



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on January 2nd 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 all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

**Today's service is led by Alec, and Joy plays the piano for us as we prepare to worship together. Our Advent wreath is alight for the final time this season.**

We begin with a welcome from Alec, as he removes his mask, and wishes us all a Happy New Year, this year of our Lord 2022! He then shares our notices for this week: he and Jason from St Lukes will be distributing the Welcome packs to the new homes in the area; the fellowship meeting will take place on Thursday evening here at 7.30pm, and Movie morning will restart this coming Saturday, January 8th. He announces that our freewill offering will be collected during our opening hymn: (for which he has chosen the original text, and which Joy plays on the piano)

### **Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah**

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
hold me with Thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me now and evermore;  
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,  
whence the healing stream doth flow;  
let the fire and cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through.  
Strong Deliv'rer, strong Deliv'rer,  
be Thou still my Strength and Shield;  
be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
death of death and hell's Destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side.  
Songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to Thee;  
I will ever give to Thee.

**As Alec receives our offerings, he prays:**

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your gift of your son to enable us to know forgiveness for our sins and everlasting life. The gifts that we give back to you now, we thank you for all you give us in our daily lives and we pray that you will bless these gifts and multiply them for the sake of your kingdom and for the growth of your church. In Jesus name. Amen.

**Alec then invites Jean W (who helped to take the offering) to lead our prayers:**

"Heavenly Father thank you for all you have done for us over this past week and for bringing us safely here to be with our church family to worship you today.

We confess our need for you today. We need your healing and your grace and sometimes we need to be reminded that you work on our behalf and for all those you love, constantly, powerfully and completely.

Forgive us for trying to fix our problems on our own, for running in all different directions to find help when the true help and healing can only be found in you. Forgive us for forgetting how much we need you above everyone and everything.

You see where no else is able to fully see or understand, you know our pains, our worries, our burdens. Thank you that you are able to do far more than we can ever imagine.

Father there is so much conflict in your world, there are people displaced from their homes and countries. Children struggling to be educated, to get medical care, even the basics of life that we take for granted, please be with those leaders of armies and countries, help them to see the bigger picture and to see the suffering that their actions are causing.

Lord please keep safe the Christians around the world who don't have the luxury of being able to acknowledge their love for you openly and have to meet in secret.

Lord we have prayers for our town, please be with those who have authority to make decisions for our town, that they make the best decisions for all who live here that our lives will be the best we can have and that we can all live together peacefully, whatever our backgrounds, customs or beliefs.

Heavenly Father we bring before you our church family and friends. Please be with those who are waiting hospital results and appointments, grant them patience whilst they wait. There are those who are grieving, those who are ill, those recovering from operations and those who are suffering with the worst effects of getting older. Please put your loving arms around them all, help them to feel your presence and your peace.

We ask that you guide the Deacons who work on our behalf to know your guiding hand on them and for Alec our Pastor as he tries to do your work although hampered by the restrictions of Covid.

Lord it is almost 2 years in March since the pandemic began and the world has learned to live in a very different way. May we continue to be tolerant of each other's fears and worries and may we very soon see the end of this and begin to return to a more normal way of life. We are thankful for all the scientists who were able to create the vaccine and their ability to tweak the vaccines to incorporate any new variant.

Lord we ended 2021 with thankful hearts and start this New Year with peace and faith, thank you that you make all things new. Let us release any bitterness and frustrations of the past year and let us move into this New Year knowing that you loves us and want the best for us. Give us the wisdom to make the best choices, fill us with a desire to seek you more than anything else in this world. Thank you that you are greater than anything we may face and Lord keep us mindful to keep our eyes and hearts fixed on you.

Heavenly Father we ask so much of you, but we know that with you and through you all things are possible.

In Jesus' name, Amen "

**We can lift our voices in song again, or read our next Hymn: I've found a friend,**  
again played by Joy

I've found a Friend, O such a Friend! He loved me ere I knew Him;  
He drew me with the cords of love, and thus He bound me to Him;  
and round my heart still closely twine those ties which naught can sever,  
for I am His, and He is mine, forever and forever.

I've found a Friend, O such a Friend! He bled, He died to save me;  
and not alone the gift of life, but His own self He gave me.  
Naught that I have mine own I call, I'll hold it for the giver;  
my heart, my strength, my life, my all are His, and His forever.

I've found a Friend, O such a Friend! So kind and true and tender,  
so wise a counsellor and guide, so mighty a defender!  
From Him who loves me now so well, what power my soul shall sever?  
Shall life or death, shall earth or hell? No! I am His forever.

Author: James G. Small, George Coles Stebbins, CCLI SONG # 85220  
Public domain CCL No 5664

**Graham reads our Bible passage for today: Gospel of John 6: 35-40**

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven

not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."

**We sing, or read a hymn known to some at Bethesda, "A debtor to mercy alone",** Joy plays it on the piano (and thought the tune was familiar, perhaps more so to those from a Bethesda heritage than those from a Baptist background!)

A debtor to mercy alone, of covenant mercy I sing;  
nor fear, with your righteousness on, my person and offering to bring.  
The terrors of law and of God with me can have nothing to do;  
my Saviour's obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from view.

The work which his goodness began, the arm of his strength will complete;  
his promise is yea and amen, and never was forfeited yet.  
Things future, nor things that are now, nor all things below or above,  
can make him his purpose forgo, or sever my soul from his love.

My name from the palms of his hands eternity will not erase;  
impressed on his heart it remains, in marks of indelible grace.  
Yes, I to the end shall endure, until I bow down at his throne;  
forever and always secure, a debtor to mercy alone

Author: Augustus Toplady CCLI SONG # 3291117  
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**After thanking Colin and Joy for their help in preparing communion, to be shared later, Alec prayed that the Lord will open our hearts and speak to us,**

"Loving Heavenly Father, we praise you that you are the living God; that we can come to you in freedom here in Blackburn in 2022, at the beginning of this New Year of the Lord, the New Year in which you are going to lead us, in which we ask you to be with us, we ask you to show your mercy to us and we pray today that you would open my lips to say what you would want me to say and that you would open all our hearts including mine to be obedient to what you are saying to us, for we pray in Jesus name. Amen"

**prior to bringing his: Message**

**New year, new life?**

(Alec began by saying what a wonderful day it was to be back here in Blackburn, not because it wasn't raining but because the Lord took him back to his family in Germany and brought him safely back - of which more later)

We have been celebrating Jesus coming into the world. Emmanuel, God with us. But why did Jesus come into the world?

I have come down from heaven says Jesus not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. Now if we look closer at John`s Gospel and a bit further down the road we see that Jesus` disciples and the crowds had been treated to an ongoing feast of miracles and a lengthy series of dramatic actions. The disciples had only just been called by Jesus to be his followers and then experienced:

-Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding

-Jesus kicking out the abusers of the temple courts who had turned the house of God into a market-place

-Jesus speaking privately at night with a member of the Jewish ruling council about new birth

-Jesus as seen by John the Baptist as the Christ

-Jesus talking alone with a Samaritan woman about water welling up to eternal life

-Jesus saying that his food was to do the will of the one who sent him and to finish his work

-Jesus` impression on the Samaritans who could not but believe that Jesus was the Saviour of the world

-Jesus healing of the official`s son

-Jesus healing at the pool of Bethesda

-Jesus feeding the five thousand

-Jesus walking on the water

And then Jesus says "I am the Bread of life".

In the Septuagint, abbreviation LXX, the earliest extant Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew, we read Ego eimi "I am", "I exist", the first person singular present active indicative of the verb "to be" in ancient Greek. In Aramaic, the word that is later translated as "I am" is really "I-I." Aramaic doesn't have a "being" verb. You can't actually say "I am" in ancient Aramaic, nor can you do it in ancient Hebrew. But you can in Greek. Jesus principally spoke a Galilean dialect of Aramaic.

What Jesus is actually saying is I am: I was, I am and I will be.

Jesus is the same yesterday today and tomorrow.

You see Jesus is not a Christmas present in a box that we unwrap on the 25<sup>th</sup>. and then put back in the box.

He is not a Christmas present that we look at occasionally when we have time.

And he is definitely not a Christmas present that we take back to the shop or send back to the online distributor.

You don't send him back to Amazon or anywhere else. He made the Amazon basin, the entire continent of South America, the whole world and everything in it.

Jesus is not a present remaining wrapped up, safe and hidden in a box somewhere in your rear room, in the attic or in the garage.

If you have seen Jesus, if God has opened up your heart to Him how do you respond?

Even if we think we are really religious, even if we use all the apparently, supposedly correct religious vocabulary, even if we are an active member of a religious community what really counts is how we respond to God in Christ Jesus.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, says Jesus, and I will give you rest."  
(Mt. 11:28)

Isn't that what we really need? Rest?

We need new hearts, transformed lives, hope for today and hope for tomorrow.  
Orientation in a world that has lost its way.

God knows that. So he sent Jesus down from heaven to earth-as one of us. Jesus who says, "He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6: 35)

This is really a no-brainer isn't it. Believing in Jesus, following Jesus is so obviously the best, indeed the only reasonable way to go. The only clear way, the only sensible direction, God's appeal to us to open our hearts to Him in Jesus Christ is actually, intrinsically, essentially the only way for us to go.

But then Jesus says, "As I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe."

Where is my heart this morning? Where is your heart this morning? Is it open to God in Jesus Christ? Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.

Maybe you say I've been a Christian, a believer in Jesus Christ for many years, indeed for many decades.

(At this point Alec uses an illustration from his recent journey home to Germany, when he had a very short time to make his train connection at Frankfurt International Airport, when a stranger literally kept him from falling as he travelled from airport terminal 1 concourse z to airport long-distance train station ICE platform 5 - a very long walk/way/run.)

Our walk as believers on the earth may be a very long one. We may have been faithful and fruitful for years and years, for decades, but we may be in danger of falling.

Then we need to remember the Word of God.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24) To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:25)

God knows where we are. He knows where we are going for He is both leading us and we are following Him. God knows. God cares. Trust Him. He will continue to protect us. He will continue to help us and to strengthen us.

The reading today has a preface from John 6 verses 25-34; maybe you might read that during the coming week. I would really like to come back to that another time. It is really about this. Why are we looking for Jesus? Why are we saying we want to follow Jesus?

For many who don't understand the message of Jesus, He is simply a means of meeting our physical needs rather than the provider of spiritual food and drink.

John exposes how Jesus reacted to a crowd seeking someone who met their material needs. The call of Christ demands a response, and if we have not put our trust in Him, like the crowd in John chapter 6, we ourselves are guilty of unbelief.

Are we looking for miraculous signs and wonders, for what He will do for us, for what He will give us? Or are we looking to believe in the One that God sent. Are we committed to Him whatever the cost? Are our eyes fixed on Him whatever He does? Are our hearts open to follow Him whatever He tells us to do? Are we living in a genuine, in a real relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?

I'd like to show you a picture. (Those at Bethesda see this picture of an open door on the screen) This picture seeks to illustrate what Jesus is saying in John 6:37. Let's look at the verse first.

All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

Now the picture.

From which side has the door been opened?

What's the key to the entire picture: to the access through the door, to sharing in the bread and wine? It is the Cross.



Come to Jesus. Go away from everything that is so empty, so foolhardy, so meaningless, and so unhelpful for your personal and spiritual growth and development. Come to Jesus. In Him alone is life in 2022.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, „Come to Me, and rest;

Lay down, you weary one, lay down your head upon my breast.”

I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and sad; I found in Him a resting-place, and He has made me glad.”

Come to Jesus, believe in Jesus. There is no other way to receive new life.

This is the grace of God.

What did we sing earlier between Jean leading us in prayer and Graham taking the reading?

“I’ve found a Friend, O such a Friend! He loved me before I knew Him;

He drew me with the cords of love, and so He bound me to Him;

And round my heart still closely twine those ties which nothing can sever,

For I am His, and He is mine forever and forever.”

Yes that is really powerful. Yes it is really true. It is God’s grace that brings us to Him and it is God’s grace that will never let us go. Yes we found Him. But He called us to Himself.

Has He called you? Is He calling you now? Is HE calling you to come to Him? Is He calling you to believe in Him and receive new life in this New Year?

Jesus says: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” (John 15:16)

What is our responsibility if He has called us and we have come to Him? As the Apostle Paul wrote:

“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus”. (Philippians 3:14)

And if we have entered the last laps of our time on earth, if our earthly pilgrimage is about to end, may we be able to say again with Paul to Timothy:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”. (2 Tim. 4:7)

New year, new life , in the year of our Lord 2022.

**Alec prays:** “Father we thank you for your word, thank you that it is good to us. Help us to understand what you are saying to us in this New Year, and to be obedient to your call, and to run the race, until its end, until we come into the new mansions, the new homes, the new places that you are preparing for us now with you in heaven. Thank you that you protect us, you care for us, that you speak to us, that you lead us,

that you strengthen and enable us. We pray as we come now to remember your death on the cross, as we share in the bread and wine, fix our eyes upon you, and no one and nothing else. In Jesus name we pray. Amen"

**Alec continues** "We're going to sing a song before we join together in communion. Anybody over 12, anybody who has given their heart and life to the Lord, anybody who is living in fellowship with believers in forgiveness, grace, love and mercy is welcome to join with us in this celebration, whether you have been here before or not, it won't really matter, it is whether we are living in a relationship with the Lord, whether we have given our heart, and we would welcome you joining with us in this meal together."

**We join in a Communion Hymn, Man of Sorrows what a Name (Hallelujah! What a Saviour)** - shown on the screen at Bethesda, but if you are reading this at home you may wish to sing or read aloud. The version shown at the chapel has a loud organ accompaniment which may bring back memories.

Man of sorrows what a name for the Son of God, who came  
ruined sinners to reclaim:  
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood,  
sealed my pardon with his blood:  
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

Guilty, helpless, lost were we; blameless Lamb of God was he,  
sacrificed to set us free:  
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

He was lifted up to die; "It is finished" was his cry;  
now in heaven exalted high:  
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

When he comes, our glorious King, all his ransomed home to bring,  
then anew this song we'll sing:  
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

Author: P. P. Bliss (1875)  
Public domain.CCL No 5664  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzOkVtXPdGk>

**We share communion together, led by Alec, who says:**

On the night when he was betrayed Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it. Let's give thanks for the broken body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Alec prays:** God in heaven, King of kings, Lord of lords, we can hardly imagine that you, the creator and sustainer of the universe, should come down to earth for such people as us, who decided not to go your way but to go our way again and again and again. Thank you God that you sent your son Jesus Christ to die on the cross, that his body was broken for us. We thank you for giving us this feast to remind us of who you are, of who we are without you, and what you have done for us. We give thanks for the broken body of your son at Calvary. Amen

(Colin and Joy - duly masked - distributed the bread, which all were invited to eat as it was received, **the body of Christ**)

**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.

**Alec prays:** Our Loving Heavenly Father, we praise you that you gave your life, that you sent your son to spill his blood for us. In this sacrifice is forgiveness of sins. We praise you and thank you and we thank you too for this reminder today that we are only doing this until you come again. We praise you and we pray "Come soon Lord Jesus." Amen.

(Colin and Joy distribute the cups, with the fellowship retaining them until all had been served so as to drink together as a sign of fellowship and unity as brothers and sisters: **The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ**)

As Colin and Joy collect the empty glasses, **we close our service** by watching (at Bethesda ) or reading at home, another version of Man of Sorrows, this time sung by Hillsongs, from Australia. Whilst the words did not appear on the screen, you can see them and read them here. You will have to imagine the music though!

Man of sorrows, Lamb of God  
by His own betrayed:  
the sin of man and wrath of God  
has been on Jesus laid.

Silent as He stood accused,  
beaten, mocked, and scorned,  
bowing to the Father's will  
He took a crown of thorns.

Oh, that rugged cross, my salvation  
where Your love poured out over me.  
Now my soul cries out, "Hallelujah,  
Praise and honour unto Thee"

Sent of heaven, God's own Son  
to purchase and redeem  
and reconcile the very ones  
who nailed Him to that tree.

Oh, that rugged cross, my salvation  
where Your love poured out over me.  
Now my soul cries out, "Hallelujah,  
Praise and honour unto Thee"

Now my debt is paid it is paid in full,  
by the precious blood that my Jesus spilled.  
Now the curse of sin has no hold on me  
whom the Son sets free oh, is free indeed.  
Now my debt is paid it is paid in full...  
Oh, that rugged cross my salvation...

See the stone is rolled away  
behold the empty tomb,  
Hallelujah, God be praised,  
He's risen from the grave!  
Oh, that rugged cross my salvation....

Songwriters: Matt Crocker / Brooke Ligertwood CCLI SONG # 6476063  
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZjBJuHgXPE>

### **Alec shares a Benediction and blessing:**

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for this time together at the beginning of this new year that you have been with us and are with us as promised We pray that you will go with us, protect us, strengthen us, encourage us and give us your joy, your grace, your mercy and your peace which passes all understanding each day and every day, and we say 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.**