



## Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on Sunday March 14th 2021 at 10:45.

The current lockdown restrictions have resulted in the decision to not meet in person at Bethesda Chapel at present. We plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, but will still continue to provide this written service sheet. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

### Judith welcomes us.

"Good morning, and welcome to our service today. I'm Judith, a member of Blackburn Baptist Church, which would usually be meeting in Bethesda Chapel. You can see that we aren't there today, but we are still Blackburn Baptist Church, no matter where we are geographically.

Today has a special name and place in the calendar, its Mothering Sunday, which gives us an opportunity to think of families. They come in all shapes and sizes, with different joys and sorrows, and differing gifts as well! We think of the Williams sisters, the Brownlee brothers, father and son Graham and Damon Hill. If I say Von Trapp family, what springs to mind - I guess for most of us that reminds us of the Sound of Music - a musical family, like the Nolan sisters, Jackson 5, Everly brothers!! (I know I'm probably revealing my age now!!) The Kanneh-Masons!! Well, in our church family we also have musical families, and one of them, the Wicks family, have recorded our music today, as their offering of worship for which we give them thanks. They don't have a professional recording studio, but they have played from the heart, and we are grateful to them all - Paul on Double bass, Jackie on guitar, Naomi with her clarinet and Hannah playing the flute - an excellent mix !

So we prepare ourselves for worship, once more.

We pray:

We come, we open ourselves out, knowing that we must be more honest with ourselves than we are comfortable.

We come, we gather, we hold each other in prayer and love.

And we worship you, Lord God. Amen.

We may be a scattered church family at the moment, but we are joined together by invisible cords of God's love, shown in his son, Jesus, and we are reminded that Jesus himself said "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them". As we are gathered, today then, Jesus is here. We join together as we watch, listen, or read those words, accompanied by the wicks family. If you listen carefully, you may hear Paul counting to 4, then its straight in, so in the privacy of your home you too can make a joyful noise to the Lord!"

**Song:**      **As we are gathered, Jesus is here.**

As we are gathered, Jesus is here;  
one with each other, Jesus is here;  
joined by the Spirit, washed in the blood,  
part of the body, the Church of God.

As we are gathered, Jesus is here;  
one with each other, Jesus is here.

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**Judith continues: Today as we've said has a special name - its Mothering Sunday.**

I expect you will remember that this used to be the time when those "in service" were allowed a Sunday off to go and visit their homes - returning to their mother churches, as the days lengthen into spring and we prepare for Easter. It's been somewhat hijacked now as Mother's Day, which is celebrated on different days in different countries, but here in the UK we continue to mark the 4th Sunday in Lent as Mothering Sunday.

On this special day, then, many of us thank God for the women who have had the greatest impact on our lives, and celebrate their unconditional love and sacrifice.

For others, however, Mothering Sunday brings mixed emotions, and it can take real tenacity and trust in the Holy Spirit to give love and to feel loved.

So, in this service we remember before God families of all kinds, as they navigate the joys and challenges of family life, and ask for his blessing upon them.

We also reflect upon the wonder of God's love, shown in the beauty of the world, and there is a lovely hymn about that. For the beauty of the earth:

Whilst this can be sung to what is probably a familiar tune to many of us, it has also been set to a perhaps slightly brighter melody by John Rutter. We can listen and singalong to the familiar tune played by the Wicks today, but perhaps you may want to listen to the alternative later.

**Hymn:**      **For the beauty of the earth**

For the beauty of the earth,  
for the glory of the skies,  
for the love which from our birth  
over and around us lies,  
'Lord of all, to Thee we raise  
this our joyful hymn of praise.'

For the beauty of each hour  
of the day and of the night,  
hill and vale and tree and flow'r,  
sun and Moon and stars of light,

'Lord of all, to Thee we raise  
this our joyful hymn of praise.'

For the joy of human love,  
brother, sister, parent, child,  
friends on earth and friends above,  
for all gentle thoughts and mild,  
'Lord of all, to Thee we raise  
this our joyful hymn of praise.'

For each perfect gift of Thine  
to our race so freely given,  
graces human and divine,  
flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n,  
'Lord of all, to Thee we raise  
this our joyful hymn of praise.'

<https://youtu.be/UFz3uQbImnw>  
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**Judith continues:**

**We read in 1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**

So we draw near in worship to our heavenly Father, with full and thankful hearts, for we all belong to his family and are all equally loved by him.

**We join together in prayer:**

**Alec**

Wherever we are, we live in God's family.  
When our families are broken by circumstance and pain,  
He reaches out to hold us in His arms, piece by piece  
He makes us whole again,  
and in His love-filled hands we are transformed.Judith

So Lord, help us to build relationships  
in all the corners of our hearts.  
To be like you, to love like you,  
to heal brokenness and restore wholeness  
in families worldwide. Amen

**Prayer:**

**Paul, Jackie, Naomi and Hannah Wicks**

For today's prayer you are encouraged to repeat the phrase 'pour out your love' as a response. After the words....

Loving God, pour out your love.

You may wish to join with....

**Pour out your love.**

**Let us pray together**

We come to you today, needing to know your love and forgiveness for us. As we confess our sins to you, we hear your loving words: 'your sins are forgiven'.

Loving God, pour out your love.

**Pour out your love.**

We come to you today, giving thanks and praise to you, O God, for you are loving, kind, and worthy of all praise.

Loving God, pour out your love.

**Pour out your love.**

As we remember your world that you entrusted to us we pray for those feeling isolated and alone, even those amongst our own congregation and community, especially during this time of crisis.

Loving God, pour out your love.

**Pour out your love.**

We pray for our local community. As we worship you, Holy God, show us by your Holy Spirit how we might show your love today.

Loving God, pour out your love.

**Pour out your love.**

Amen.

**Let us now say the Lord's Prayer together:**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us all our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.**

**Homily 1:                    Judith**

How many of you remember what happened this time 12 months ago? I expect we all remember, as this was the first Sunday we were not able to meet at Bethesda- it was that word largely unknown - lockdown. Yes, it's been a year, Mothering Sunday last year saw the beginning of the pandemic, and I think probably none of us at that time anticipated the situation continuing for as long as it has. Hopefully, with the advent of a vaccination programme, we will be able to resume some of our activities in the not

too distant future, but our lives have been changed in the interim – some things I expect will never return to the pre-lockdown situation. My prayer is that we become a more caring society, sharing God's love in different ways – and no doubt utilising technology in new ways as well – the word zoom will never be the same again!! I was due to lead the service last year, but you had to rely on the printed word, whereas this year you can see and hear me, if the computers play of course! I trust that we will all be aware of God's presence in these different circumstances, and that this morning will be a time of blessing and of joy, where we acknowledge God's goodness and loving kindness even in times of trouble and distress.

Theres a song about that – set to a very familiar tune!

**Song: All our blessings**

Tune: All things bright and beautiful

All our blessings, all our joys  
With thankful hearts we sing,  
God of love and faithfulness,  
Accept the praise we bring.

For parents and for children,  
for partners and for friends,  
for those whose care enfolds us  
with love that never ends.

    All our blessings, all our joys

For fellowship and friendship  
for all we have to give,  
for those who've shared our journey  
and taught us how to live.

    All our blessings, all our joys

For all who've shared our sorrow,  
walked with us in our pain,  
who've held our hand through darkness  
and showed us light again.

    All our blessings, all our joys

In sacrifice and service  
your love is clearly shown,  
your outstretched arms embrace us  
to bring us safely home.

    All our blessings, all our joys

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**Homily 2 : Chickens,      Judith**

I'd like to introduce you to three special ladies, Jemima, Beatrice and Matilda. Here they are on their journey to a new home. Yes, they are rescued battery chickens,

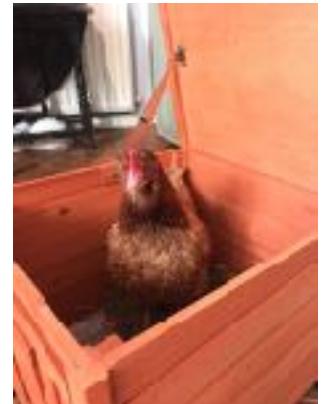


adopted by Jonathan and Gemma about 9 years ago. They were told at the time that their expected life span would be about 3-4 years - the hens that is, not Jonathan and Gemma!! During that time, they continued to lay eggs, although perhaps not as prolifically as when they were younger, and enjoyed scratching at whatever bit of garden they could find!! That was 9 years ago, but here is Jemima now, in her hen house for one, no longer

laying eggs but still announcing her presence vocally and very much a part of the family!

We can read about chickens in the bible too - roosters are mentioned a number of times, we all remember Peter and the cock crowing 3 times, but

both Matthew and Luke record how Jesus was upset over Jerusalem, "saying how often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings"



I think its a lovely picture, of a mother hen with her little chicks under her wings - hopefully we'll be able to see the little ducklings and goslings in the park soon, being cared for in that same way!



Some of us have been busy with chickens in a different way over the last weeks - knitting them in response to a request from the hospital chaplains for easter gifts for the staff at the hospital. We were told the chicks could be as funky as we wished- some took that as a challenge! Here are some of the chickens we have lovingly made.

For those non-knitters amongst us, we had the opportunity to make paper hearts as a thank you, and we thought some of you might like to make one this morning, as a thank you to those we love or a gift to a friend, neighbour, or even yourself. You need some paper and some concentration, and in 4 minutes time, if you follow the instructions on this video, you too will have a heart to treasure.

How to make an origami heart

[https://youtu.be/uFx29Li6\\_tk](https://youtu.be/uFx29Li6_tk)

### Prayer:

God of celebration, who rejoices with those who rejoice,  
we pray for those for whom Mothering Sunday  
is a time of thanksgiving and joy.

### Brenda and Trevor:

God of compassion, who weeps with those who weep,  
we pray for those for whom Mothering Sunday  
is a time of heartache and pain.

God of community, who calls the children to come to him,  
we thank you that your love abounds  
for families of every kind.

God of comfort, who gathers us as a hen gather its chicks,  
we thank you that your love surrounds  
the disappointed and hurt.

God of every circumstance, we bring our thanks and praise  
that we belong to your family  
as your beloved children. Amen

### **Homily 3: Judith**

Sadly we are all aware that not all families are the safe havens they should be. We are grateful that in this country organisations exist to care for those who would otherwise never experience this kind of mothering. Charities like The Children's Society protect children in danger, act as an advocate for children in trouble with the law, enable children who are struggling to reach their God-given potential, take a risk and invest in the future of children in the knowledge that they must have their own integrity, and yet at the same time walk with them on their journey of self-discovery, and affirm that all children are, in the words of Moses' mum "beautiful before God". Sometimes charities working with vulnerable children, are involved in finding, out of situations of extreme suffering, tragedy and crisis, new and life-giving ways of creating family and community, just as Jesus did from the cross when he asked his mother and his best friend, John, to care for each other when he had gone, and just as Moses' mum did when she risked everything to give her son a chance at life.

We might think about our own lives – our experiences of mothering or of being mothered; remembering with thanksgiving the people who have done those things for us. And perhaps we might also think of times when we have been failed by those who were supposed to care for us, or those times when we ourselves have failed.

If mothering were only done by mothers, it would be very hard indeed to ensure that everyone received the nurturing, the protection, the love, the sacrifice, the guidance (etc) that we need to become the people we are meant to be. As a church community, we are called into a role of mothering that sometimes might need to be just as desperate, fierce, loyal, grieving etc as the mothers we can think about in the bible. If we, as a church, truly love the community in which we are situated, just as God loves it, and if we are to be God's holy people for God's needy world, then we will feel the pain of the world's suffering, and we will be willing to sacrifice something of ourselves in order to bring to birth God's purposes for the world.

On the cross, God's love is nailed firmly to the world so as never to let it go – is our love for the world so firmly fixed as this? Are we this passionate about nurturing the world into becoming the place that God created it to be? A truly parental love is one that would give anything and everything for the child. This is the love of God that we see on the cross, but this is also the love that we are called to have for one another and for all of God's creation. When we love like that, we make our Mothering-God visible in the world.

### **Prayer**

**Lynne, Kayleigh and Beth Wild**

Loving God, we come today all on different parts of our journey. Some are searching, some are feeling lost, some are hurting, some are feeling loved. Wherever we are and whatever we feel, we come to you as our parent who understands, knows and walks with us.

As we journey with you, we hear sounds of joy as families meet and celebrate being family together, children tell mothers how beautifully wonderful they are, and mothers tell children how loved they are.

We also hear sounds of mourning. We pray for those for whom today is a reminder of loss. A reminder that Mum is not with them anymore. We pray for peace. We pray for comfort. We pray that you might pick them up and carry them today.

As we journey with you, we taste the sweetness of new life. We thank you for children; the way they smile, the way they brighten our lives. Help us to welcome children into our family, loving them unconditionally as you love them.

We also taste the bitterness of those for whom today is a sorrowful and painful reminder of their childlessness. We pray for those who have desperately wanted to be parents and have not been able to be. We pray that you might bring sweetness into their lives through the blessings of others. We pray for comfort. We pray that you might pick them up and carry them today.

As we journey with you, we see the beauty in family life. We see how you have blessed and cared for us. We remember where you have led us look forward to where is next. Help us to trust you as the future unravels before our eyes.

We also remember those for whom the future is not what they expected to see. We pray for those who have lost a child – who were looking forward with joy only to have dreams shattered. We pray for peace and comfort. We pray that you might pick them up and carry them today.

As we journey with you, we remember the smells of home. The smell of freshly baked cake, a delicious meal and the familiar. We thank you for what you have provided.

We also remember that not everyone has enough, that not everyone can experience the smells of home. We pray for those children who have no home, who have nobody they can call Mum or Dad. We pray for those who do not have enough food or money. We pray that you will provide. We pray that you will pick them up and carry them today.

As we journey today, we reach our hands to you. We know that where we put our hand in your hand we can rely on your guidance, your love, your arms that carry us when life is hard.

We also remember those we love who have not reached out their hands to you or have let go: Our children who do not know you, parents, partners, siblings, wider families and the people we care about deeply. We pray that they may reach out, take your hand and choose to follow.

Loving God, we come today all on different parts of our journey. Some are searching, some are feeling lost, some are hurting, some are feeling loved. Wherever we are and whatever we feel we come to you as our parent; the one who understands, knows and walks with us. Amen.

### **Judith concludes our service today:**

No matter how great is the love of a parent, it cannot compare with the love of God,  
We bring our time together to a close now as we sing one of the great songs of love

**Hymn: Love divine**

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heaven to earth come down,  
fix in us Thy humble dwelling,  
all Thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love Thou art;  
visit us with Thy salvation,  
enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe, Thy loving spirit  
into every troubled breast,  
let us all in Thee inherit,  
let us find that perfect rest.  
Take away the love of sinning,  
Alpha and Omega be,  
end of faith, as its beginning  
sets our hearts at liberty.

Come almighty to deliver,  
let us all Thy life receive,  
suddenly return and never,  
never more Thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,  
glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation,  
pure and spotless let us be,  
let us see Thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in Thee.  
Changed from glory into glory,  
'til in Heaven we take our place,  
'til we cast our crowns before Thee  
lost in wonder, love and praise.

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**Judith share a final Blessing:**

May the love of the Father fill our hearts;  
May the love of the Lord Jesus fill our homes;  
and may the grace of the Holy Spirit  
bind us together in love in our families and communities.  
And may the blessing of God be with us all, Amen

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<https://youtu.be/TascswZPj8U>

If you can access the Internet you may wish to use this link to watch the Irish blessing - a version of Be thou my vision, showing beautiful Irish scenery and even featuring some Irish dancing, and of course, accompanied by Irish pipes and fiddles. If you're not able to see it, perhaps you will want to hum the tune and spend some time in quiet reflection.

You may also want to watch the John Rutter version of 'For the beauty of the earth' on this link.

<https://youtu.be/UFz3uQbImnw>

A reminder that we are having a **virtual Church Members Meeting on Tuesday March 16th**. Whilst we are still restricted in the present situation, this seemed the sensible option at present, although it will be a new and different experience for us all. If you can access the internet and wish to join on Zoom, details are available, please email the church website enquiry address, but you can access the meeting over the telephone as detailed below.

It would be good to have as many members as possible sharing this perhaps once in a lifetime experience!

- **Ring 02034 815237 from any landline or mobile**
- **You will hear a voice saying, "Welcome to Zoom, enter your meeting ID followed by hash."**
- **Use your telephone keypad at this point to tap in the meeting ID (93235146498), then press the '#' button**
- **You will then hear the voice saying, "Enter your participant ID followed by hash; otherwise just press hash to continue."**
- **Just press the '#' button on your keypad at this point.**
- **You will then hear the voice saying, "Please enter the meeting passcode followed by hash."**
- **Use your telephone keypad at this point to tap in the meeting passcode (188488), then press the '#' button.**
- **The voice should then confirm, "You are in the meeting now. There are (x) other participants in the meeting. You have been added to the waiting room. You cannot talk or listen until your host admits you to the meeting." You will then hear some music until you are admitted to the meeting.**
- **At this point, the Zoom host will see that you are joining the meeting and will admit you. Only your phone number will appear, so the host will need to ask you your name so that we know who has joined the meeting.**

