



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on May 23rd 2021 at 10:45, meeting once more at Bethesda Chapel, on Pentecost Sunday.

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.

Alec welcomes us:

"Good morning everybody and a very warm welcome to this warm Bethesda on this very special day. Isn't it good to be here this morning? I'm very pleased to be back here in Blackburn but this morning is a very special day. Is there anybody here this morning who's had a birthday in May? (someone indicates yes!). Today's birthday if I'm allowed to talk about another one is the birthday of the church, not Blackburn Baptist Church or Leamington Road Baptist Church or Bethesda chapel but the birthday of the church, God's church. Why do I say that? Because on this Sunday Pentecost Sunday, the day the spirit came down on the disciples in Jerusalem was really in the first sense of the word the beginning of the church. So really we could have a celebration and a party and get the balloons going and some appropriate drink and food as well and sing from our hearts. So I think you've come this morning to a birthday party, is that what you wanted? And the people who are missing it this morning, they can still get here if they are quick, we still have one or two seats open, vacant. It's really nice to see you all, thanks to Paul, who has the camera and to Debbie with the sound and PowerPoint at the back.

Some long time ago I got invited to a meeting where George Verwer was going to speak, maybe that rings a bell with some of you, it was quite a long time ago and I had never seen or heard George Verwer but I think I had read one of his books, I think it was called *Come, Live, Die*, and if you write a book called *Come Live Die* and you are a Christian and you hear about it, you think well that might be interesting to see what he looks like and what he talks about, whether he is still with us or not and he's actually 83 years of age now, but I thought I'd like to go. So I went and I wasn't disappointed and I don't think you would have been either. But at the beginning of the meeting he said something like this: I'm really pleased to be with you this evening in Ipswich, and I'm sure that the Lord has got something to say to each one of us and to all of us. And I listened and it was true, the Lord did have something to say, he had

something to say to me, and to everybody there as well. There was only one thing he said that was wrong. My wife says that I usually find at least one thing that doesn't fit when someone speaks but in this case it was just one thing that he said that I thought was definitely wrong. And I was right that he was wrong, if you see what I mean because we weren't in Ipswich, we were in Reading! Well he didn't know where he was, but it didn't matter. So whether we are in Blackburn today or in Germany or in Australia or Vienna or wherever we are listening and sharing, or watching and sharing in this service, what really matters it's not where we are, though it's really good to be here in the chapel, but that we have God speaking to us and that our ears are open to hear what he is saying to us, to understand what he is speaking to us. And that's what I pray in our meeting today.

I've chosen John 14 verse one as our introductory verse which is probably behind me on the screen already: **"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me."**

That's really meaningful isn't it because there are so many things we can worry about and think about and really deeply be troubled about, not just in the time of the pandemic but at any time, God says do not let, do not allow, your hearts to be troubled, trusting in God, trust also in me. And we're going to start our service with singing, 'Come behold the wondrous mystery'. No I know we can't actually sing, but God can hear us singing in our heart, isn't that wonderful, no one can record the decibels of our heart, but God can hear us, so we sing from our hearts the **song 'Come behold the wondrous mystery'**, and let there be joy in heaven as well when they hear us singing."

Come behold the wondrous mystery
in the dawning of the King,
he the theme of heaven's praises
robed in frail humanity.
In our longing, in our darkness
now the light of life has come,
look to Christ, who condescended,
took on flesh to ransom us.

Come behold the wondrous mystery,
he the perfect Son of Man,
in his living, in his suffering,
never trace nor stain of sin.
See the true and better Adam
come to save the hell-bound man,
Christ the great and sure fulfilment
of the law; in him we stand.

Come behold the wondrous mystery,
Christ the Lord upon the tree,
in the stead of ruined sinners
hangs the Lamb in victory.
See the price of our redemption,
see the Father's plan unfold,
bringing many sons to glory,
grace unmeasured, love untold.

Come behold the wondrous mystery,
slain by death the God of life,
but no grave could e'er restrain him,
praise the Lord; he is alive!
What a foretaste of deliverance,
how unwavering our hope,
Christ in power resurrected,
as we will be when he comes

(What a foretaste of deliverance,
how unwavering our hope,
Christ in power resurrected,
as we will be when he comes)

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Alec says: As our opening prayer I'm going to read the words of a very familiar hymn which were not able to sing or even show on the screen because of copyright laws. So let's pray together:

O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your church with life and pow'r;
O Breath of Life, come, cleanse, renew us,
and fit your church to meet this hour.

O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your tenderness remake us,
revive, restore, for this we plead.

O Breath of love, come breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart;
come, Love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive your church in ev'ry part.

O Heart of Christ, once broken for us,
'tis there we find our strength and rest;
our broken, contrite hearts now solace,
and let your waiting church be blest.

Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating
while harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
equip your church to spread the light.
Amen.

Alec then shares the notices for the week: "In the coming week on Wednesday morning at 9:30 till about 1130 for the seventh time we have the Tiddlywinks group, perhaps you don't know what the Tiddlywinks group does? If you want to find out you can google on the church page where it says Tiddlywinks on the link will find it, it's very interesting there's about 25 people that come every week, mostly under fives and their mothers which is great fun and very lively and it's full up again, it's always booked at the very latest by Monday. But this week is the last one before half term holiday so the 2nd of June it won't take place but this week on Wednesday at 9:30, the tiddlywinks group, mothers and toddlers, it's really great fun and we can pray for those as well. And then on Sunday next week we'll have our usual service of worship here at 10:45, and I anticipate that in line with the leadership team decision, this will be the last livestreaming for the present time at least, we will still be recording the services but if I'm correct next week will be the last live streaming at the present time. So we are looking forward to coming again next week if we can. Now on Tuesday in a week, this is an Advance notice for the 1st of June at 7:30 in the evening there will be a meeting of the RISE group, a RISE prayer meeting at 7:30 pm on June 1 Tuesday. The codes for this meeting are not put on the screen and they are not hanging in the entrance porch either. If you want to know what those codes are please ask one of the deacons and we will get some to you, they are not to be publicised (not for general public). And then there is another meeting a week later than that, on Tuesday, June 8 at 7:30 pm there will be a church members meeting, God willing, in this church in this meeting hall here. Plus our normal prayer meetings deacons meetings, coffee meetings, chat meetings and everything else, if you need more information on any of these please ask.

Then I'd like to read in full a thank you card that we have received from Gwen:
"To the church family. I would like to thank you for your prayers, your flowers, your cards and your phone calls during this sad and hard time. Thank you to the deacons for allowing me to use the chapel for Keith's Thanksgiving Service. We know as Christians life goes beyond the grave and he is now with his heavenly Father, and one day we will meet again and in God's presence. God bless. Gwen Margerison."
Alec continues, I felt it was appropriate to read that in full to you all this morning as she has given me permission. We continue to remember her in our prayers during the week. Are there any other notices that I have forgotten or someone should have told me about? No okay.

Well, the next point on our program today is an interview with someone who hasn't arrived yet so I am going to postpone that and go on to the point after that and then come back in the hope that he will come very shortly. I'm going to go onto the reading if I may so that it doesn't throw my presentation into chaos, which is from John 14. You might think that's a pretty strange reading to have on Pentecost, but I'm going to tell you why afterwards."

Alec reads from the NIV: John's Gospel 14: 15-27

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Amen.

Alec continues: "Very powerful words and very helpful words and we will be looking at them in awhile. I think the best thing to do now is to move to our second hymn which is also from the Gettys, it's not that I'm a fan, although I like the Gettys very much, but we are very limited in what we can choose, which is one of the reasons why I am very happy if we don't carry on with the live streaming, because we can then use all kinds of songs and hymns that we cannot use at the present time. But we are going to sing our second one from the Getty's today, **singing from our hearts and the angels will hear us in heaven, it's called Across the lands.** Thank you."

You're the Word of God the Father,
from before the world began;
every star and every planet
has been fashioned by your hand.
All creation holds together
by the power of your voice:
let the skies declare your glory,
let the land and seas rejoice!

You're the Author of creation,
you're the Lord of every man;
and your cry of love rings out
across the lands.

Yet you left the gaze of angels,
came to seek and save the lost,
and exchanged the joy of heaven
for the anguish of a cross.
With a prayer you fed the hungry,
with a word you stilled the sea.
yet how silently you suffered
that the guilty may go free.
You're the Author of creation....

With a shout you rose victorious,
wresting victory from the grave,
and ascended into heaven
leading captives in your wake.
Now you stand before the Father
interceding for your own.
from each tribe and tongue and nation
you are leading sinners home.
You're the Author of creation....

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty

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Alec returns to the pulpit and moves the microphones, ready for an interview. He's invited Victor Adesope, who comes forward to a round of applause. Victor apologizes for being late, and says he is expecting to be asked questions by Alec- who says in response that he thought Victor was going to ask him some questions!

Alec asked when Victor first came to a church service here at Bethesda Chapel - it was January 2019, which as Alec says is more than a few weeks ago - before he himself arrived - so why is Alec interviewing Victor rather than the other way round? Victor replied because Alec is the Shepherd, the Pastor, but asked Alec to tell us a bit about himself!

Alec told us he was born south of Blackburn, and at a summer camp in Devon, when he was 11, he realised he needed to have forgiveness of his sins, so he confessed his sins and was forgiven. 6 years later he was baptised at a Baptist Church in London and

after that he had a call to go to mission as a Christian worker ,and so after studying he went to Japan as a as a missionary.

There was some banter between the two as to who was being interviewed, then Victor gave us some of his background. He has a daughter, Charlotte now aged 3, (who was a founder member so to speak of the creche here at Bethesda, looked after by Eileona, pre-pandemic) His work background is computer science and electronics, he gave his life to Christ in 1999, the Lord has been faithful and has held him steadfastly.He was baptised in 2001, and has a Baptist background, being born to a Baptist Missionary in Nigeria.

Nike, his wife, goes to a Nigerian church in Birmingham at present, where she is involved in leading the choir, where her services are needed.

Alec then shared that Victor is always very helpful when asked to help in church ministry, responding quickly (usually be email) - smart phones are very useful at times! Victor has never said no - leading to Alec wondering if he was Japanese! Victor said that his mother had taught him - if it is for Christ, you cannot say no, even if you want to! This may be partly because of his African heritage. Alec said it is then it is his responsibility never to ask Victor anything to which he may prefer to say No! He also said that in Japan, four of the first 10 people who came to his services were Nigerian - news to Victor, who quipped that Nigerians are everywhere!!

There was some gentle teasing between the 2 as to who would deliver the message - as Victor can't say no - but he can walk away - as he did!!!

Alec again said how important smart phones can be for communication, particularly with the younger generation.

At this point, Alec delivered his message, entitled

“WHO I AM” (- these are the notes he has sent through, not quite as he delivered it in Bethesda - you miss out on his introduction!)

“The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.” (Isaiah 11:2-3).

-the Spirit living generally in the people of God is described in Ezekiel 36:26-27 and Joel: 2:28-29 where we read, “And afterward, 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.”

The Holy Spirit is the uncreated, creative powerful, holy, loving God, different in essential nature from, but personally present to, the human spirit.

The Spirit strives with us, convinces us, transforms us, constrains us, guards us, and warns us of quenching or grieving Him and even more against blaspheming Him and cutting ourselves off from Him.

In the Latin language we read spiritus sanctus which is why we say Holy Spirit. But the OT references I cited usually have the Hebrew word ruach, breath of God.

The Holy Spirit is not an influence or a force, not an impersonal what or which, not a suddenly appearing and probably equally suddenly disappearing of a good feeling or attitude.

The Holy Spirit is seen in the church probably more than in anything else in transformed lives. If we jump over into the NT we see Paul challenging the churches in Galatia to walk by the Spirit, to live by the Spirit, and to keep in step with the Spirit. For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

God is here, His Spirit is with us, speaking to us and with us, encouraging us, building us up as and into a body of believers, transforming our lives together individually and as a fellowship. Let us not block or hinder His speaking to us and working in us.

As a fellowship we have been looking together over many weeks at the Gospel of Luke in which we have seen how before Jesus even began His ministry in Luke 4:1 that “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where He was tempted by the devil.” In Luke 4:14 that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and that He then read in the synagogue from Isaiah 61:1-2 which I referred to earlier and said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.”

At the beginning of Jesus ministry the Spirit enabled Him to perform many miracles and wonders, to heal the sick, the lame and the dumb and to free many from demons. At the start of His life and ministry on earth Jesus didn't talk a lot about the spirit, but what He did showed that He was living in the power of the Spirit. To what extent and in what ways is this true of us?

Jesus spent little time talking about the Spirit, concentrating instead on working effectively in the power of the Spirit. But we have seen from our reading for today that there came a point when His strategy changed.

In Luke 14 we see Jesus is moving slowly but clearly and surely towards his arrest and death on a cross as God His Father had planned it. In this context and in the context of teaching about discipleship He begins to express Himself clearly to His disciples about the Holy Spirit as we see in the parallel Gospel of John 14.

In Jesus' clearest teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit he refers four times specifically to the Paraclete, in 14:15-17; 25-26; 15:26; 16:5-15 and several other times he refers to the Holy Spirit in related contexts.

What does Jesus mean by Paraclete? Is it a special kind of parachute with which the Spirit comes down?

Let me explain what Paraclete means after first commenting on John 14:15 where Jesus says: "If you love me, keep my commands."

Well of course we love Jesus don't we so I am pretty sure that we keep His commands. Well at least those that seem to fit our lifestyle in the culturally advanced world we live in and those which seem to be practicable in a multi-religious context. Strange that Jesus didn't qualify what He said in any way. That's really odd. What could He have been thinking when He said: "If you love me, keep my commands."?

Maybe this might have been what He was meaning right here in verse 16?

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever."

Because wanting to keep Jesus' commands is one thing. If we love Jesus wanting to keep His commands is kind of an obvious statement isn't it. But being able to keep His commands really is a challenge. If you don't know that or you are not sure try it out and then you will see that we need help to be able to follow Jesus' commands, to know them, to understand them and to fulfil them. If we are to do greater things and be more fruitful we need God's power through the Spirit. None of the fruitfulness promised by God is going to come if we think we can manipulate Christ for our own ends. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands, (1 John 5:2).

Throughout His ministry in John's Gospel Jesus' disciples are shown to fail in their understanding of Jesus. After Jesus is taken up to heaven the Holy Spirit will remind the disciples of Jesus' teaching, help them grasp its significance and understand what it meant.

Sorry to have kept you waiting! Here comes the paraclete again. Another advocate, another Counsellor, another helper, ἄλλος παρακλέτος. What does paraclete mean?

The best translation of this might be "one who is called alongside". Another of the same, called to be near us. This is the Holy Spirit of God who will lead us into or better in all truth and who will be with us. He is the same as but different from Jesus, God's Son.

Jesus says in 14:17b "... For he lives with you and will be in you."

Jesus seems to be saying that in his own Person, they have experienced the Paraclete living "with them" or at their side. But, when the Father sends the Holy Spirit, this Paraclete will be within them.

Jesus has been their Paraclete, Helper and Friend so far, but the Holy Spirit will replace Jesus as an interior presence, always with them, to guide and to instruct them.

The role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the disciples mirrors or parallels Jesus' role with them when he was on earth.

On my Facebook page last week I posted a statement from Dr. E J Stetzer. Ed Stetzer is a professor and dean at Wheaton College, Illinois who also serves as Executive Director of the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center. Stetzer has planted, revitalised, and pastored churches, trained pastors and church planters on six continents, has earned two master's degrees and two doctorates, and has written hundreds of articles and a dozen books. He is regional director for Lausanne North America and publishes research through Mission Group. But what really counts, he loves the Lord!

He has written and I reposted: "If you want everyone to like you, don't be a pastor. Go sell ice cream."

Maybe we could have written if you want to be liked and not hated don't follow Jesus. If you want to be popular in all you say and do, just copy everybody else. But don't follow Jesus.

You see we live in a world which does not love Jesus or even like Jesus. It might pretend that it does sometimes or often but it doesn't. There are just maybe churches that con themselves into thinking that they love Jesus without actually putting Him first. Let us make sure that as a church we put Jesus first, not the Pastor, not the leadership team, not the members, so that Jesus Christ has the decisive power in our fellowship. That He alone makes the decisions. No-one else.

Jesus said: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

The organisation "Open Doors" writes, that for 2020, 260 million Christians were facing persecution in the top 50 World Watch List countries, and persecution was getting more severe. They estimate that there are another 50 million Christians facing high levels of persecution in a further 23 countries outside the top 50. During the World Watch List 2019 reporting period, in the top 50 countries, a total of 1,266 churches or Christian buildings were attacked; 2,635 Christians were detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned; and 4,136 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons. On average, that's 11 Christians killed every day for their faith. Persecution comes in many forms.

You see that is why we need another Comforter. That is why the Holy Spirit came. We need Him to teach us and remind us of the truth of the Word of God. We need Him to stand by us and stand with us because just like Jesus was arrested, tried and sentenced to death on a Cross, just like He was hated, so will we be if we follow Him.

Elsewhere, Jesus told his disciples not to worry about what to say when they are brought into court (Luke 12:11b-12). The Holy Spirit serves as our legal advisor as needed when we are persecuted, (not if).

The Holy Spirit is a distinct person in his own right and performs functions we attribute to being a person. The Holy Spirit appoints missionaries (Acts 13:2; 20:28), he leads and

directs them in their ministry (Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 16:6-7; 1 Corinthians 2:13), he speaks through the prophets (Acts 1:16; 1 Peter 1:11-12; 2 Peter 1:21), he corrects (John 16:8), comforts (Acts 9:31), helps us in our weaknesses (Romans 8:26), teaches (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3), guides (John 16:13), makes holy (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11), talks of Christ (John 15:26), glorifies Christ (John 16:14), has a power of his own (Romans 15:13), searches all things (Romans 11:33-34; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11), works according to his own ideas (1 Corinthians 12:11), lives in the believers (John 14:17), can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), can be resisted (Acts 7:51), and can be tempted (Acts 5:9). These are functions we attribute to persons aren't they, not to impersonal forces. John sees the Holy Spirit as a Person, sent by the Father to replace Jesus' physical presence as the Paraclete, the other near-called One, with them. Someone said they would like maybe like a PowerPoint presentation to accompany the message and make it more understandable? That's fine with me. This is a real PPP isn't it-Physical Presence of the Paraclete-a real PowerPoint presentation. He is here! He speaks to me and He speaks to you. Well we can sometimes put up something on the screen too I am sure; I would have no problem with that.

The Holy Spirit is real. He is genuine. He is authentic. And He lives in me.

Romans 8:9 says: if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

Does the Spirit live in you? Do you belong to Christ? Choose to follow Jesus today. But don't forget to weigh up the cost first.

Jesus is coming again. The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance. What do I mean? It is God who enables Sibylle and I along with you, to stand firm for Christ. He has commissioned us, and he has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first instalment that guarantees everything he has promised us,(2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

I began this service with John 14:1, where Jesus says to his disciples "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me." And I end this short message today with John 14: 27, where Jesus once again says to His disciples, to those who really do follow Him: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Amen.

Now its time for our third hymn: I WILL WAIT FOR YOU

We can listen, watch, or read, to this song, based on Psalm 130, "I Will Wait for You." This is a quieter reflective song from the Getty Collection, and begins and ends with an "Intro and Outro" being sung to the tune to which we generally sing the words "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord"

(INTRO

Lord, from the depths I call to You,
Lord, hear me from on high

and give attention to my voice
when I for mercy cry.)

Out of the depths I cry to You,
in darkest places I will call;
incline Your ear to me anew
and hear my cry for mercy, Lord

Were You to count my sinful ways
How could I come before Your throne?
Yet full forgiveness meets my gaze
I stand redeemed by grace alone.

**I will wait for You,
I will wait for You,
on Your word, I will rely.
I will wait for You,
surely wait for You,
till my soul is satisfied.**

So put your hope in God alone,
take courage in His power to save
completely and forever won
by Christ emerging from the grave

I will wait for You....

Now He has come to make a way
and God Himself has paid the price
that all who trust in Him today
find healing in His sacrifice

**I will wait for You,
I will wait for You
through the storm and through the night.
I will wait for You,
surely wait for You,
for Your love is my delight.**

(OUTRO

I pray my soul waits for the Lord,
my hope is in His word.
More than the watchman waits for dawn
my soul waits for the Lord.)

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We are now led in prayer by Rebecca (Becky) Eaton

"As we gather together this morning, we can feel God's presence among us, isn't that amazing? You told us Lord, where two or three of us are gathered together, so also will you be. We are gathered here together heavenly Father, to praise your glorious name. We are gathered together to thank you for our blessings and to tell you how much we adore you. We are gathered together to thank you for our families and your protection over us all.

Every promise you made to us has been kept. You will never abandon any of us however much we hurt you, however many promises we break. We never need to feel alone. All we have to do is speak your name even through our tears and fears and you will take our hand and give us comfort.

That is your gift to us, given freely, no interest added, no set time to accept it. You never give us a time limit to accepting you as Lord and Saviour in our lives. You never lose patience with us when we blow hot and cold or don't put you first in our daily lives. You are never angry with us when we keep putting our own needs first. How blessed are we, to have love like this.

Teach us Lord to love our brothers and sisters as you love us. To put the needs of others before our own. To be your eyes and ears, your hands and feet. Teach us to want to please you. We are so blessed that we are able to do that with no repercussion for going to church, for reading your bible, for speaking your name, your wonderful name.

Even at this difficult time with Covid, we are surrounded by so many blessings. We can see wildlife and nature at its most wonderful. Birds flocking around our gardens, new flowers blossoming. We are witnessing appreciative and kindly actions among the neighbours. We have our church services live or online, and are very thankful to our church leaders for arranging this. We have our regular zoom meetings which help to keep church members in touch with one another. We get numerous phone calls to check we are all okay, most of all we pray for one another's well-being. We also have our Pastor Alec back with us.

We just lift before you precious Father, those people who have not yet come to know you or your love. We pray that circumstances in their life may attract these people to come to know you Lord, and how wonderful is your love for them. We have a desire to reach out to the new occupants on Galligreaves estate and encouraging them to get to know you Lord.

Just as we pray for our own parish Lord, we remember Brian and Jackie Chilvers, and pray for their work in Chad. We lift them up to you, gracious Father, and hope that

they can very soon continue with the work they want to do for you. Please bless them at this time and keep them safe.

We are all so sad at the horrific things going on in India and Lebanon and other poor countries across the world. We know it will be breaking your heart Father God as it breaks ours, when we see the news. So much poverty and cruelty and sorrow. Whole families dying and little ones being orphaned. No food, or homes, no vaccines, no hospitals. We pray for the situation to improve rapidly Lord. Please let aid get to these countries quickly and let the leaders of these countries enforce stronger and better rules. I can't say I understand all that is happening, but the conditions are appalling, and it is heartbreaking to know people have to live in these squalid conditions.

We pray for the lonely and broken people who live in Blackburn and surrounding towns. People afraid of abusive partners, broken homes, money problems, unemployment. Children and adults who get bullied every day and have no one to reach out to, or are too afraid to. We pray for the people grieving the loss of a loved one, or caring for a loved one and feeling frightened and confused. We pray for the people who feel unable to cope anymore. Please Heavenly Father, we pray for one of your miracles for them. God, you are the miracle worker, help these sad people to find peace and happiness again. We live in a troubled world right now. Please Father in heaven let one of your angels, human or otherwise, come among these people and give them hope and peace once again.

Lastly now we pray for our church families. We ask for your healing touch on all members of our congregation. I don't need to name them, you know each and everyone by name. Be with us all Father God, today and forever more. Amen."

Alec announces our closing hymn:

"Holy Spirit living breath of God" which begins and ends with the music from The Mission, known as 'Gabriel's oboe', written by Enrico Marricone, and played on the violin, before Kristyn Getty leads the singing of the verses.

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.

(Spoken by Kristyn Getty to close -" Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than than all that we ask or think, according to the power within us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, Amen."

Ephesians 3, 20-21)

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDYjn-YdnD4>

Alec leads us in saying together the Grace, as we bring our service to a close:

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

Sundays at 11.45, Meeting ID: 962 5576 8258, Passcode: 491306.

Wednesdays at 2.30pm Meeting ID: 954 0425 3654, Passcode: 064246.and the

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.