



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on July 4th 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. We still plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, and will continue to provide this written service sheet for those unable to attend Bethesda. 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.

We continue our studies entitled; "Encouragement in Hard Times", and our worship today is led by Colin, **who welcomes us all, wherever we are**. He begins by sharing his obvious excitement at the result of the football match the previous night, England's victory meaning they now play in the semifinal of Euro 2020! The weather couldn't dampen his spirits. He continued:

Psalm 19 states 'the heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands, Day after day they pour forth speech, Night after night they display knowledge"

If we come to Colin's garden, he's not sure what message we'd get! He has roses, and a climbing plant - identified by the congregation as clematis, which is glorious at the moment, Colin says plants do speak to you, even if you're not Prince Charles holding a full conversation, but they say God is glorious. We all delight to see a beautiful, well tended garden, perhaps reminding us of the garden of Eden. Day after day, particularly at this time of year, they pour forth speech.

We have a marvellous hymn to begin with, It was heard at the Billy Graham Crusades, popularised by George Beverly Shea. It is a favourite of Anne Thomas and was sung at Frank's Thanksgiving service. At Bethesda we have a more up-to-date version to watch on the screen, and at home you can sing as loudly as you like!

Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee:
'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee:
'How great Thou art, how great Thou art.'

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;

when I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur
and see the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

Then sings my soul....

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Then sings my soul....

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart;
then I shall bow, in humble adoration
and then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art

Then sings my soul...

Songwriter: Stuart Hine

How Great Thou Art lyrics © 1949 Sony/ATV Tree Publishing, Universal Music Publishing, I Am They Publishing, Manna Music Inc
CCL no 5664

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GKhDCsLrUg>

Colin leads us in Prayer

Our Loving Heavenly Father, how great Thou art! You are our magnificent God and Your name is great in all the earth. You spoke the worlds into being and stretched out the heavens by the might of Your great power. You have established Your strength from everlasting to everlasting, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. We are surrounded at this time of year by the beauty of your Creation.

You looked down in mercy and grace upon us, and sent the eternal Son of Your love to visit us and redeem us. We rejoice in Your gracious love and great compassion, and we joy in you, the God of our Salvation. We sing Your praises this morning, for You alone are worthy to be praised and worshipped.

How excellent is Your wonderful name in all the earth, and how majestic are the works of Your hand. Open our eyes to see You more. Open our ears to hear Your still small voice, and open our hearts to worship You more and more so that we may grow in grace and in a knowledge of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whose name we pray, Amen.

Colin shares the Notices: reminding us to follow the guidelines as we leave, social distancing etc, and inviting us to join the Zoom Coffee at 1pm today, and the Zoom prayer meeting on Thursday at 7.30pm.

He then leads us in a time of Communion

We come before this communion table today with the words of Psalm 34:8, *O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. [If you are watching this*

later at home, you may wish to reserve for yourself a piece of bread and some wine or juice or even water to drink]

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.' (John 6.35)

- I hold this bread up for all to see because as the Bread of Life, he became flesh and dwelt among us and the disciples beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. You see, Jesus came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him – his Heavenly Father. And the will of the Father is that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life; and he will raise them up at the last day.
- I break this bread because as the Bread of Life he was broken for us on the Cross. He was the Lamb of God, chosen to bear away the sin of the world, to be the sacrificial offering for my sin and your sin, for we are all sinners before God and worthy of his condemnation. Indeed, we acknowledge our failings of this past week and ask him to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And so through faith we now see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, because he by the grace of God tasted death for us all.
- And, finally, I pass this bread for us to share because through faith we have partaken of the Bread of Life and have eternal life. We bring our praise and thanksgivings to our Saviour God through this act of remembrance and long to proclaim the gospel-blessings of his death until either we are taken or he comes again. Either way we look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God as King of kings and Lord of lords.

So let us eat of this bread and rejoice, thanking God for the forgiveness that is ours in Christ.

In the same way, He took the cup saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'

In the sin of Adam we are all separated from our Creator God, but in the faithfulness of Jesus, the New Adam, we can all find forgiveness. His blood was shed so that we can be saved, for we have not been redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus, as a lamb without blemish or spot. This red wine speaks of his shed blood and his perfect sin-offering.

Therefore, this cup speaks of a communion restored, that through faith in Christ we have been brought into a new and living relationship with God. In his high priestly prayer, Jesus states: 'I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.' We look forward in anticipation, in eager expectation, to that time when symbol will give way

to sight and we will be glorified in our Saviour, for we will be like him and we will see him as he is in all his majesty and glory.

And so we drink this wine together, to declare the truth that through his Spirit we are one in Christ, and that no barriers or barricades should come between us. Amen.

We now lift our hearts in song, and may wish to join in with the actions as at Bethesda we watch a video of Doug Horley leading us in 'May the God of hope'. Of course if you are at home, you can do any actions you find helpful, or simply read the words aloud or silently.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him, as you trust in him.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him, as you trust in him.

So that you might overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
so that you might overflow with hope, with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Father God I love you, Father God I trust you,
Father God I need you every day .
Fill me with your hope Lord, fill me with your joy Lord,
fill me with your peace, let your love flow.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him, as you trust in him.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him, as you trust in him.

So that you might overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
so that you might overflow with hope, with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Doug Horley)

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CCL No 5664

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

Hywel now reads Isaiah 12, 1-6, from the Good News Translation.

Hymn of Thanksgiving

A day is coming when people will sing,

“I praise you, Lord! You were angry with me,
but now you comfort me and are angry no longer.

God is my Saviour;

I will trust him and not be afraid.
The Lord gives me power and strength;
he is my Saviour.
As fresh water brings joy to the thirsty,
so God's people rejoice when he saves them."
A day is coming when people will sing,
"Give thanks to the Lord! Call for him to help you!
Tell all the nations what he has done!
Tell them how great he is!
Sing to the Lord because of the great things he has done.
Let the whole world hear the news.
Let everyone who lives in Zion shout and sing!
Israel's holy God is great,
and he lives among his people."

Our Prayers of Intercession are now led by Jean W

"Let's turn our thoughts to prayer:

Heavenly Father you are faithful and good. We thank you for your promises to us - to give us hope and a future. Thank you for the assurance of the Holy Spirit telling us that you have come to us in Jesus Christ with the free gifts of forgiveness and life.

Forgive us for our failings and weaknesses, for our pessimism, wrong thoughts and deeds especially when we know all you have done and continue to do in our lives. You have said 'I will guide you along the best pathways for your life, I will advise you and watch over you'. Lord help us to trust and obey your Word - to seek your way forward for our lives and your church.

We pray for your wonderful world and are sorry for how we have treated it. Lord you have a special love for the powerless - please give your strength to those who are weak. Let those in war torn countries know they have not been abandoned by you, even if their leaders seem to have forgotten them. Give courage to those Christians around the world who are not free to worship you openly but must be secretive.

Father please be with the government and leaders of our country. Give them wisdom, integrity, and compassion when they make the decisions that will affect so many lives. The lives of so many have been affected by the pandemic. It is still a cause for anxiousness, it might be due to the illness itself, but it could be the isolation of those living on their own, the fear of starting to go out again and mixing with others, it could be the worry about jobs and possible redundancies and all the frightening consequences that this brings. For those who don't know you as their Lord and saviour it must be so much harder for as a believer we know we can put all our worries on You knowing you love and care for us.

We pray for our families and friends and especially for young people that they may grow up knowing love and hope, valuing life and respecting others. We pray for those who are about to leave school and move on to the next stage in their lives.

Lord please be with the leaders of our town. Again help them to make wise decisions for all its citizens. May they make careful decisions on the way the budget is spent taking care of the weak and vulnerable.

Heavenly Father we bring to you our concerns for our church family. Help those who will be under medical care this week & those facing isolation or surgery. Grant them peace and protection & the faith. Grant skill to the hands of those who heal and patience too as older minds and bodies sometimes take longer to process information and react. You know the names of those who need your extra care and love you know their needs. Please give them your Grace to cope with the daily worries and problems that they face. We thank you for the dedication and time that Alec our Pastor and deacons spend in making sure that all the legal requirements are addressed and brought up to date and dealing with all the other concerns that need to be looked at, and we pray for the future deacons elections.

We pray for the Worldwide Church and for the Churches here in Blackburn, asking for your help to grow in faith. Help us also to respect the beliefs of others even if we do not share them, to celebrate what we have in common and accept our differences. Guide us as we live each day determined to spread the Good News of your son Jesus Christ.

Faithful God we pray for ourselves; as we go from our worship today to start the week ahead, we ask that in all we do, may we walk more closely with you at our side safe in the knowledge that your Fatherly love and care knows no bounds.

Father we ask that you accept these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ your son.....Amen."

Those at Bethesda are now able to watch a Video of Michael McIntyre (not Colin's favourite comedian!), as he meets a fortune teller in June 2019, predicting 2020!! If you have internet access and wish to watch, here is the link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LEr_84HJbgk

The video gave an introduction to Colin's Message: Trusting God in uncertain times.

Encouragement in Hard Times

"We are living in hard times, in times of uncertainty, when the crisis of Covid 19 has shaken our society to its core, and we are now faced with many challenges on a personal level,

whether because of illness, work-related difficulties, problems to do with citizenship, or family worries.

You see, if you are, say, under the age of 80, you belong to a generation that has never known great hardship as a society, when compared with my father's generation, which went through the Great Depression of the 1920s and 30s and then through the war years with its food-shortages and rationing.

And yet for the first time since last March, we have suffered a pandemic that has turned our world upside down in a way we have never known before. Okay, we have not suffered, particularly, from food shortages; our supermarkets have remained more or less fully stocked once all the panic buying calmed down. There has been some rationing. But the biggest curtailment has been in relation to our rights as a free society. Many of the freedoms to do with movement and association, family get-togethers and entertainment, including those to do with meeting in churches, have been curtailed by the government in its attempts to bring the coronavirus under control. The numbers that could gather for funerals and marriages were a mockery of human compassion and celebration. No embracing or hugging; no shaking of hands, singing, or dining. And the cost of furloughing people for so long will be felt by the younger generations for decades to come.

All these restrictions has led, according to the stats to unprecedeted levels of anxiety and stress, isolation and loneliness, worry and concern, from which Christians are neither immune nor exempt, nor should they be, for if the Mystery of the Incarnation teaches us anything it is that the Son of God became as we are in order to share the lows as well as the highs of this earthly pilgrimage.

Trusting God in Uncertain Times

KEY VERSE: Isaiah 12.2 (GNB) – ‘God is my Saviour; I will trust him and not be afraid’ How should we respond in these unprecedeted times?

I have four headings for us to reflect on

1. Live a life of desire towards God

The Psalms have many things to say about a person's life being directed towards God. One of the greatest is Psalm 42, which states '*As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*' After a chase, having escaped the claws of its predator, the deer looks for the water brooks to refresh itself and to quench its thirst. We live at a time when life for the Christian in the UK, and in the modern world in general, has never been more distracting and challenging. We can no longer assume that people believe in a Creator God, let alone in the Christian faith. At the same time, we are surrounded by people who are happy to lie and cheat their way through life. We put the television on and watch the news and we discover that even those in power over us live lives that are so utterly removed from the standards that are presented

to us in the Scriptures and were once taken for granted as the basic norms of human behaviour. And on top of all this, we have fallen under the Covid curse just like everyone else, with all the concerns this brings.

So, where do we go to find spiritual refreshment? Where do we find rest for our souls? Do we seek our Saviour God, or do we seek out other, more secular, alternatives to find peace for our inner selves, that calm and contentment that is so elusive?

The danger is, you see, that we may place Christ in a box marked ‘Open only in Case of Emergencies’ and then hope that we may never have to open it, or if we have to that he will work his magic in those times of difficulty, but for the rest of the time we are quite happy to deal with life’s problems in our own way, without heaven’s help.

Yet Christ is the guardian of our souls. Psalm 23 states: *‘The LORD is my shepherd I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul.’* Do we really believe this or do we think it’s just a nice bit of poetry? You see, Christ has your and my best interests at heart, but he never barges into our lives; we have to ask him, prayerfully, to provide us with the water of life, as Jesus told that Samaritan woman beside Jacob’s well, so that we can drink of that living water and never thirst, especially when we consider that we live in a world that is suffering from a spiritual drought and famine.

2. Live a life of delight in God

Happiness is one of the goals of life that all humans share. All people yearn to be happy, don’t they? But all too often, it is an ideal, a hope and dream, and rarely a reality of life, as the figures for stress and anxiety, depression and sadness make clear. The world tells us that happiness can be achieved through the material things of life, and yet Jesus said, ‘Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions, no matter how rich a person may be.’

Like so many of the qualities that contribute to the vitality of our human life, happiness is ultimately a spiritual quality, and it is only at this level that people can find true peace and joy, and a sense of inner well-being that will sustain them in difficult times. The gospel is good-news and it should never cease to be good-news for the Christian even after many years of owning the title of ‘Christian’. Because there is a blessedness in the relationship with Christ that yields a delight that transcends what the world has to offer. Blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven, whose sin is covered, says the Psalmist. For you have shown me the path of life; in your presence is fulness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

3. Live a life of dependence on God

We live in the age of entitlement: we expect the shelves of the supermarkets to be full; we expect to be treated when we ring the doctor with a medical problem; we expect the Council to clear away our rubbish. We expect things to happen, because they always have,

like the rising of the sun in a morning. We have rights and others have responsibilities towards us. As a result, we have, I feel, lost the art of being grateful and thankful for the mercies that surround us each day. When was the last time that we truly thanked someone for their help and forbearance. I don't mean a quick 'thanks' like we do, but a genuine thank you very much with an expression that highlights why you feel a sense of gratitude towards them. Of the ten lepers who were cleansed by Jesus, only one returned to Jesus after being healed to thank him and to give glory to God – and he was a foreigner, we are told, a Samaritan.

Ultimately, we depend on God for everything that we are and have. Every new day is a mercy, an expression of his faithfulness toward us. Trusting God means that we look to him at all times, regardless of our situation and circumstances. 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him' was Job's response to the terrible tragedy and suffering he experienced, especially when his wife and friends accused him falsely of being a hypocrite, a cheat and a liar. 'Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.' This is hard, for I have a sneaking suspicion that as Christians we think we should be on the receiving end of only good things, for after all, we have trusted him for salvation. This is one of the fatal flaws of the Arminian position, for in truth God chose us in Christ and not us who chose him; and so we are his, and we are at the centre of his love.

Our lives should be lived in the love and forgiveness of God, and in the embrace of his mercies. Yes, we have responsibilities before our Lord, and he will allow things to happen to us at times that we may not be able to understand, and yet our response should be one of trust – for he is our heavenly Father.

4. Live a life of devotedness to God

The 4th of the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 states: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.' As we said in our Communion celebration, Jesus is the Bread of life; outside of him there is nothing that can sustain us, or fill us, spiritually – nothing to feed our souls - either in this life or for the life to come. Righteousness is ultimately about having a right relationship with God, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the pure in heart who will see God, according to the 6th Beatitude. And we cannot hope to be pure in heart if we only devote part of ourselves to Christ, and keep our best bits, we might think, to ourselves and our own aspirations. For we are called to present ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. We are priests, and dedication to our priesthood is, Paul goes on to say in Romans 12, our acceptable service. Please don't misunderstand. I'm not saying that we only do Christly things when we do churchly things. What I'm saying is that everything we do, or choose to do, on a day-to-day basis should be done in a Spirit of christliness. That is, we live our lives not in conformity with the principles of this world, but through the principles of christlikeness, because our hearts and minds have been renewed in Christ. We have been chosen and transformed to demonstrate to the world the goodness of Christ.

In conclusion, we must not become weary in the race. The Christian life is not a sprint; we are in a marathon. Like all long-distance running it requires careful preparation and planning if we seek to win – and in this race we can all be winners, for each one of us has a goal that Christ has set for us to achieve. And so let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin (or weakness) that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

We bring our service to close as we watch, listen or read the words to: “He will hold me fast”. This version was sung by EMU music at the Virtual Keswick Convention last year.

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast;
when the tempter would prevail, He will hold me fast.
I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path;
for my love is often cold; He must hold me fast.

He will hold me fast, He will hold me fast;
for my Saviour loves me so, He will hold me fast.

Those He saves are His delight, Christ will hold me fast;
precious in His holy sight, He will hold me fast.
He'll not let my soul be lost; His promises shall last;
bought by Him at such a cost, He will hold me fast.

He will hold me fast....

For my life He bled and died, Christ will hold me fast;
justice has been satisfied; He will hold me fast.
Raised with Him to endless life, He will hold me fast
'til our faith is turned to sight when He comes at last!

He will hold me fast....

Words: vv. 1-2 Ada Habershon (1861-1918), Public Domain.

Alt. words, new words (v.3), and music: Matthew Merker

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhcBExh8Qeo>

Colin invites us all to join together saying The Grace:

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.

(We were planning to share refreshments and sing in the church garden, but the rain came tumbling down - another week, weather permitting!)

Join us in the NWBA Season of Prayer:

Thursday 8th July 2021

Grove Lane Baptist Church, Cheadle Hulme

For discernment for a good way ahead.

Lumb Baptist Church, Rossendale

Ask God to guide us in our search for a new minister and the future ministry of our church.

Friday 9th July 2021

Harpurhey Community Church, North Manchester

For power and motivation to continue to share the gospel message.

Llanelwy Community Church, St Asaph, Denbighshire

Please pray that God will guide us in unity as we once again shine the light of Jesus into the heart of our community, and that we will love each other, as He has loved us.

Saturday 10th July 2021

Astley Bridge Baptist Church, Bolton

That the current fellowship will return and newcomers will join us

Greenfield Baptist and Congregational Church, Urmston, Manchester

Thanking God for His faithfulness towards us throughout the lockdown, asking Him to show us the next steps as we move out of lockdown.

Sunday 11th July 2021

Hill Cliffe Baptist Church, Appleton, Warrington

May your kingdom come and your will be done - at Hill Cliffe and in our community - as it is in heaven

Stanley Road Baptist Church, Morecambe

May God speak to us in the space we make this summer:

- in the space that our pastor Steven has during his sabbatical
- in the space that our assistant pastor Mark has to develop his ministry
- in the space that we all have to consider how we share God's love in the future

Monday 12th July 2021

Astley Christian Fellowship, Manchester

The Fellowship needs God's wisdom for 1) a new form of Leadership and 2) a way forward, based on our ethos of The Priesthood of all Believers. To this end, in coming weeks, there will be an announcement that there will be an open meeting to address the Fellowship along these lines, then the meeting itself a week later. The idea is to include church members, people who've met on Zoom at Sunday services and Bible Studies and folk who we don't see on Zoom, or those who are still shielding or with other interests in the work of the church alike.

Moreton Baptist Church, Wirral

That we will have wisdom, understanding vision and courage for the changes that are coming

Tuesday 13th July 2021

Blackburn Baptist Church

Our church building is located in the middle of Blackburn in Galligreaves bordering Wensleyfold. When we moved here several years ago it was our understanding that the Lord wanted us to reach specifically into these two areas. This is a challenge for what has up to now been basically a commuter church from Blackburn with Darwen and Ribble

Valley. Please pray with us as we seek to develop and apply strategies to reach these areas in line with our church vision.

Widnes Baptist Church, Cheshire

We would value prayer for guidance and Godly wisdom as we consider our way forward and our reopening.

Pray that we would hear what God is saying to us in these challenging times.

Pray that God would equip us to meet the needs of new people that join us.

Wednesday 14th July 2021

Broadway Baptist Church, Isle of Man

Pray with us that people sharing in our livestreams and “Sunday Live” services would become committed and connected Jesus followers.

We have sensed God’s challenge to prayerfully kindle the embers of a small trickle of people finding faith in Jesus and asking for baptism. Please pray with us for this.

Please pray for the work of Graih, homeless drop-in and night shelter.

Waterloo United Free Church, Merseyside

Prayers for our future direction as a church and guidance as our Minister moves on at the end of July, for wisdom in our decision making. Pray for us as we continue to make links with the community, re-starting events and engaging with partners Age Concern and the Salvation Army to serve and support people in the local community.

Thursday 15th July 2021

Bury Baptist Church

For our Church as we plan a ‘drop in’ centre, to create a hub at the heart of our community, where we believe our God wants us to be. We pray that God will guide us that we may discern his will and serve him as best we can.

For our Minister Paul. Paul has just completed his second year of his Ministry in Training at college. As he enters his third and final year of studies, we pray that God will continue to support and guide him and his family and bless his ministry with us.

We hope you'll be able to join us for virtual fellowship:

Sundays at 1pm, Meeting ID: 962 5576 8258, Passcode: 491306.

Prayer meeting on Thursdays at 7.30pm. Meeting ID: 923 9680 7071, Passcode: 411034

Its very easy to join on the phone, and it would be lovely to hear your voices again!

Just ring 02034 815237, then use the ID and password as above when you are prompted.