

# 16<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## The paper-version Service

**To Begin:** Find a Bible and a comfortable



place. If safe, light a candle and read

prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



**The Good Shepherd**  
Four Marks

*Responding to God's Love*

**Opening Prayer:** Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Song:**

In Christ alone my hope is found,  
He is my light, my strength, my song  
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease

My Comforter, my All in All  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,  
Fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid

Here in the death of Christ I live.  
There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain:  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine  
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell, no scheme of man,  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

**Read Hebrews 11:1-6**

## **The sermon given by Rev. Howard Wright: Faith is ...**

We are beginning a new teaching series, Faith. And through this series, I hope that we will inspire faith and courage, and dispel fear.

Our age has been called an age of high anxiety. This has become worse in the pandemic, but we were already in a period of rapid change which has brought increasing uncertainty, in all spheres of life.

We worry about economics, an area worryingly dear to too many of our hearts, ‘...for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil’ (2 Timothy 6:10). And we worry about identity – especially for the younger generations – who are we and how do we define ourselves? Male, female, gender neutral; straight, gay, or anything in-between. The old labels are being rejected, even vilified, and the new labels aren’t yet accepted.

And we fear for the future. We have a lack of trustworthy leadership and a lack of confidence in the information. There’s no lack of information – we just don’t know who we can trust with it!

### As Christians we have Good News!

Read 1 John 4:16-18. The most common lies of the devil include, ‘does God really say that?’, and ‘does he really love you and want your best?’ Faith believes in God and his love.

### Fear in scripture is seen in two directions:

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, (Proverbs 9:10)

And, ‘do not be afraid’ of anything else! (E.g., Genesis 15:1, which is the first of four times in Genesis alone and of 70 times in the whole Bible.)

### Faith is seen in one direction.

It is directed to the person of God, as revealed in Jesus, and inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). And as in our passage today see, Hebrews 11: 1.

### Faith is an antidote for our anxious selves.

Howard Strickland, an American pastor said: *‘Fear is letting your circumstances come between you and God. Faith is letting God get between you and your circumstances.’*

Faith enables trust in God and his good purposes.

Faith in scripture is a condition to pleasing God. See Hebrews 11:6.

Jesus through John’s Gospel, as we saw last term, and along with the whole of scripture, invites us to believe in him as the access to the Father.

Finally, faith (again in our passage today) is what the ‘ancients’ were commended for.

### So, let’s look more carefully at our passage.

Faith is the confidence in/evidence of/certainty of/surety of/substance of what we hope for. And the assurance/certainty/evidence/handle/proof of what we do not see (v.1).

Firstly, we hope for the God we do not see. But our faith is not such a massive leap of faith, because Jesus, who was seen and about whom we have hard evidence, revealed God to us (John 14:9).

Secondly, we hope for this God to love us. And through faith we see this, again through Jesus, who by his example demonstrates the extravagant love of God in his sacrifice on the cross to save us. The whole of Romans 8 is at pains to demonstrate how much God loves us and his purposes for us. And this leads us to the third point.

Thirdly, we hope for eternal life. And through faith in Jesus, belief in the resurrection, and the experience of the Holy Spirit, the guarantee of this inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14) we can have confidence in this hope.

Jesus is the key to our faith. We are so blessed by living this side of Jesus, and hence, even more so the 'ancients' are commended for their faith.

Abel, as an act of faith, 'brought a better offering than Cain.' Abel gave his very best and what cost dearly. Cain brought a token. Abel was all in, Cain was not. And tragically Cain murdered Abel in jealousy – Abel becoming the first martyr.

Enoch chose, as an act of faith, to walk with a particular person and to follow God so closely that he simply walked straight into heaven. Enoch's relationship with God is one where all things are submitted to God's will. Where God, and the relationship with him, are the priority – the first thing and last.

So, today, will you trust God? Will you believe and trust?

Will you trust him, taking your fears to him and seeing what happens to them in his perfect love. Remember the quote: *'Fear is letting your circumstances come between you and God. Faith is letting God get between you and your circumstances.'*

Will you trust him for your health and aging? Will you trust him for your education, career, and future? Will you trust him for your finances and housing, for your food and clothes, for our nation and world – for the pandemic?

This does not mean living recklessly but living with confidence in the God who loves and gave himself for us.

**Prayers:** *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

**Collect: Second Sunday after Epiphany:** Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**



**The Lord's Prayer:** Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. **Amen.**

**Blessing** to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

**The Notices:** We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am, 9.30am & 7pm and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is available the week after the service.

- 1-Service Sunday: There will be a 11am service on 30th January.
- Coffee & Questions: 26<sup>th</sup> January at 11am, Church Hall.
- Tea and Chat: 19<sup>th</sup> January at 2pm, Church Hall.
- COGS Tots: 8<sup>th</sup> February. Messy Church: 13<sup>th</sup> February.