



ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, SIGHTHILL
21 March 2021

A special Call to Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pg1WCLq2Z3I>

Opening Song - 'church united'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5NjhTnRDrE>

Opening prayer

Oh! Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South. (Psalm 107:1-3)

Loving Father, we are here, we have come. Today You remind us, through Your word and the songs we shall sing, that Your Church, our church is not about bricks and mortar. Our church is not a specific place with an address and places to sit. It is not the place we go to sing our favourite hymns or to listen to the minister and others speak.

Today, and indeed during this time of trouble and uncertainty, You remind us that Your church is a family, a hospital for sinners and a school for saints. Church is made up of all those who believe in you as their Lord and Saviour. Jesus, Your light will shine while all else fades; it is never ending. Your glory goes beyond all things. And the light of our heart is to give You praise. As Chuck Swindoll, one of Your faithful servants reminds us "Like a stained-glass window, we come together with others to let Christ's light filter through us and shine into the world. As we learn to more fully to live out our citizenship, we realize that we are part of a people who will endure forever." Thank You Lord God, for making us all a part of Your family and for connecting us to other believers. As we celebrate all our blessings at St Nicholas Church, Sighthill, and the many ways You have empowered and guided us through Your Holy Spirit, we thank You for our church (in its gathered and scattered forms), and for our church buildings where we, your children, members of your church will hopefully soon gather

again to grow and to be joined together with you and one another. Lord, also thank You for our church – local, national and international - but more importantly thank you for making everyone one here a part of the Church of Jesus Christ and for making us members of your family. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

**Bible Readings: Ephesians 2:19-22;
 Colossians 3:15**

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Reflection

There are many things that can divide us; age, occupation, appearance, intelligence, interests, political parties – but as, Charles Spurgeon said; "Sovereign grace can make strangers into sons." "When Paul wrote these words the kingdom of Rome was at the height of its territorial expansion and glory. Rome dominated the world. Roman armies kept peace and dispensed justice. Roman roads linked far flung reaches of the Empire. Rome had stood for hundreds of years and was thought to be able to stand for thousands of years more. But Paul looked at Rome and saw it, not as one great United Kingdom, but as a force imposed on mutually antagonistic factions: rich and poor, free and slave, man and woman, Jew and Gentile.

And in its place he saw this new humanity, created by God Himself, transcending those boundaries. The kingdom was destined to grow and permeate all nations, drawing from all peoples. **It is a kingdom that cannot be shaken or destroyed – AND IT IS GROWING FAST." Today there are 2.5 billion followers of the Christian faith), representing nearly a third (31%) of the total global population.**

In Jesus there is a place for everyone and all are welcome. We are a holy family and have a singular access to our Father through Christ His Son. We belong, we are part of God's household, and **God, Himself, dwells in us**. We belong to the church of Christ, to the family of Christ. We are God's children and all have a place at the family table. Our membership in God's household is not something that any one of us has deserved or earned - **it is God's gracious gift, given in love**. We are connected, not only with those around us, but also with the generations of apostles, saints and prophets built on the corner stone that is Christ Jesus himself.

We are connected past, present and future... We are connected. We are brothers and sisters - I know some are often put off when a fellow Christian calls them a brother or a sister. But we have a common paternity—God is our Father—the Church is our mother and Christ is our brother. We have family in heaven and on earth. With family comes benefits and privileges. No one should suffer alone or rejoice on their own. **That is why we sing happy birthday... because we are connected, we are family...** Of course, like any normal family – we too fight—we annoy one another - and sometimes we experience more bitterness than affection. There are two amazing things relating to being a family of faith. One is that are better together than apart. **We are a team – Together Each Achieves More.** So it is important that we work on our differences – especially those that could easily affect our life and work.

Secondly, as a Household of Faith— in Christ— we as children of God, are seen by God and treated by God – in the same way he would treat the Lord Jesus Christ. God sees us and treats us like family, with love and affection. guidance and comfort. We are all equal an one in Christ—Jews or Gentile, male or female, bond or free—regardless of any distinction whatever. We are all one and called to live in harmony with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to let the world know that we are members of one spiritual family.

“In France some soldiers with their sergeant brought the body of a dead comrade to a cemetery owned by the Roman Catholic church to have him buried. The local priest told them gently that he was bound to ask if their comrade had been a baptized adherent of the Roman Catholic Church. They said they did not know. The priest said that he was very sorry but in that case he could not permit burial in the churchyard. So the soldiers took their dead comrade and sadly buried him just outside the fence. The next day they came back to make sure all was right with the grave but to their astonishment, they were not unable to locate the site of the freshly dug soil. They searched and searched for hours but could not find it. They were about to leave in total shock and bewilderment when they met the priest. He told them that his heart was so troubled in the night for his refusal to allow their friend to be buried in the cemetery that in the night the priest himself moved the fence.

In Christ, all are welcome – and all who receive Him – all who have accepted Christ in their lives as Lord and Saviour, all who love the Lord, have received the power to become sons and daughters of God. We are the Church (Gathered or scattered – we are church). Our purpose is not to rule the world or serve the world or flee from the world or imitate the world. **We are in the world but not of it.** Our mission is to love the Lord and to serve God and all His people, in word and through our actions. We are the church of Christ – bought by Jesus - Lamb of God and head of the Church. He laid down His life that we might not perish, but have lasting fellowship and friendship with Him, the Father and Holy Spirit – We are the church – the chosen people of God. We exist to love God with all our hearts, minds and souls and to love others as we love ourselves. We are the church – Yes we are – The church of Christ – marching on in victory, full of love and welcoming all who, like us, are keen to join us as we grow deeper in the love of God, closer in fellowship

and wider we share the Good News in Word and action, Amen.

Prayers – Thank You God...

Thank you Lord God Almighty for this amazing world, that is both diverse and complex. Thank you for a world that includes snowy tundra and desert, that includes rocky mountains and tropical beaches, that includes icy lakes and warm oceans, that includes cold winds and warm breezes. Thank you that the world is not all the same. Thank you for its beauty and our place in it.

Thank you for our amazing families, that are both diverse and complex. We need Jesus to show us the way, giving us a love for our families as deep as the need for love within ourselves.

Thank you for our amazing congregation that is both diverse and complex. Thank you for all who work so hard to make our church tick. Thank you for those who teach children and youth and adults, share food, donate money, welcome visitors to our services, our gardening team who still work hard in our church gardens.

Thank you for those who pray, for who work in various teams, groups and committees, for all who handle our finances, gift aid, IT, for all who lead us in worship, maintain our buildings, other properties, hall hire, and for all who provide care and support for others (especially behind the scenes). Thank you for all who keep our membership records, church records, correspondence, for the visiting, caring and community action groups, for church officer and office team and for all who keep in touch with the vulnerable among us - at home, nursing homes and in hospitals. Thank you for all the members, families, supporters and friends of St Nicholas Church.

Thank you for all the gifts you've given us and for the way they are used to build up our church. Thank you for the amazing way you work in our world, in diverse and complex ways that we can hardly understand. Thank you for the role you give our congregation and our families, sowing seeds, being salt and light everywhere we go. We pray especially today for those we know who are sick and grieving loss of loved ones. We call on your amazing power to comfort, strengthen, renew, restore, and rejuvenate your people.

Bless our meeting after the service. We want it to be a good time of community sharing and visioning. As we meet to conduct matters of business, Lord Jesus, guide our hearts and our minds in the spirit of fairness, right thought and speech. Impart your supreme wisdom upon our activities so that our affairs may reach a successful conclusion. Thank you for being our source of guidance today. We pray this in the name of Jesus our Saviour, Amen.

Closing Song: Great is thy faithfulness

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ALHSjbTK_jE

Final Blessing

Radiant God, your face has shined upon our gathering. In our common words and our plain faces, your wisdom has peaked and prodded. If our decisions have lighted our community's path, may our choices shine forth. As we now depart, shine in us and through us, that we will be faithful until we meet again.

*God
is good
all the
time*