



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on September 26th 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel.

The lifting of lockdown restrictions has resulted in the decision to meet in person at Bethesda Chapel once again. As everyone is not yet able to return, we still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast a recording of the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Today we celebrate Harvest, and our service is led by Tim. Alec plays the piano for us as we prepare ourselves for worship, based on BMS World Mission - I Will Stand.

Tim welcomes us all, thanking those who decorated the chapel with Harvest gifts. (These will be shared with the Foodbank afterwards)

Our first hymn is a traditional Harvest song, played by Alec: **Come you thankful people come.**

Come, you thankful people, come, raise the song of harvest home!
fruit and crops are gathered in now, before the storms begin:
God our maker will provide for our needs to be supplied;
come, with all his people, come, raise the song of harvest home!

All the world is God's own field, harvests for his praise to yield;
wheat and weeds together sown here for joy or sorrow grown:
first the blade and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear-
Lord of harvest, grant that we wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come and shall bring his harvest home;
He himself on that great day, worthless things shall take away,
give his angels charge at last in the fire the weeds to cast,
but the fruitful ears to store in his care for evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come- bring your final harvest home!
gather all your people in free from sorrow, free from sin,
there together purified, ever thankful at your side-
come, with all your angels, come, bring that glorious harvest home!

Tim leads us in a prayer of thanksgiving

"Father God we do want to count our many blessings before you this morning as we come into your presence. We do indeed thank you for your faithful provision for us through harvest, for our food and for our drink. We thank you that despite supply problems we still have food, we have enough. We thank you for your faithfulness to the promise that you made all those years ago to Noah, that as long as the Earth endured, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease. Thank you Lord that you are a promise keeping God. Thank you Lord for those who work so hard to bring our food to us for those who work in farms growing our food, for those who distribute it to us, who work so hard to keep supermarket shelves stacked. Thank you Lord for the other material blessings that you bless us with thank you for our homes and the materials used to build them so that we can stay warm and dry. Thank you for clothing so that we can be warm and comfortable. Thank you Lord for our family and our friends, for our employment and our leisure time. Lord for all these good gifts we recognise come from you, we don't want to take them for granted, we want to thank you and bless you for all of these. Thank you too this morning Lord for the great gifts you have made to us, gifts that don't just benefit us for a relatively short time that we are here on this planet but gifts that last for eternity. In particular thank you this morning for the gift of your son to us, how he came, how he died in our place so that we could know your forgiveness, and that we and all who trust in him can be brought into the great family of God. We thank you that we have, as that song reminded us, the sure and certain hope that one day we will be part of the great harvest that you bring in as you bring us into everlasting life with you. Lord thank you that we have the freedom to meet here this morning and to celebrate and to worship you for all that you have done for us. Help us never to take this freedom for granted for it is a privilege. Lord we bring all these prayers to you, We give you our grateful thanks for all that you have done in Jesus name. Amen"

Tim then introduces our theme for today, before playing a short video produced by BMS, featuring the stories of three people from three different parts of the world, as they discover (or are discovered by) Jesus, and the changes in their lives following these encounters. As faces cannot be shown because of the risks and dangers to the individuals concerned, they are shown in cartoon form, but the message is serious and thought provoking. Are we prepared to stand with these fellow Christians in their challenging circumstances?

Tim then leads us in a memory verse, shown on the screen.

So do not fear, for I am with you;
Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand

Isaiah 41 verse 10

We attempt to learn the verse one line at a time, as the lines are removed from the screen - some of us find this more challenging than others!

BMS have produced a quiz on the World Church - how much do we know about other nations and lifestyles? (Answers on the final sheet!)

Question 1

How many people around the world today follow Jesus?

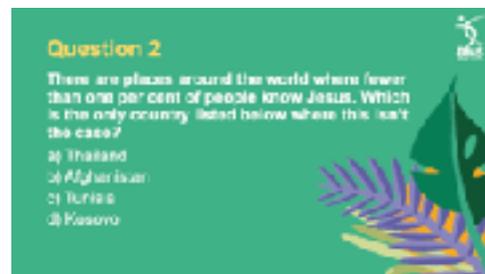
- a) More than two billion
- b) More than three billion
- c) More than five billion



Question 2

There are places around the world where fewer than one per cent of people know Jesus. Which is the only country listed below where this isn't the case?

- a) Thailand
- b) Azerbaijan
- c) Turkey
- d) Kosovo



Question 3

Which country has the highest number of different religions practiced?

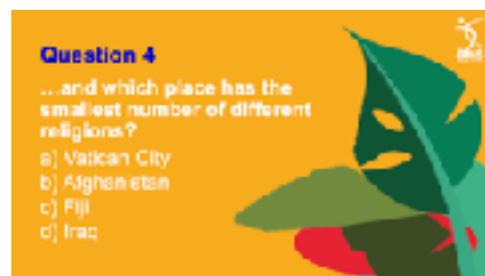
- a) Brazil
- b) South Korea
- c) The UK
- d) The USA



Question 4

...and which place has the smallest number of different religions?

- a) Vatican City
- b) Afghanistan
- c) Fiji
- d) Iraq



Question 5

In many countries, numbers of Christians are expected to rise. But can you guess the region where the numbers of Christians are expected to fall?

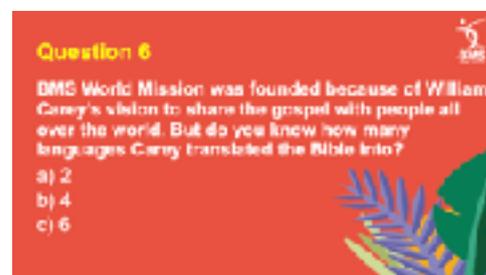
- a) North America
- b) Russia
- c) The Middle East and North Africa
- d) Sub-Saharan Africa



Question 6

BMS World Mission was founded because of William Carey's vision to share the gospel with people all over the world. But do you know how many languages Carey translated the Bible into?

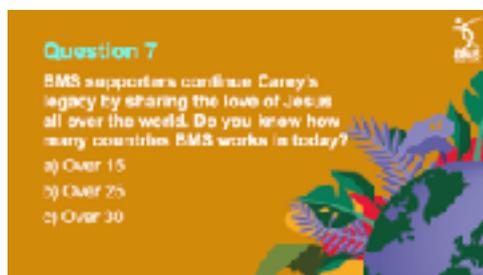
- a) 2
- b) 4
- c) 6



Question 7

BMS supporters continue Carey's legacy by sharing the love of Jesus all over the world. Do you know how many countries BMS works in today?

- a) Over 15
- b) Over 25
- c) Over 30



Tim share the notices for the week.

- Refreshments after the service
- Coffee Morning – Tuesdays @ 10-12 – and restart of ladies' Bible Study on 5 October @ 10.45, then fortnightly

- Fellowship Meeting – Thursday @ 7.30pm
- Keswick in East Lancashire – 8/9 October
- RISE Praise evening – 19 October at Beacon / Zoom
- 'Praying for each other' sheet

Time for more music, a new song to most of us. Written by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty, it is a Harvest Hymn, "**For the gifts of heaven.**" The version shown on the screen at Bethesda is a recording by 2 musicians, one playing the violin and the other the piano. The tune is played firstly on the violin, then both sing (with one also playing the piano!) and the final verse is played on the violin whilst the pianist sings by himself. Some from Bethesda felt confident enough to join in as the song progressed whilst others listened.

For the gifts of heaven in the fields of earth,
my soul will sing to the Lord.
For the fruitful lands as they yield their worth,
my heart gives thanks to him.
We may plough the soil, we may plant the seed,
but God will make it grow,
and the harvest comes from the tender goodness
of the Father's hand.

As the trade winds blow over thirsty plains,
my soul will sing to the Lord,
And the storm clouds pour with reviving rains,
my heart gives thanks to Him.
Every season whispers the mystery,
the glorious rhythm of life,
till the harvest comes from the boundless goodness
of the Father's hand.

When the crops have failed and the fields are bare,
my soul will cry to the Lord.
When the hungry know only death's despair,
my heart will look to Him.
For the call goes out from the heart of God
to share with those in need;
as we feed the world we reflect the goodness
of the Father's hand.

Stuart Townend, Keith Getty & Matt Bronleewe Copyright © 2013 Getty Music Publishing (BMI) & Townend Songs (Adm. by Song Solutions Copycare info@songssolutions.org.)
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<https://youtu.be/MEvGh7CSY2g>

Becky reads our Bible passage for the day, 1 Corinthians 12, 12-27

Unity and Diversity in the Body

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body —whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Tim shared a short sermon:

The Body: United *and* Diverse

We truly have much to give thanks for as we celebrate our Harvest service today.

Physical gifts – shelter, warmth, food and clothing, our families and friends – and for all those who work hard to make these things possible.

If we’re Christians, we should also be thankful, I suggest even more thankful, for the amazing spiritual gifts we enjoy - our salvation, our forgiveness, sure hope of eternal life, the security and protection of the Lord, and not least being part of the family of God, the church of Jesus Christ. As we experience these things, we are God’s special harvest.

The passage we’ve read today reminds how privileged we are in being part of this great family. Paul beautifully compares the Church to the human body, drawing out the message that, just like the human body, the Church has both *unity* and *diversity*, and it is the balance of these that gives it strength.

The Body

Look at verse 12: 'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.' And he says, 'So it is with Christ'.

We know this balance of unity and diversity is true for the human body, don't we? It has a **unity** – our bodies each have one type of DNA, one genetic fingerprint and one blood type. But yet, as Paul illustrates in verses 14 to 20, the human body needs not only its unity, but also its **diversity** – its different parts and functions - in order to live, grow and work. The parts of the body look different, operate differently and are treated differently, but no part is inferior or unimportant just because it has a different role. And we know that we don't somehow have to spend time making this balance of unity and diversity true – that's just the way it is – it's the way our bodies are designed.

Paul's saying that it's just the same with the body of Jesus Christ – the Church. We *have* unity – it is not a goal to be achieved, but a fact to be recognised. Look at verse 13 – it is the one Spirit of God working in all Christians who brings them into the body in the first place. It is the one Lord Jesus Christ (v 27) who is the head. The Church is one. But at the same time, the Church has diversity – we are all different and are given different gifts by the one Spirit (v 11) as he determines, so that we can live, grow and work together.

This is a wonderful thing to recognise and give thanks for today – and it's true not just at a local church level, but across the whole worldwide Church that we have been thinking about today. How wonderful it is that we can learn from people of other cultures, in other places, who are our brothers and sisters, who are equally part of that one body of Christ. God has designed the worldwide Church to work together.

Unity is Promoted as We Discover our Dependencies on Each Other

Paul expands on what he has said in verses 21 to 26, showing that appreciating the diversity of the body actually helps promote its unity. The diversity in the human body is evidence of the wisdom of God. Each part needs the other parts, and no part can afford to become independent (v 21). In a healthy human body, the various parts co-operate with each other and even compensate for each other when a crisis occurs. If any part of the body seeks to act independently, it weakens and creates problems for the whole body. Often, we may consider a part of our body unnecessary or of low importance - until it is hurt – then we realize how important it is! If one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers along with it.

It's the same in the church - when we recognise and value each other's different roles, it avoids division and increases our concern for each other, because we know that our well-being depends on theirs (v24b, 25, 26). Unity in the church is recognised and promoted as we discover our dependencies on one another, and care for one another.

Let's think a bit more about that verse 26 in the context of the worldwide church. As Christians in the UK, we have perhaps experienced a tiny glimpse of what it's like to be an isolated believer through the Coronavirus pandemic – separated from the Christian community, locked down at home and unable to gather to worship. Perhaps close your

eyes for a moment and remember how that felt. How did it feel to be unable to see or hug your loved ones? How did it feel to be unable to worship publicly? For many Christians that BMS World Mission supports around the world, this is what it is always like.

Maybe keep your eyes closed and imagine that you are sitting here in church, but completely alone. Think about what it would be like not to know a single other Christian. How would you grow in your faith? How would you worship? Where would you find the strength to carry on? Now imagine that your family and your closest friends have all turned their backs on you because you follow Jesus. They won't talk to you. You're not welcome in their homes or at their celebrations. And you know that for as long as you remain a Christian, they will act as if you don't exist. Would you continue trusting God? This was the difficult decision the North African believer we heard about earlier had to make.

But we are all one body – if one part suffers, every part suffers with it. We have such freedom to live out our faith openly here. It's a privilege many people don't have, yet the incredible believers that BMS is supporting around the world believe that Jesus is worth it. They want to tell others about him – and others want to hear.

Will we stand with them and encourage them as much as we can this harvest?

Let's hear some words of encouragement now from the Psalms which mean so much to us and to our fellow believers in difficult places, after which we'll think what we can practically do to stand with them.

We were encouraged to watch a Reflective video produced by BMS, which was a combination of Psalm 23 and Psalm 27.

How can I get involved?

How Can I Stand with Fellow Christians ? 

Stand with the world Church today by supporting *I Will Stand*

1. Pray
2. Give: www.bmsworldmission.org/stand
...or via envelopes available here today
3. Share: Links to the videos – e.g. via social media
4. Join In: Register for 'I Will Stand' live event on Thursday 30 September at 7.30 pm

Our Prayers of Intercession were led by Brenda:

"Our loving Heavenly Father, on this day when we are celebrating Harvest in our service, we again thank You for our freedom to do this together and also for the representation of the world's harvest that is before us.

However, as we have seen this morning, there are many in the world for whom a joint celebration like this is really difficult, because they have to stand up for their faith in trying circumstances where they are rejected by families and are isolated. May they be surrounded by Your love and be given the strength to continue. We pray for protection for new believers worshipping and witnessing in hostile places and for Your care and support for all Christians where holding on to faith is really challenging because of the situation in which they live or work.

We continue to ask for Your help and guidance for all those involved in the work of the Baptist Missionary Society and other charities that we support, asking for safety for all involved and for their continued faith and commitment especially when difficulties arise.

As we see the food here before us and celebrate harvest today, Lord, we also have concerns about supplying the people of the world with nourishing and plentiful food and their many other needs, as this continues to be difficult. We bring before You the various problems and challenges of growing, producing and delivering enough for all. We pray for those who work on the land where often the weather, water supplies and other factors are a continued problem. In many places there is a lack of workers as well and at present not enough people available to drive trucks and make deliveries. Other parts of the world's harvest are at risk too like the supply of fuel and energy and we ask for Your presence with many who are trying to make improvements and find new ways of doing things.

Lord God, we know that there is a change in the earth's climate as we hear and read the facts and figures and see more floods and droughts on our screens and we also know that it is fault of us all. Many years ago as the world developed this was not realised but now we know that things have to change and new ways found to feed and supply the world. So we bring before You the Climate Change Conference set to take place soon in Glasgow and ask that it will be a time for the leaders of the world to offer solutions and be guided by You to know the best ways to approach this. We thank You for this wonderful world You have created and pray that we will all, as a human race, do our utmost to keep it as good as we can.

Lord we bring before You the help given to others in need, here in our own country, especially during these difficult times. We thank You for the work of food banks which are a lifeline for many people and we ask that those working in them may be given strength and be safe and that many will be motivated to give food for others. We also remember those who give help and have done so by shopping or in other ways, particularly during these last difficult months and we thank You for the ones who campaign for improved help for those in need.

As the pandemic continues we thank You again for the wonderful gift of the vaccine, but also ask that this gift be shared with other nations who have not yet had much access to it.

Heavenly Father, we continue to pray for the work of our church here at Blackburn

Baptist as we move on into the autumn and winter months and start or continue our activities and outreach. We bring before You the work amongst children and young people of this area and ask that it will be a way of reaching others for You. We also pray for initiatives amongst the older people and things we might plan to do in the future to find new ways to show God's love. Please continue to place Your hand upon Alec and the Deacons, as they seek Your will and how to lead us all to serve You and share Your love with people around.

Our prayers are also offered to You, Lord, for those of our fellowship and friends who are suffering at his time. We especially remember the ones who have lost loved ones recently and miss them so much and those who are not well or in hospital or waiting for appointments and treatments. Others have difficulties with finance, family worries and problems. We pray that You will be beside all with Your love and care. We bring our family members to You, some not far away and others in far off places and ask that You will care for them and protect them wherever they are.

As we bring our intercessions to a close we ask for Your forgiveness for all the things we have done wrong recently and ask that You be with us in the coming week. May we be strong in our faith and our witness for You.

We ask all this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen"

We repeated the Memory verse we had (hopefully) learnt earlier in the service.

So do not fear, for I am with you;

Do not be dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you and help you;

I will uphold you with my righteous right hand

Isaiah 41 verse 10

Our final song was sung to a very familiar tune to most of us: Beethoven's Choral Symphony, the Ode to Joy - appropriate as today sees the elections in Germany!. Alec played it on the piano so we could sing the words written by Timothy Dudley-Smith in 1970, **Fill your hearts with joy and gladness.**

Fill your hearts with joy and gladness, sing and praise your God and mine!

Great the Lord in love and wisdom, might and majesty divine!

He who framed the starry heavens knows and names them as they shine.

Praise the Lord for times and seasons, cloud and sunshine, wind and rain;

spring to melt the snows of winter till the waters flow again;

grass upon the mountain pastures, golden valleys thick with grain.

Fill your hearts with joy and gladness, peace and plenty crown your days;

love His laws, declare His judgments, walk in all His words and ways,

He the Lord and we His children; praise the Lord, all people praise!

Timothy Dudley-Smith

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Our service was brought to a close as we shared the Grace together.

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.

Hello all,

The deacons have been looking again at possibilities of providing transport for those who may need it to come to our Sunday services. We are grateful to those who have been bringing others regularly. We would like to check again on who would value transport provision. Please could you let us know if you would appreciate transport being provided? We can then plan better whether it would make sense to try to restart the mini-bus service, or arrange taxis, or whether there are enough offers of lifts from others in the congregation.

Thank you.

(Ring Judith, Tim or Jane)

Quiz answers

- 1 a, more than 2 billion
- 2 d, Kosovo
- 3 b, South Korea
- 4 a, Vatican City
- 5 b, Europe
- 6 c, 6 languages
- 7 c, over 30.

