

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

HARVEST THANKSGIVING SERVICE 10.30 AM 13<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2024

Rev Dr Julia Binney leading & Rev Hayley Young (SCBA Regional Minister) preaching

[www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk).

Find us on Facebook @ Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



**Welcome:** As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease. (Genesis 8:22)

**Call to Worship:**

**God of abundance, God of fruitfulness, God of generosity,  
God of celebration, God of goodness, God of love beyond imagining.**

**We gather bringing the best that we can offer to give thanks to you for the good things you give us, to share your generosity with others and to celebrate your abundant provision together.**

**Hymn BP&W 135:** *(During this hymn you are invited to bring your harvest gifts forward)*

We plough the fields and scatter  
The good seed on the land,  
But it is fed and watered  
By God's almighty hand;  
He sends the snow in winter,  
The warmth to swell the grain,  
The breezes and the sunshine,  
And soft refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above;  
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all His love.*

He only is the Maker  
Of all things near and far;  
He paints the wayside flower,  
He lights the evening star;  
The winds and waves obey Him,  
By Him the birds are fed;  
Much more to us, His children,  
He gives our daily bread.

We thank You, then, O Father,  
For all things bright and good;

The seedtime and the harvest,  
Our life, our health, our food.  
Accept the gifts we offer  
For all Your love imparts,  
And what you find more precious,  
our humble, thankful hearts.

MATTHIAS CLAUDIUS (1740-1815). TR. JANE M. CAMPBELL (1817-78)

**A Harvest Prayer of Praise:**

Lord, your works are wonderful, in wisdom you have made them all.

**God of the abundant harvest, we give you our praise.**

You are the Source of all life, one Ground of the whole earth, with all the creatures you have made.

**God of the abundant harvest, we give you our praise.**

You are the Lord of all the earth and sovereign over all the nations of the world. For people from every tribe, language, and nation are one in your kingdom.

**God of the abundant harvest, we give you our praise.**

Forgive us for the madness that abuses the earth for short-term ends, and for our waste and greed. Give us the wisdom to cherish our fragile planet and the compassion to care for all your generous gifts.

**God of the abundant harvest, we give you our praise and bring our worship to you with humble, thankful hearts. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer:** *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread, and 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 for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Family Time:** BMS Appeal 2024 – Seek first his Kingdom

*There will be an offering taken during the following song, and after the song the children will leave us for their own groups.*

**Hymn MP 128:**

Father God I wonder how I managed to exist  
Without the knowledge of your parenthood  
And your loving care.

But now I am your child, I am adopted in your family  
And I can never be alone  
'Cause Father God you're there beside me.

Chorus: [English]

I will sing your praises (x3)

Forevermore

[Bangla]

Ami gai tomar gan (x3)

Gabo chirokal

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## Prayer of Dedication

**Bible Reading 1:** Revelation 21:1-7

**Bible Reading 2:** Matthew 6:24-34

### Hymn BP&W 357:

Seek ye first the kingdom of God  
And His righteousness,  
And all these things shall be added unto you,  
Allelu-, alleluia.

*Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, allelu-,alleluia!*

Man shall not live by bread alone,  
But by every word,  
That proceeds from the mouth of God,  
Allelu-, alleluia.

Ask and it shall be given unto you,  
Seek and ye shall find.  
Knock and it shall be opened unto you,  
Allelu-, alleluia.

If the Son shall set you free,  
Ye shall be free indeed.  
Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you  
free,  
Allelu -, alleluia.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,  
He shall direct thy path,  
In all thy ways acknowledge Him,  
Allelu-, alleluia.

Praise to the Father, praise to the Son,  
Praise to the Spirit, too,  
And to the Godhead, three in one;  
Allelu-, alleluia.

KAREN LAFFERTY © 1972 MARANATHA! MUSIC/ ADM. BY COPYCARE.



## SERMON: Seek First the Kingdom of God (Revelation 21:1-7 & Matthew 6:24-34)

Introduction taken from BMS Harvest Appeal 2024:

Bangladesh is a beautiful country and God loves this country. There are 52 ethnic groups within Bangladesh and thousands of small villages.

Because many people are poor, they move to the city seeking a better life. For me, this is a picture of what is happening inside people, they are seeking something better spiritually. Thankfully, we are free to seek, and this is our blessing and opportunity.

As a Christian minority (less than one per cent of the population), the government protects us. There is no restriction to sharing the gospel, but at the same time there can be many problems locally. Sometimes the message of Jesus can be shared openly, and at other times it is hidden and opposed. They also experience many challenges with injustice and corruption. It is not easy for believers...

We are living in a time where people are looking for a story and we have a story tell?

We have the greatest story ever told to tell it's the Biblical narrative, it is the most beautiful story

However, our story has been massively distorted, and I want to briefly look at the story with you:

There is a beginning to the story: there is creation, there is a fall and then there is a pathway to heaven on earth and human flourishing.

It begins in the Garden of Eden, the place of perfection – God places humanity made in his image, and he places them in the garden so that they can enjoy the garden – they can live life fully, no sin, no sickness, no suffering – humanity fully alive in the presence of God.

That's what we are made for: fully alive in the presence of God.

And then sin enters the story and Adam and Eve grab hold of the fruit, and they bit it and because sin enters the story all of created order begins to unravel and pain enters the story – brokenness, evil, injustice.

Adam and Eve are thrown out of the garden and they end up in the wilderness – where there really isn't much life.

And the rest of the Old Testament narrative is the people of God, the nation of Israel trying to get home.

And as they are struggling as slaves in Egypt and later slaves in Babylon, they were like – we were created for Eden, fullness of life – in relationship with God, running around naked and unashamed – we weren't created for slavery, and pain – and the deep longing is I want to go home – I want to be in relationship with our father.

That's the beginning of the story, creation – and then the fall, accounting for earthly pain.

Let me tell you about the end of the story, briefly: the end of our story has been massively distorted.

Our story isn't us ascending to some disembodied bliss to drink red bull with the angels.

Heaven in the end of our story comes down – Heaven is best defined biblically as the place where God lives and where His will is done.

Heaven comes down and God makes his dwelling place with humanity – everything around gets restored.

The Apostle John is writing down this vision in revelation 21 – he can see this restoration take place as God makes his home with humanity – suddenly there is no death, no grief, no crying, no pain – the former things – in other words, the earthly pain, injustice, inequality – all of that passes away and a new created order is established.

Does that ring any bells, hearing John talk about no death, no grief, no crying – it sounds like Eden, right? No sin, no sickness, no suffering – humanity fully alive in the presence of God.

In other words – everything is being restored.

And then in Revelation 21 the final moment, is God sits down on his throne, which is indicative of his work being complete and he says these words: 'behold I am making all thing new.'

That's our story. God is on a mission to make you new.

And how does God do it? The answer is Jesus.

God wraps himself in flesh and steps into the pain: our God isn't a distant deity that just shouts commands from the sidelines.

No, that's our God, our God jumps into the mess and begins to restore – he lives, he dies, to wash away our sin – and he rises to new life.

God is coming to live, forever in our midst: a healing, comforting, celebrating presence.

The mission of God is found in the Scriptures: and in this time of uncertainty; to be more fully alive we know God through the Scriptures.

You may be sitting here thinking Hayley, that's sounds great, wide-open space, God in the midst – that's great but you don't know what I'm going through... That's great for moments like this...but how can that be in my life.

So, let's get back to some wisdom from Jesus on his top tips for living life in all its fullness – Jesus tells us the secret to life in all its fullness... Matthew 6:24-34 - 'So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.'

If your anything like me, you might want to respond: 'well, Jesus – it's not quite as simple as that; life is quite complicated and complex right now. It's quite difficult, we are not all just roaming around by the Sea of Galilee having a chat with our mates – it's complex!'

But it is worth remembering that Jesus is talking to his disciples and they have left homes; family; friends; jobs to follow him.

Plus, within a couple of years, almost of all of them will have been hated by their friends; they will have been hunted by the authorities; they would have been rejected by their communities – they will be beaten by mobs in the town square.

Some of them will be tortured; they will be imprisoned and they will be executed.

And to them: Jesus says: 'don't worry about your life or your body.'

Why? Because of the birds and the flowers!!! He knows us better than we know ourselves.

And Jesus says: look at the flowers; look how beautifully they are made;  
With precision – with a particular purpose  
Look at the way they grow, by grace – they haven't earned their rain or their food.

It's like God would say to us: 'you are worried about so many things – I made you – perfectly and beautifully – I don't make mistakes; you are beautifully designed by a creator who loves you and knows exactly what you need.

You don't have to fear that you won't have enough provision; or value

Jesus encourages us take a step back and realise who we are and who God is.

God can take the mess and breath life upon it: to heal and restore it.

Jesus calls us to trust in Him

To trust Him with every area of our lives;

Because the return of trusting God is life in all its fullness.

To have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

Look at the flowers. That is the Kingdom of God. God is coming to live, forever in our midst: a healing, comforting, celebrating presence.

## TIME OF RESPONSE

*(During which we will listen/sing along to the following song)*

**Song:** <https://youtu.be/PoRz4e2eEE4>

You call me out upon the waters  
The great unknown where feet may fail  
And there I find You in the mystery  
In oceans deep  
My faith will stand.

And I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise  
My soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours  
You are mine.

Your grace abounds in deepest waters  
Your sovereign hand  
Will be my guide  
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me  
You've never failed  
And You won't start now.

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders  
Let me walk upon the waters  
Wherever You would call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Saviour.

Oh, Jesus, You're my God  
I will call upon Your name  
Keep my eyes above the waves  
My soul will rest in Your embrace  
I am Yours and You are mine

SONGWRITERS: SALOMON LIGTHELM, JOEL TIMOTHY HOUSTON, MATTHEW PHILIP CROCKER.

## **Prayers for Others:** Selina and Lam

Dear Father God,

We come before You with humble hearts, acknowledging Your greatness. Through the preaching of Rev. Hayley, we are reminded to seek first the Kingdom of God and Your righteousness, trusting that all other things will be added to us.

Lord, we confess that too often, we are distracted by the worries and desires of this world, losing sight of the greater treasure found in You. **Dear Father, please help us to refocus our hearts and minds on what truly matters—Your Kingdom and Your will.**

Innocent people across the world are being devastated by regional wars. We are deeply concerned that these conflicts may escalate, leading to greater suffering for civilians. **Dear Lord, we pray for Your**

**intervention to cease the wars and restore peace where it is desperately needed.**

We have witnessed the destructive power of climate change—tsunamis, floodings, droughts, wildfires, earthquakes and famine seem more severe and frequent than ever before. **Dear God, we ask that You bring balance and order back to nature, calming these forces and guiding us toward healing and restoration.**

As winter approaches and the economic outlook remains uncertain, many may struggle with the rising cost of living. Some may face unemployment or even homelessness. **Dear Father, we ask for Your mercy and provision. Only You can save Your people from this plight. Have mercy on us, Lord.**

We give thanks for Abbey International Baptist Church, where Your love has been so evident through the growth we've experienced in recent years. **We pray that You continue to plant the seeds of love, mercy, and peace in every one of our hearts.**

We trust in Your provision for BMS World Mission, which has brought the fullness of life in Jesus Christ to many. **Lord, we ask that You continue to provide the resources needed for BMS World Mission to reach and support those living in Bangladesh and the other fragile countries.**

Dear Father, we long for the new Heaven and Earth, where You will dwell among us, and there will be no more sorrow, injustice, or tears. **Help us to surrender all to You, trusting fully in Your grace. For as we seek You first, all else will fall into place. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

### **Hymn BP&W 62:**

O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the works thy hand hath 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 hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

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:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
and take me home—what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then shall I bow in humble adoration  
And there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

STUART K. HINE (1899-1989)

### **Harvest Blessing:**

May you find heaven in the wilderness of creation;  
May you seek justice in bread for the world;

May you know resurrection in the sunsets of autumn;  
May you find God in the sharing of it all.  
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, go with you always. Amen.

**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.**

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**Today:**

- Harvest service followed by lunch – all welcome
- Interactive evening with mission partners at Wycliffe Baptist Church. Today 5pm VR Mission experience with food. 6pm Interactive Service.

**Dates for your Diary:**

- Tuesday evening prayer open to all on Zoom. 8:00 – 8:30 pm (Meeting ID: 862 1518 8882 PW: 657161)  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86215188882?pwd=0Ln8HnRMbvmYrwCPJbsGDrE0TokDmB.1>
- Walk – Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October
- Baptismal Service – 20<sup>th</sup> October
- Work day at church and at the Manse (where Jim and Julia live) – Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October

If you would like to contribute financially to Abbey International Baptist Church electronically, please use the card reader at the back of the church or scan the following QR code below to pay:

**QR Code for Offering:**

