMAGE of a king. Their King enthroned in heaven did everything for them that a king had to do. The king they wanted would not have the heart of a king like God`s heart.

God is not going to step off His throne to give you and me and to do for you and me whatever we want

Make sure you don`t ask and get from God what you want but He doesn`t want.

Psalms 106:15 “So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease among them”.

God gives them their king.

They rejected the Word and Will of God. They rejected the will of God; but they can`t escape him.

Where are we resisting the rule and reign and will of God for our lives? Is there some small corner or more of our church in its present reality where we are resisting the rule and reign and will of God?

“Hey God this is how your kingdom can come. Listen to us; we know our world better than you do.” “We need to update your Word, to make it more suitable and applicable to the world we live in right now.”

No. God says to pray:

“Your Kingdom come, your will be done”

That is the context in which we make our decisions. The Word of God does not change. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

We are giving a great deal of attention as it is right and proper to do to the carrying out of appropriate health and safety procedures in our physical church building. How much more then should we give serious and detailed attention to our individual and church lives before God.

“Search us, God, and know our hearts; test us and know our anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting”.

There is a real danger of being swallowed up by the surrounding culture.

“Don`t copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will learn from your own experience how his ways will really satisfy you.” (Living Bible)

“So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognise what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.” (Message).

“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.” (JB Phillips)

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (NIV)

The 11th century BC had the same challenge in basically the same way as today.

What about having a king? In Judges 21:25 we read: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

The Israelites said to Gideon, "Rule over us--you, your son and your grandson--because you have saved us out of the hand of Midian." But Gideon told them, "I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The LORD will rule over you."

Judges had been appointed to exercise leadership under the absolute authority of God the Lord as King.

In Psalm 146:3-5 we read: “Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God”.

Moses is with God on the mountain being given the 10 commandments. The people had no patience. They did not wait on God to see what he was saying. They didn’t wait for their King, the Lord of creation, to tell them what to do, for they had other ideas.

In Exodus, they “gathered around Aaron and said to him: 'Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us’” (Exodus 32:1). Rather than remaining steadfast in his faith, Aaron gave in. He ordered the people to collect all the gold in their possession, and used it to create a golden calf for worship. Then they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt.”

But what had God said? “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.”

Moses’ reaction on seeing the golden calf was to throw the tablets on which God had written the commandments for His people out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain; then to take the calf they had made, to burn it on the fire; to grind it into powder, scatter it on the water and to make the Israelites drink it. That is some leader.

You can have your own way. You can have your king like all other nations. But there will be a price to pay.

But in the grace and mercy of God there is another side to this.

God does not leave His people even though they are frequently set on rejecting Him. Through Jesus Christ death on the Cross there is forgiveness for our sins. The God who saves us keeps us. The good work that he began in us he will bring to conclusion until the day of Jesus Christ, (Phil 1:6).

Though we are by nature rebellious, though we often go our own way, though we wander off and come up with our own crazy ideas and live with the implications of that; God, because of the God who is actually restores even the years that the locusts have eaten, (Joel 2: 25-26).

Let us be careful what you ask for and how we ask for it. Do we really want to do what God Himself wants?

God we want to know your will for our church? And then we will decide if that fits us or not; whether we really want that or not.

We don't really want you alone to be our King. We don't want to be completely tied up your holy people, this distinctive nation, this royal priesthood. We have allegiances elsewhere too.

We want to be the kind of people who can be absorbed into the culture. We would like to be like everybody else, to have leadership that is accessible, that is not so picky about some of your "suggestions" to us in the Bible.

Do we want a different King, with other "gods", with other options and other possibilities?

You see where this goes? It goes in the direction of saying we want to be free of God's perfect rule. God's perfect rule is not bondage, it is freedom. God says to Samuel they are not rejecting you, they are rejecting me.

Samuel's reaction to the people of God and the response of the Lord Himself is astounding. The elders don't obey Samuel; but God says to Samuel, then give them what they want.

God says to his people I will punish you by giving you the experience of getting what you want. In that day you will cry because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves. But the Lord will not answer you.

Welcome back to Egypt. Slaves again. Throwing away the freedom God has given us by making our own choices. He bought us back from sin and from the kingdom of darkness and we say no but the kingdom of darkness is what we choose, what we really want.

The people were brought out of Egypt by God and came through the Red Sea and then in a short period of time they said to their leader, we want to go back to Egypt, the life was better there, the food was better there. Has God led us into this wilderness? Let us go back to conflict, let us go back to making bricks, let us go back to strife, let us go back to unforgiveness, and let us go back to lies and gossip. Is that what they said?

What about BBC? We want to make our own decisions? We want to make our own choices? Or do we spend time in prayer together that his church, can go his way, in his time, in his strength. It is very pertinent question. It is a very important matter. It is of eternal significance for the lives of the people of Blackburn, in particular for the people in the communities around this building where God in His wisdom placed us. And we said, yes God has something particular, something special for us to be and to do here so this is where we are moving. So let's be encouraged and empowered and get on with it. Let's pray and seek the Lord daily as I hope we are doing. Let's humble ourselves before him and let him work amongst us as he is indeed doing. As for me He is my King.

He came on a donkey. The Kingdom of God is at hand. God's kingdom is a dynamic reality.

My kingdom is not of this world says Jesus.

In 1 Samuel 6 we saw that with 2 milking cows and a brand new cart God fixed it that the Philistines gave the Ark of the Covenant back to the Israelites.

In 1 Samuel 7:10 the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed and defeated.

At this point the people of God had celebrated the power of God leading them up to that point. Up to now they said the Lord has helped us; up to this point the Lord has led us and enabled us, strengthened us and helped us.

AND NOW?

The people refuse to obey what Samuel is saying from God, so God tells Samuel to follow the will of the people.

Our God is able and He will. Let us this afternoon and every afternoon trust Him to lead us on. To Him be glory and honour and majesty now and forevermore; for He is our true Lord and King.

A jigsaw puzzle like this takes time to put together. Take time with the Lord this week to sort it out.

Our Prayers were led by Brenda

King of kings, Almighty God and Saviour, we come before Your throne again this morning as we continue in our service of worship together. We know that You are the King in our lives and that there should be no other and we worship You. We offer You our praise and thanks for all You have done and continue to do for us in our lives and amongst the people of our church. Sometimes though we fail You and now we bring those failings before You. Please forgive us for all the wrongs we have done and omissions we have made. May we go through this year serving You in the best way we can.

Once more, Lord, we bring this world before You, as there is so much horror and suffering, so much selfishness and greed, and there seems to be no end to it. We ask for You to bring reconciliation and no further escalation in the places of conflict, where just now all seems lost, as we see what is happening in many places. May world leaders show restraint and care. We pray for help and support for those who are suffering so much at this time with the loss of loved ones, homes and infrastructure, and with lack of food, water and medical aid. We also ask for safety for hostages and innocent prisoners and comfort for those worrying about them. We bring to You soldiers, some who never wanted to fight and those living in fear of bombs and destruction.

Heavenly Father, in many places there is persecution for Christians and no freedom to worship You in the open and we thank You that so far here we have that freedom. We ask for Your protection for all those who are in great need of it and remember missionaries and charity workers often caught in difficult circumstances. But we also say thank you for the work done by the Baptist Missionary Society and other Christian organisations to help and care and at the same time to spread Your Word to others.

In our own country there are many difficulties as people struggle on, trying to make ends meet and some finding themselves homeless. Please give hope to those in despair and help to those in great need. There have been recent floods and high winds causing damage, bringing heartbreak and loss and we ask that You will comfort those in distress and may there be help for renewal of damage. As we see the effects of climate change throughout the world and so many indicators of this, we pray that mankind may keep resolved and work to protect the beautiful world that You have made.

We thank You, Lord God, that this week there has been a firm move towards exonerating and compensating the postal workers who were wrongly accused of theft. However we continue to see unrest amongst doctors working for the NHS and we pray that an answer and agreement be found to this ongoing dispute which is affecting so many.

We pray again for our members here and friends who are continuing to suffer in both body

and mind and may be in pain, and for younger ones working under strain. Some are in hospital or needing care or are ill at home, or have had recent treatment, many are awaiting appointments and others are mourning. However, we thank You that some of our friends have had answer to prayer and are renewed in strength and others have been able to move to better accommodation. May all in need get their answers and Your comfort.

Almighty God, we bring to You the children and young people who we know and ask that You will keep them in Your loving arms as they face the dangers and challenges of this world. May You reveal Yourself to them and challenge them to serve You.

Now we ask for Your guidance for the future of our church here and the services and activities held week by week. Thank You for all who are in the background making sure that things are run safely and efficiently so that all can be welcomed. Thank You for our pastor and leaders and may they continue to be guided by You. We ask that others may come forward to join them.

We bring our church meeting, later on, before You, asking that You will give us wisdom, patience and courage to see together the clear way ahead. Also that as we pray and trust in You, we may, in unity, follow Your commands and have Your blessing.

Thank You for the message Alec has given to us this morning. As we offer our prayers before Your throne, may we be humble in our worship and adoration and may we in our lives try to live according to Your will. Please be beside us and keep us safe through the coming week, giving us the strength that we need.

We offer our prayers to You in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. Amen

We joined in song for our Closing (offertory) hymn

Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea,
A great High Priest whose name is love who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on his hands, my name is written on his heart,
I know that while in heav'n he stands no tongue can bid me thence depart,
no tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died my sinful soul is counted free,
for God the Just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me,
to look on him and pardon me.

Behold him there, the risen Lamb, my perfect, spotless Righteousness,
the great unchangeable I AM, the King of glory and of grace.
One with himself, I cannot die, my soul is purchased by his blood,
my life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ my Saviour and my God,
with Christ my Saviour and my God.

Original words by Charitie Lees Bancroft (1841-1892)(alternate words and music by Vikki Cook ©1997 Sovereign Grace Worship (ASCAP))
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And together we said: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.