



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on February 6th 2022 at 10:45, meeting once more 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.

Today's service is led by Alec, concluding the Mini-series entitled 'Spiritual Fitness' and including a time of communion together. Alec is also playing the piano - a busy morning!

Our service begins as Alec welcomes us all, reminding us that Christ is also present with us, as he promised that when 2 or 3 are gathered together in his name, he will be there. Alec goes on to say that today is a special day, not only because it is the Lords Day, but because - as we see on the screen -

70 Years!

Today is the Queen's Platinum Jubilee – the seventieth anniversary of her accession to the throne, following the death of her father, King George VI, aged 56, on 6 February 1952



Alec also shares that that he has something in common with the Queen - they share the same birthday!

You may remember that Alec told us last week that Colin would be leading our service today, unfortunately Colin and Joy are both unwell, and therefore not able to be present, (hence Alec playing the piano, which Joy would have done had she been well) but Colin has prepared the outline of our worship today together with the message which Alec will share on his behalf.

We lift our voices and we join together in song: 'Come People of the Risen King', shown on the screen at Bethesda.

Come, people of the risen King, who delight to bring Him praise.
Come, all and tune your hearts to sing to the Morning Star of grace.
From the shifting shadows of the earth we will lift our eyes to Him,
where steady arms of mercy reach to gather children in.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!
One heart, one voice, O Church of Christ, rejoice!

Come, those whose joy is morning sun and those weeping through the night.
Come, those who tell of battles won, and those struggling in the fight.
For His perfect love will never change, and His mercies never cease,
but follow us through all our days with the certain hope of peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!.....

Come, young and old from every land, men and women of the faith.
Come, those with full or empty hands, find the riches of His grace.
Over all the world, His people sing, shore to shore we hear them call
the Truth that cries through every age;

'Our God is all in all'.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!

Authors: Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty and Stuart Townend

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CCL no 5664

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azEWoyjj4LI>

Alec leads us in a Prayer: "Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can rejoice this morning with the riches of your grace. Thank you for all you have given to us in this week that has just gone by. Thank you Father that you give us all that we need to eat, all we need to drink, and that we have a roof over our heads. We thank you that you take care of us. Thank you that you hear and answer our prayers and you are ready to listen to us at any time. Thank you for your grace and your love and your mercy and your care and faithfulness to us because you are a great God, you are the only true God, you are the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the God of Gods, so we worship and praise you and thank you here this morning. Please be with us and guide us in our time together we pray. In Jesus name. Amen. "

The Notices for this week are shown on the screen at Bethesda:

- Refreshments are available after the service
- Coffee Morning - Tuesday @ 10
- Ladies' Bible Study - Tuesday @ 10.45
- Tiddlywinks - Wednesday AM @ 9.30
- Fellowship Prayer Meeting on Thursday @ 7.30pm

- Film Club - Saturday @ 10.30
- Next Sunday - Leprosy Mission with Paul Moores, followed by lunch (Alec apologises that he will not be with us as he has been invited to join with St Lukes, as they meet at St Wilfrid's School, where they will be interviewing him).
- Saturday 16 April, 18.30 - **The Gospel in the Passover** with Igal Vender

We can join in song again: 'Here I am to Worship' during which we will take up our Offering. Alec plays this on the piano for us.

Light of the world you stepped down into darkness, opened my eyes, let me see beauty that made this heart adore you, hope of a life spent with you:

Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down,
 here I am to say that you're my God.
 You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy,
 altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days, so highly exalted, glorious in heaven above;
 humbly you came to the earth you created, all for love's sake became poor.

Here I am to worship.....

I'll never know how much it cost
 to see my sin upon that cross;

Here I am to worship....

Author: Tim Hughes
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Alec now leads us in a time of Communion:

He begins by reading from Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth:

"For I receive from the Lord what I also pass on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said: "This is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me." In the same way after supper he took the cup saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." **And then we get the following very strange words that I probably would never have put in myself:** "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread or drinks of the cup, for anyone who eats or drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgement on himself". So let us just be quiet for a minute and or two, we can maybe close our eyes or maybe not, we can examine ourselves to see if there is anything wrong between us

and the Lord or between us and our brother, and ask the Lord to forgive us before we go on and share together in the Lord's supper: let's just be quiet for a minute or two."

(We spend time in silence)

Alec continues:

"On the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took the bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it; let's give thanks for the broken body of our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Loving Heavenly Father, rarely will someone die for a good man but you died for us, those who had ignored you, those who had put you out of their lives, even those who didn't want to know anything about you, those that went their own way. So are we. Those who made a mess of their lives, and you sent your only son into the world to die. He died on the tree. We thank you for his death for us. And we remember what you have done for us and what you continue to do for us each day. We remember your grace and your mercy and your faithfulness to us but above all your love and your sending your son into the world to die for us. We remember too that we have a hope, that one day soon we will be with you, that you are now preparing a place for us where many of our brothers and sisters have already gone. We thank you Father for your amazing grace to us. Help us never to forget, help us always to remember who you are, what you do for us, what you have done for us, and what you will be for us in your kingdom. Amen' "

Jane and Becky come to distribute the bread and wine. Alec asks that we eat the bread as we receive it but retain the cup that we may drink together as a sign of our individual commitment and faith in the Lord.

After all have been served, Alec continues:

"In the same way after supper he took the cup saying:"This cup is the new covenant in my blood, do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Let us drink together thankfully as a sign of our unity and our harmony together in our fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Alec replaces the covers and returns to the platform, before asking Brenda to come and lead us in our Intercessory Prayers.

"This morning, I have divided our intercessions into 5 short prayers, each with a different topic, hoping this will help you to direct your thoughts.

Today is the seventieth anniversary of our Queen's accession to the throne, so first let us pray for her.

Almighty Father, some of us (the older ones) remember the sad day when King George died and then later our young new Queen came back by plane from an overseas visit. We thank You that since then she has been steadfast, loyal and upright in her service to You and to our country and commonwealth. We ask that You

will be close beside her today as she remembers those events in 1952 and that You will give her good health as she, supported by members of her family, continues through the year of celebration. May she be able to take a full part in the all planned events. Amen

Today is also the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) Day of Prayer and so we now include the special prayers they have requested.

Heavenly Father, first we pray for the leaders of the Baptist Missionary Society, asking that they may know the best ways to help displaced persons in need especially in Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan. Thank You for all mission workers and we ask that those abroad may be able to respond to extra challenges caused by the pandemic, praying for their safety at all times. Please help them to be able to share the Gospel in difficult places as they help people, and we especially remember Chad, where our link missionaries Brian and Jackie work. Lord, we ask that the BMS Disaster Fund may be sufficient to help when tragedies and emergencies occur and also that more may respond to Your call to serve overseas, not only with the Baptist Missionary Society, but with other charities and societies too. Amen

Now we think of our own country and all the people of its cities, towns, villages and countryside and also of the world that surrounds us.

Lord God, we pray for all who have difficulties of various kinds. Many are suffering with health problems and there is a slow provision of care, some have to isolate and are ill, many have increasing financial and family worries, also there is abuse, homelessness and much more besides. All we can do is ask for answers to problems, and support and care for those in need. We pray for MPs at this difficult time asking that the truth can be revealed and the right answer be found to the present situation. Heavenly Father we also ask for peace between nations and an end to greediness, asking that there be a resolve by all to work for good and better things, not horror and war. We remember places near and far where there are many difficulties following storms and other disasters. and pray that the right help be given quickly where it is needed. Also we bring before You the many refugees in different places and those who are displaced and persecuted therefore suffering great distress, and we ask for Your help, comfort and support for all. Amen

Next we pray for our church, its activities here, the community around, and the church family and leaders.

Lord God, we ask that all here today may find comfort and joy as we worship together, and we ask for Your presence also with those watching the recording or reading the script. Please be beside the ones who can't be here who would like to be and those who have not yet returned since Lockdown. We thank You for all who take responsibility for organising all that happens here and particularly ask for Your continued presence with our Pastor and Deacons. May we be able to continue to reach out to the people living nearby and we ask for Your special guidance with new plans to share the Gospel with them. We bring our church family and those they know and love to You, remembering the ones who are grieving or suffering or ill and especially those we know in care homes or in hospital following operations or having treatment. We name them before You now. **(Time of silence)** Please be there beside them all

with Your strength and love. We continue to pray also for the young ones in our families and put their lives in Your hands. Amen

Lastly we pray for ourselves.

When we leave here today, Lord, may we go out with renewed commitment to You and with the knowledge that You are beside us. Help us to be faithful to all we believe about You and share it with others. and as we say sorry to You, please forgive us when we let You down. We ask that You keep us safe and able to cope with any problems and also be with us in our happy moments too. Thank You for all You give us and most of all for the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ. We offer all these prayers now to You Heavenly Father, in His name. Amen"

We are invited to join in song once more - a shorter song shown on the screen which can be quite lively!: 'Be Bold, Be Strong'

Be bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you.
Be bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you.
I am not afraid, I am not dismayed,
because I'm walking in faith and victory,
come on and walk in faith and victory,
for the Lord your God is with you.

Words: Morris Chapman CCLI Song No. 58563

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Becky comes to lead our Bible Reading for today: Philippians 3.7-21.

"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

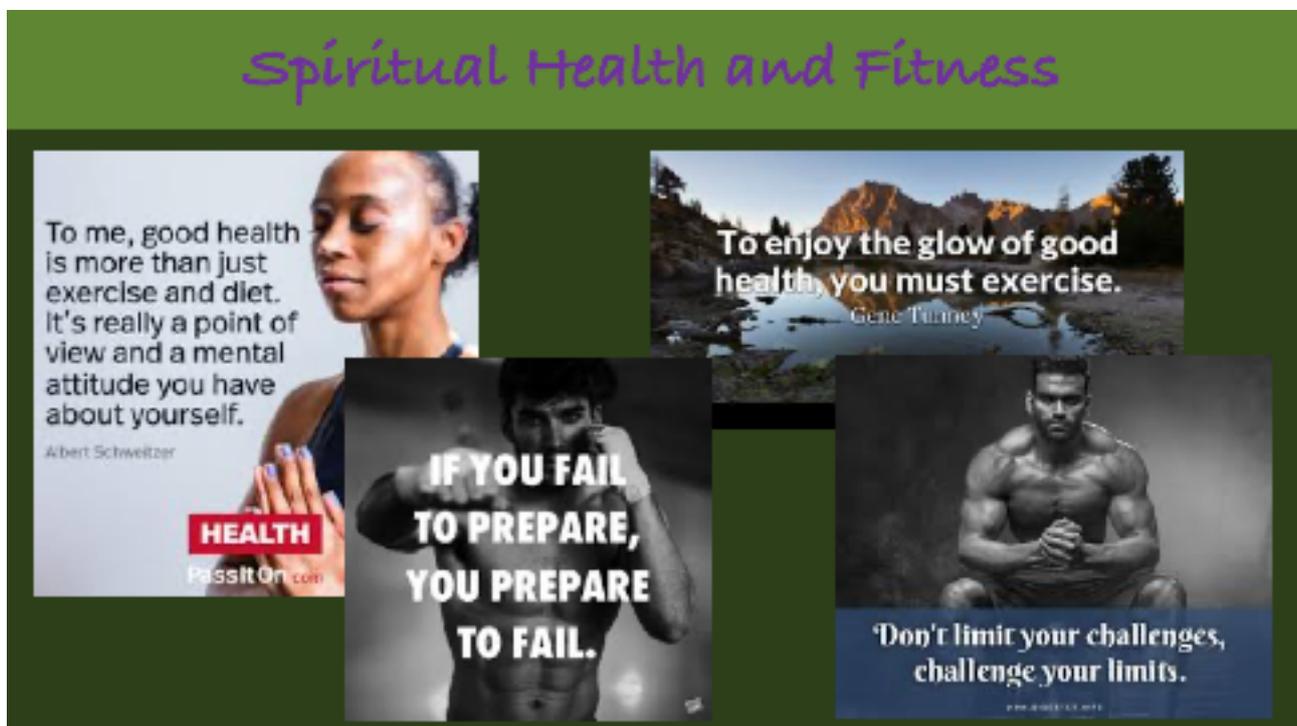
Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Following Paul's Example

All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

Alec now shares the Message Colin has prepared: 'Spiritually Fit and Healthy'



Today is our final look at our New Year topic of Spiritual Fitness. We chose this topic because one of the big themes in the month of January, when people make their New Year resolutions, is getting physically fit and healthy. Many people promise themselves to do more exercise, to work-out better and get to the gym more often, and even to take up yoga. They want to eat better by cutting down on junk food and fast foods – even bacon butties! Sorry, Shirley. Some people have had a meat-free and alcohol-free January. They may possibly attend Slimming World or some other dieting group to lose weight. People may even start new hobbies to try to give their brains a new stimulus. All this is good. I'm not in any way knocking any of it. Saint Paul tells the Christians at Corinth to look after their bodies, for the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And so, there is a divine mandate that we should look after our bodies and not abuse them.

However, we are not just a physical body on legs, or even a brain in a body on legs. We also have an inner life, a spirit, which is made up of a heart or soul, as well as a mind. And our spirit, too, needs looking after. Some would say that our spirit is our real self, our true ID, and this is who we really are as a person. So, we cannot afford to neglect this, without doing serious damage to ourselves as Christians and unique individuals. In the last four sessions, Alec and Tim have given us the opportunity to examine important themes in how we should look after our spirits or spiritual selves – and it all starts with asking Christ to fill us with his Holy Spirit, to come into our lives to shape us and mould us so that we'll be in the best possible position to fulfil the destiny that God has planned for us. So, it is my task this morning just to sum up, briefly, what we have learnt in the last four weeks on spiritual health and fitness. I have three headings.

A Spiritual Health Check-up

I'm sure we would all agree that physical fitness is important, but what about our spiritual fitness? If we do have a soul or spirit, then surely this is even more important. When you go to the gym for the first time, you are sometimes given a physical check-up. Equally, a spiritual check-up is also important. But check-ups aren't always easy or pain-free, but they are necessary and they are worth it. When was the last time you spoke with the Great Physician, our Saviour God, and had a chat about your spiritual health? You don't need an appointment and you won't be held in a queue. Be honest with the Lord and with yourself as you evaluate where you are spiritually and if necessary, make any changes God brings to your mind. After all, doing life God's way is always the right way.

Here are a few questions, just to get you started in doing a spiritual check-up (there are probably many more):

1. Describe your relationship with God at the present time.
2. What words or phrases best describe your Christian life – a chore, an obligation, a delight, routine, boring, invigorating, spiritual nourishing, non-existent, essential or...?
3. What are the factors that affect your devotional life?
4. What answers to prayer have you received recently?
5. Is there any area in your life where you need to completely surrender to Christ as Lord of your life?
6. Is there a sin which you are harbouring? Confess it my name.
7. Do you need to seek forgiveness from someone whom you have wronged?
8. Do you have a humble, teachable attitude?
9. Are you consciously living by the Spirit?
10. Are you serving the Lord with joy and gladness?

Spiritual Health

As we all know, if we don't take care of our physical bodies, we get into trouble. We become weak; we develop a whole raft of health problems. The same sort of thing is true in the spiritual realm, as well. Much of the same advice we take onboard for the advancement of

our physical health also applies to our spiritual health. To build good health and fitness, we need to manage carefully our diet and nutrition, life-style choices, and exercise. Just as it is impossible to become physically fit and healthy by merely reading books or watching youtube channels on physical well-being, we cannot develop our spiritual health and fitness by simply reading the Bible or listening to sermons. Instead, we must apply what we are learning by energetically doing the will of God in our lives.

Any physical health advice usually starts with a person's diet and nutrition. This also applies to our spiritual health. We need to get plenty of spiritual nourishment. We need to feed our hearts and minds with good food. As Tim reminded us in Session 3, we need to feed on the Word of God, and also on good Christian literature. In his first letter, the Apostle Peter tells us: *'Like newborn babies, crave spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.'* We need to eat to grow as Christians. It changes and transforms us into what we need to be. So, we should take a good dose of God's Word, not once a week, on a Sunday, but each day to help us grow strong. This is where daily Scripture notes can be very useful, to help us maintain a regular habit of reading the Bible. But as well as this, listening to Christian music will also encourage us in our daily walk with Christ. What do you listen to in the car, or on your MP3 player, as you walk along? There's nothing wrong with listening to good secular music, entertainment programmes, discussions, news-channels, or even education and documentaries, but we should also seek out good Christian alternatives, so that we attune our hearts and minds with what Christ wants us to become in 2022, regardless of our age. For we are never too old or too frail to be of service for our Lord and Saviour.

Equally, some people put food in their mouths but don't swallow it, because they suffer from anorexia. In the same way, it is not enough merely to listen to God's word; we must also digest it by incorporating it into our lives. In other words, we must avoid spiritual anorexia. Even so, solid food needs to be chewed and digested. We need to think carefully about it and meditate upon it. It requires us to search more thoroughly, to dig deeper. This will involve sharing our thoughts with other people, and this is where good fellowship comes in – and this is one of the reasons why we have the Tuesday coffee morning. But above all else we must put what we learn into practice, so that we become doers of the word and not hearers only.

Spiritual Fitness - Holiness

Along with plenty of good food comes the need for exercise. 1 Timothy 4:6-8 *'For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.'* I'm sure most of us place some emphasis on physical exercise, even if it's only walking. But since our spiritual health is more important, we should put even more effort and time into spiritual exercise. Paul goes on to tell us: *'train yourself to be godly.'* The Greek word Paul uses here for 'train' describes vigorous exercise. It is the kind of exercise that makes you sweat. It takes work. And spiritual exercise takes work. There is no doubt about it. And since to 'train' implies action, we need to put our 'godliness' or 'holiness' into action with the help of God's Spirit. Spiritual exercise takes various forms, and these include Bible and theological study, prayer and meditation,

fellowship with other believers, and church-and-faith activities, such as sharing our faith with others.

Again, if you take the first one, Bible-study, as our main example, Paul tells Timothy in his second letter to him that *'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.'* And so, if you are going to faithfully study your Bible this year, it will take work. If you are going to memorise verses, it will take effort. If you are going to get victory over a sinful habit, it will take application, if not a hard slog! Exercise must be frequent. An athlete preparing for the Olympics will exercise daily. His exercise will vary, but he is in constant training mode. If you have a passion to become spiritually fit this year, you are going to have to exercise spiritually every day. It must become a daily habit. Daily we must draw near to the Lord in prayer. As we do, he promises that he will draw near to us (James 4:8).

Also, good health entails the practice of cleanliness and good hygiene. So much poor health comes from germs and contagion. For good health, it is wise to keep ourselves clean. We definitely know this in relation to our bodies, for I'm sure we're tired of hearing as part of the covid requirements that we should wash our hands, regularly. (Colin: 'Oops'.) But we are also clearly taught the same in relation to our hearts and minds. 2 Corinthians 7:1 *'Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.'* We must identify and get rid of those things in our lives that contaminate our hearts and minds. These may be selfish thoughts or desires, dodgy attitudes or responses. Or, equally, our hearts and minds might be polluted by the world, by, for example, what we see and hear on television. We must take time to take these matters seriously if we want to stay spiritually healthy. For I'm convinced that a Christian cannot experience the abundant life in Jesus Christ (John 10:10) without exercising good spiritual hygiene or purity on a day-by-day basis; such is the state of the world in which we live these days. And yet God wants to see us as his children living our lives in and before the world, and not avoiding it; and to live in a manner that glorifies him. But this is not easy to do; this why we need to be filled and guided with the Spirit of Christ. The Latin motto of St. Wilfrid's High School is *Domine Dirige Nos*, which means 'Lord, direct us'. By being directed by the Spirit, we will be able to live and move in time with the will of the Lord our God.

In conclusion, God cares about our spiritual health and fitness. He wants us to become spiritually strong this coming year. This will not happen by accident. We must have a passion for it. We must develop self-control. We must discipline ourselves to do what is right by Christ. And if we are uncertain about what is right, we should always ask ourselves what would Jesus do (W.W.J.D.)? We must exercise unto godliness or holiness. We must work at it daily. We must cast off all the 'weights' that would hinder us. If we seek to win one of God's crowns (a Crown of Life), we must seek to get rid of every single weight in our lives. We ought daily to pray as the Psalmist: *'Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting'* (Psalms 139). And we must allow God to strengthen us. If God has shown

you an area of your life that must change before you can become spiritually fit, then you must take action today. Do not put it off. Get serious with God, so we can be effective ambassadors for his kingdom, for the sake of his glory and honour. Amen.

We bring our service to a close as we sing: Fight the good fight, which again Alec plays for us on the piano.

Fight the good fight with all thy might.
Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right.
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
thy joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race through God's good grace;
lift up thine eyes, and seek Christ's face.
Life with its way before us lies;
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

Cast care aside; lean on thy guide.
God's boundless mercy will provide.
Trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Faint not nor fear: God's arms are near.
God changeth not, and thou art dear.
Only believe, and thou shalt see
that Christ is all in all to thee.

Words: Rev. John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1863). Music: Pentecost, 1864 by William Boyd.
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And finally we share together in saying aloud the words of the Grace, but with some actions which those who visited Haggate last week saw demonstrated! If you are reading this at home you may wish to add some movements of your own to emphasise what we say week by week. There are no right and wrong ways to move - and no prizes for the most, or least, energetic!

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.