



**Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on July 16th 2023 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 being led by Alec who welcomed everyone and read from Psalm 9, verses 1-10**

I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart;

I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.

I will be glad and rejoice in you;

I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.

My enemies turn back;

they stumble and perish before you.

For you have upheld my right and my cause,

sitting enthroned as the righteous judge.

You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked;

you have blotted out their name for ever and ever.

Endless ruin has overtaken my enemies,

you have uprooted their cities;

even the memory of them has perished.

The Lord reigns for ever;

he has established his throne for judgment.

He rules the world in righteousness

and judges the peoples with equity.

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,

a stronghold in times of trouble.

Those who know your name trust in you,

for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.

**Alec then invited all to lift their voices in song, accompanied by Trevor, Kate and Judith.**

Lord, be my vision, supreme in my heart,

bid every rival give way and depart:

you my best thought in the day or the night,

waking or sleeping, your presence my light.

Lord, be my wisdom and be my true word,

I ever with you and you with me, Lord:

you my great father and I your true child,

once far away, but by love reconciled.

Lord, be my breastplate, my sword for the fight:  
be my strong armour, for you are my might;  
you are my shelter, and you my high tower  
raise me to heaven, O Power of my power.

I need no riches, nor earth's empty praise:  
you my inheritance through all my days;  
all of your treasure to me you impart.  
high King of heaven, the first in my heart

High King of heaven, when battle is done,  
grant heaven's joy to me, bright heaven's sun;  
Christ of my own heart, whatever befall  
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Authors: Eleanor Henrietta Hull, Mary Elizabeth Byrne CCLI SONG # 1028365 Copyrights ©1982 The Jubilate Group  
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**Alec asked Tony to share the Notices for the week:** reminding us of the Church Members Meeting at 7.30pm on Tuesday. Wednesday would be the last session of Tiddlywinks for this term, as would Thursday for Orbit. Our usual services would take place next weekend.

**We then spent time together in Praise and worship, singing:**

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.

**How great is our God....**

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Jesus, lead us to the Father,  
by your Spirit, help us draw near.

As we come with awe and gladness,  
help us draw near.

Alleluia, alleluia,  
help us draw near.

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**(This was shown on the screen as we familiarised ourselves with it, that we may sing it as a round together soon!)**

**And finally, also shown on the screen:**

When all I see is the battle, You see my victory.

When all I see is the mountain, You see a mountain moved.

And as I walk through the shadow, Your love surrounds me,  
there's nothing to fear now for I am safe with You,

**So when I fight, I'll fight on my knees with my hands lifted high.**

**Oh God, the battle belongs to You and every fear I lay at Your feet,  
I'll sing through the night.**

**Oh God, the battle belongs to You and if You are for me,**

**who can be against me? (Yeah) for Jesus, there's nothing impossible for You**

When all I see are the ashes, You see the beauty, thank You God.

When all I see is a cross, God, You see the empty tomb.

**So when I fight....**

Almighty fortress, You go before us,  
nothing can stand against the power of our God.

You shine in the shadow, You win every battle,  
nothing can stand against the power of our God,

**So when I fight...**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=johgSkNj3-A>

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**Our Prayers were led by Jane, who began by reading a letter from Victor and Nike, sharing the glad news that they have finally been given the right to remain in this country! Good news indeed.**

**" We thank God for Victor and Nike, Charlotte and Asher, and their trust and persistence through what has been a very long and difficult process."**

**"Let us pray together:**

Our heavenly Father, today we thankfully bring you our praise and worship for being the great God that you are, the only true God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We praise you for the way in which you have enabled and led Victor and Nike over the last five or more years to enable them to be granted permanent settlement in this country. We pray for Nike and the children while Victor completes his studies, asking that you would grant him success and, Lord, in Your time, that they may all be able to return to Blackburn and join us regularly in worship here.

We pray for our world and particularly today about the climate crisis. We hear on the news of the extreme temperatures across much of Europe, America and other places, following on from massive rainfall earlier in the year. Lord, it is Your world, Your creation that is in crisis. We pray that the leaders of all nations would realise the need to take drastic action now, especially those from where the greatest greenhouse gases are emitted. But Lord, please help us to do our part in any way we can by conserving energy, recycling, and not wasting the gifts that you so graciously give us as we live our comfortable lives. We pray for our

government departments and local councils as they try to find new ways of meeting the climate challenges.

Father, we pray too for this area where you have placed this church with all the challenges that the people who live here face: poverty, lack of employment, drug and drink addiction (indicated by the number of empty alcohol bottles regularly dumped in our recycling bin), broken families, violence and intimidation. In Jesus' name, we pray again against the forces of evil that keep people so trapped. We pray that by Your Holy Spirit, you would invade this area with your love and peace and joy and turn people's lives around as they come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Father, help us to see what you are doing and enable us to join in and be your ears and eyes, hands and feet. Change our hearts of stone into compassionate hearts able to respond to your prompting, to pray, to love and to speak as we are able. Lord, we would ask that you would surround this church, people and building, with your protection that your work will not be hindered. We pray also for our church Members' Meeting on Tuesday evening, that You will be there with us, guiding our thoughts, prayers and discussions, as we continue to seek Your way forward for our fellowship, that all may be said and done to give glory and honour to Your name.

We lift before You, our Lord and God, those of our friends and families who continue in difficult circumstances due to grief, ill- health, work pressures, and life stresses. Enable them to know Your peace and loving arms surrounding them as they put their trust in You. To close, a Celtic prayer of St. Patrick: **The Protection of Christ:**

**Christ as a light, Illumine and guide me! Christ as a shield overshadow and cover me!  
Christ be under me! Christ be over me! Christ be beside me, on left hand and right!  
Christ be before me, behind me, about me!  
Christ, this day, be within me and without me!**

**Amen"**

**Brenda came to read from the Bible: Joel 2 27-32**

"Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.

### **The day of the Lord**

'And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls."

**Alec shared his Message EMPOWERMENT (2)"I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT"**

Last Sunday thank God we had a great day here at BBC, a wonderful day, an amazing day. We came together as a fellowship of believers to share in Shay`s baptism. What a great joy! Shay was baptised in

the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit who empowers us as believers and as the Body of Christ in our lives and ministry.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead but he is not third-class. The work of the Spirit in Creation is described right at the beginning of the Bible in the book of beginnings which is known as Genesis in 1:1-2 like this:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

The Holy Spirit of God was and is and will be.

We have heard many times in the last few weeks about our being the people of God, the fellowship of God's people, the Body of the Lord, about being and living together in God through Jesus Christ.

We are not the first church and not the largest. But we may learn, indeed we should learn from what God did with His people before anyone of us was around on the earth which our loving God created and sustains.

There is no letter in the New Testament written by Paul or Peter, by John or James addressed to the believers in the churches in Blackburn; there is not even an email or a recorded text message in our direction. But in both the Old and New Testaments there are true historical accounts of how God has cared for people like us, for HIS people in the past. Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through not giving up and the encouragement of God's Word we can have hope. Maybe we do not understand what hope is until we are discouraged and in despair.

So like in the Old Testament book of Numbers we read that some time ago God's people had become slaves in Egypt. God heard their cries for help and in God's kindness, mercy and grace He brought them out of captivity into freedom. If you have read the script carefully you will know that God made a way for them through the Red Sea in which the Egyptian army which followed them was destroyed.

God had made an agreement with His people saying “You will be my people and I will be your God.” He then led them through the desert on the way to the land He had promised to give them, a land that flowed with milk and honey. On their way through the desert God miraculously provided food for His people.

But God's people were not happy. They complained in the hearing of the Lord about their hardships. You get the feel of their complaints in Numbers 11:4-6.

Moses, God's chosen leader of the people of God, gets to the point where he has just about had enough of these people who are so difficult to lead. Read Numbers 11:11-14

Moses was under a lot of stress as his reactions showed. He has had just about enough of these people.

The Lord is very compassionate towards him, and he tells Moses to gather 70 men from among the elders of Israel and says to Moses-Numbers 11:17.

So now through the wonderful promise of God Moses has some helpers; but you know what? The people now complained about the helpers. The Spirit had been given to two men, Eldad and Medad (Numbers 11:26), and they were prophesying. But the people complained. How did Moses respond? Numbers 11:29

Here are these people who say they have faith in God and call themselves followers of the Lord. They are habitual complainers, self-absorbed, thoroughly ungrateful for the blessings of God that they continue to receive every day. But putting godly elders over them was not a solution to the problem.

Do you like nursery rhymes? What is your favourite nursery rhyme? Maybe you are familiar with this one?

“Mary, Mary, quite contrary; how does your garden grow?”

Some people just enjoy being contrary.

Sometimes I myself have been guilty of this. I remember when I was studying theology I had to lead a seminar on the authorship of the Gospel of Mark. This is almost about as easy and straightforward a question to answer as when someone asks you “Who wrote Beethoven’s fifth symphony?” So I proceeded to try and demonstrate that Mark’s Gospel was written by Barnabas. I don’t think anybody was either convinced or impressed.

Some people just like running up the down escalator or taking the opposite view in a discussion or whatever. In Isaiah’s Jerusalem the situation was much more serious than this. Instead of loving God they were defying Him; instead of loving their neighbour they were crushing the poor. So through the prophet Isaiah God told them that He was withdrawing His support for them. The people will have no food he said, no water, no-one capable of leadership and no dignity. They will lose everything, like the poor they exploited. Their shame will be complete. As captives they may be even paraded unwashed, unshaved, bound, branded and shaven-headed. Prized possessions and proud appearance will count for nothing. Our status symbols can become our condemnation, our judgement. Is there any hope?

Moses very probably spoke the words of verse 29 with a huge sigh: “The only hope for this group would be if God gave his Spirit to every single one of them. If they were all filled with the Spirit, they wouldn’t be constantly complaining, self-absorbed, and ungrateful! If only...” Moses probably felt deeply that to stop the people of God behaving or tending to behave like an unruly rabble each one of them, each one of them, would need to be constantly filled together with the Holy Spirit of God.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was given to some, not to all. God poured out the Spirit on some people who were called to particular tasks.

Craftsmen (Bezalel)	Exodus 31:1-5
Judges (Othniel)	Judges 3:7-11
Warriors (Gideon)	Judges 6:33-35
Prophets (Messengers of Saul)	1 Samuel 19:18-21
Kings (David)	Psalms 51:11

The Spirit of God was poured out on a chosen few.

So now we come back to our reading from Joel which Brenda took for us so helpfully today. Some of you will have noticed that the first verse that Brenda read this morning is the same verse that Jane completed the Bible reading with last week; that is Joel 2:27.

That is neither an accident nor a mistake. It is deliberate.

Think what we said a few moments ago about the people of God in Isaiah’s time that they would be under judgement and their shame would be complete. And now look at Joel 2:27!

Never again will my people be shamed!

And afterwards says God, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.” Joel 2:28-29 (ESV)

God says, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. All people! Not a privileged few. All of God’s people!”

Joel explains exactly what this means: "Sons and daughters:"

The gift of the spirit will not be limited by gender.

"Old men and young men:" The gift of the Spirit will not be limited by age.

"Servants:" The gift of the Spirit will not be limited by social status.

Notice what God says will happen when the Spirit is poured out:

1) Your sons and daughters shall prophesy

We might understand that to prophesy is to be prompted by God to speak the right word at the right time in the right way. Many of us know about this from our own experience. Someone said something that was exactly what we needed to hear, and we knew that God had brought this about. It may have been a very young person who said it and that may have surprised us.

One man of God has said, "The most dynamic one-to-one evangelists in my congregation are those who ask for and receive the gift of prophecy. They do not have canned monologues to bore people. Rather, they know how to listen, to care, to empathize with love. The Spirit gives them insight about what to say, the timing for when to say it, and boldness to be honest, personal and incisive in helping people to respond."

In 1 Cor. 12:29 we read "are all prophets?" This seems to be a rhetorical question and that this is usually taken to mean, no of course we aren't all prophets. For today I want simply to say that the Spirit of God now lives in all believers and different gifts are given to us in the Body of Christ so that the Body of Christ can be built up perfectly. We are not all legs or arms. In the grace and mercy of God we have different roles and different gifts for the benefit and building up of us all together and to the glory and honour of our God, who is to be praised forever.

The gift of prophecy is a wonderful gift; it is of massive importance across the life and ministry of a church. I pour out my Spirit upon all flesh and the result will be that across the congregation there will be this ability to minister and to speak and to do this very humbly and not to assume that every time we say something it is from the Lord but to allow it to be tested by others to judge and to discern if that is what we needed to hear.

Then we read, "Your old men shall dream dreams."

When the most elderly people in the church have great confidence in what God can do on earth, and great anticipation of what God has prepared in heaven, it is one of the great evidences of the pouring out of the Spirit. Those of us here who have been part of God's fellowship here for decades and know that though we are physically maybe no longer in a position to perform the tasks in the Body of Christ that we so faithfully and through God's grace so fruitfully carried out again and again; what do you do? We pray! And God answers your prayers. We humbled and continue to humble ourselves before God for the sake of His Name, His Glory and His honour that He will bring workers into the harvest that is ripe, that He will bring gifted and experienced workers into this church, that He will create a balanced age and gender profile in this church and continue to bind us together in a fellowship of forgiveness and love and you know what? He is continuing to answer your prayers. You may be a former leader of the Ladies Afternoon Meeting wondering why you are still on the earth and God says to you are here for this purpose-to pray.

Then we read, "Your young men will see visions."

When we are young life comes towards at an amazing speed-new media, new music, new drugs, new everything.

But there are young people who see through all this. Young people who see visions that God is giving to them, for these young people things of eternal value, things of genuinely lasting value matter. They see beyond the flashing screen. They see through the trivia and shallowness that is like an ocean all around them. They have a passion to glorify God, and to make a difference in the world. You may be young here this morning but God has given you a vision. A vision to live for Him, a vision to follow Him, a vision to speak of Jesus Christ who has set you free and longs to set others free. Hold on to the visions God gives to you and don't allow yourselves to be discouraged.

**We joined together in song once more, again accompanied by Trevor, Kate and Judith, in our Closing (offertory) hymn**

Holy Spirit, living breath of God, breathe new life into my willing soul.  
Let the presence of the risen Lord, come renew my heart and make me whole.  
Cause Your Word to come alive in me; give me faith for what I cannot see,  
give me passion for Your purity; Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within, may Your joy be seen in all I do.  
Love enough to cover every sin, in each thought and deed and attitude.  
Kindness to the greatest and the least, gentleness that sows the path of peace.  
Turn my strivings into works of grace; Breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth, giving life to all that God has made,  
Show Your power once again on earth, cause Your church to hunger for your ways.  
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise; lead us on the road of sacrifice,  
that in unity the face of Christ may be clear for all the world to see.

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**Alec led a prayer of thanksgiving:**

"Loving heavenly Father, we thank you once again for all the good gifts that you give us and will continue to give us. We will never be shamed, for You are the living God, thank you for all the gifts given, by whatever means, I ask you to bless them for the sake of your Son and for his kingdom. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

**We closed as we said to one another:**

**To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen.**



Letter from Victor and Nike:

Dear Pastor Alec,

15-07-23

I trust this letter finds you in good health and high spirits.

I'm writing to you today with a heart that's brimming with joy, and a spirit that's soaring higher than Blackburn Rovers at their peak. If we could ring the bells of Blackburn Baptist Church in celebration, we would!

Our long journey through the winding labyrinth of the asylum appeal process has reached its joyful conclusion. We have emerged, not only victorious but stronger and more thankful than ever. And it's not just a matter of legal triumph but one of immense personal growth, gratitude, and affirmation of faith.

You, Pastor Alec, have been an unwavering source of strength and support throughout these challenging times. Your prayers and kind words often served as our guiding star in the darkest of nights, giving us hope and strength to persist. Your tireless advocacy and ceaseless faith have been nothing short of miraculous.

I must say, your support was like the miraculous feeding of the five thousand – it seemed to multiply just when we needed it the most. And while I can't claim to have mastered walking on water (yet!), I can assert that your guidance has helped us navigate the stormy seas with courage and resilience.

I want to extend my deepest gratitude not only to you but also to the entire congregation of Blackburn Baptist Church. We have felt the warmth and compassion of this wonderful community every step of the way.

Thank you for being such an integral part of our journey, Pastor Alec. You have not only been our pastor but also our friend, mentor, and guardian angel.

In the spirit of Psalm 9:1, "I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds." I am sharing this joyous news with you and everyone in our beloved church.

Please continue to uplift those in need with your unwavering faith, profound wisdom, and heartfelt compassion. As we step into this new chapter of our lives, we carry with us the lessons learned and strength gained from your guidance.

With deepest gratitude and warmest regards,

Victor