

**ABBHEY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING**  
WORSHIP SERVICE 10.30 AM 16<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2025  
**Jill Bird leading with Chris Mbukwa preaching**

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

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**THEME: 'We are Family 5 We all serve together Acts 6. 1-7**

Let's take a moment to gaze into heaven. There's a family there, Father, Son and Holy Spirit living and working in perfect harmony. Together they created the world, together they brought in salvation, together they will bring about the end of time. Together they have come to be alongside, and in, each one of us who have come to faith.

**Holy God how we thank you for your threefold presence within us, our loving Father, our faithful saviour and friend Jesus, and you the powerful and wise Holy Spirit, bringing peace and purpose. Amen**

We also are family here together at Abbey Baptist church. We remember our teaching from last week on the challenge of working together as a loving, forgiving, accepting family as in heaven.

And **1 Peter 2.21** says Jesus left us an example that we should follow in his footsteps never asking us to do anything that he had not already shown us the way

Let's pray together

Lord Jesus we look to you as our great example. You lived with your friends and loved them right to the end:

**Peter** who was so active and enthusiastic but then said he didn't even know you

**John** the quiet thinker. The others must have wished he would get going

**Thomas** who took so long to work out who you were and trust you

**Matthew** who maybe the others didn't like because he had served the Romans

**Judas** who turned away and betrayed you

And then **all the others** who you also loved and accepted.

Jesus forgive us for criticising and judging others. You showed us the way to love to the end. Help us to follow in your footsteps. Jesus we look to you – the perfect one to follow

**Amen**

1. All I once held dear, built my life upon,  
all this world reveres and wars to own,  
all I once thought gain I have counted loss;  
spent and worthless now, compared to this.

Knowing you Jesus, knowing you; there is no greater thing.  
You're my all, you're the best,  
you're my joy, my righteousness and I love you, Lord.

2. Now my heart's desire is to know you more,  
to be found in you and known as yours;  
to possess by faith what I could not earn,  
all-surpassing gift of righteousness.

3. O to know the power of your risen life  
and to know you in your sufferings;  
to become like you in your death, my Lord,  
so with you to live and never die.

### **Time of confession**

Jesus you said we were to **love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul**

**Jesus we fall so far short of loving God in this way. Forgive us, we are sorry**

Then you said ' A new command I give you that you **love one another as I have loved you.**

We especially think now of where we have failed this week to love others. When we have not forgiven, when we have not loved as we should, when we have been selfish and done what we wanted and not thought about another's feelings

You say if we come to worship and realise we need to say sorry to someone, we are to first go and sort it out. Relationships are so important to you and we can't hide away .

**Jesus we fall so far short in loving others as you love us. Forgive us, we are sorry**

**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:** Pauline Mbukwa

The offering will be taken during the following song and then the children will leave for their own groups

The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you  
The greatest thing in all my life is knowing You  
I want to know You more I want to know You more  
The greatest thing in all my life is knowing You.

The greatest thing in all my life is being loved by You  
The greatest thing in all my life is being loved by You  
I want to love You more I want to love You more  
The greatest thing in all my life is being loved by You.

The greatest thing in all my life is serving You  
The greatest thing in all my life is serving You  
I want to serve You more I want to serve You more  
The greatest thing in all my life is serving You.

**BIBLE READING: Acts 6:1-7**

**BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 4:8-11**

Jesus, be the centre Be my source, be my light Jesus  
Jesus, be the centre Be my hope, be my song Jesus

Be the fire in my heart Be the wind in these sails  
Be the reason that I live Jesus, Jesus

Jesus, be my vision Be my path, be my guide Jesus  
Jesus, be my vision Be my path, be my guide Jesus

Be the fire in my heart Be the wind in these sails  
Be the reason that I live Jesus, Jesus

**Sermon** The serving family Chris Mbukwa

Today, we continue our series on **We Are Family**. In recent weeks, we have learned that the Church is a family and that God's family is a place of love, acceptance, and forgiveness. Specifically, today, we are looking at the topic of being a **SERVING FAMILY**.

The central message is that given the early church's growth and expansion, problems were inevitable. However, the disciples moved quickly and created the 'shared ministry concept,' which led to even more tremendous growth. We will see that the Kingdom of God advances through intentional unity and the exercise of our gifts. The Book of Acts provides a narrative of how the Holy Spirit fuelled the advance of the gospel and the early church's growth.

Our main passage, Acts 6:1-7 is about how the church faced the problems relating to church growth and how they worked as a family to resolve them. How did the church deal with a serious challenge to unity? Creating new roles provided the solution, and

resulted in a unified church for advancing the kingdom of Jesus. Let us, therefore, make three observations from the passage;

### **Observation 1: Problems that the Church encounters offer opportunities and the potential for growth (Acts 6:1-2)**

The early church considered problems as opportunities, to refine and strengthen its mission to spread the good news about Jesus Christ. As the gospel spread throughout Jerusalem and the surrounding area, the disciples began to encounter the problems that come with growth; coping with the increasing numbers of people!

Before the problem recorded in our central passage today, the church faced three other areas of difficulty.

- The first problem was coping with **opposition through mockery during Pentecost**. They didn't back down or cower; Peter stood up, told them exactly what was happening, and preached the gospel (Acts 2:15).
- The second problem was the **intense persecution by the religious leaders** and rulers. They were told to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18-19). But they courageously chose to continue preaching despite the arrests and other hardships they faced.
- The third problem was the **sinfulness of some believers**, the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to the church and the Holy Spirit. The leaders decisively dealt with the problem by calling Ananias and Sapphira out and they both died as punishment (Acts 5:3-5). They uprooted hypocrisy and brought the fear of the Lord in their midst.

The problem in our main text **is inequality of distribution of food among members; some felt neglected (Acts 6 vs 1)**. This new problem threatened to divide the church into factions and distract the apostles from their prayer and preaching. Satan would want nothing more than to sow division, competition, and complaining into the early church so that they would be distracted from spreading the gospel, so undermining their message of forgiveness, grace, and self-giving love.

We see that the enemy had not succeeded in stopping the church through opposition, persecution or corruption. But Satan gains the upper hand when there is chaos in a church and members are side-tracked from their crucial tasks. The early church provides a valuable lesson to us today: the need to remain watchful and not fall for the many tactics of the enemy.

### **Observation 2: The Solution to the Problem as "Shared Service" (Acts 6 Vs 2-3)**

Given the problem encountered, the apostles took a SWIFT ACTION. Acts 6: 2-3, their response was to correct the problem IMMEDIATELY! They didn't just ignore the problem

and hope it would go away. Friends, it's never helpful to overlook a problem! Decisiveness to tackle our problems without delay is the wisest course.

So, what was their solution? They sought men who understood the concept of serving God, however ordinary or small the tasks may be. Men willing to copy the example of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. Men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and marked by godly wisdom, are chosen to free the church from disorder by taking on serious responsibilities (**Acts 6: 3, 5**). Will you stand and be counted today? If so, you might play a vital role in the revival that our churches need and the awakening that can transform our society.

Previously, the apostles carried out all the work in the church. But God plans to share responsibilities and ministries. God grants His children gifts. These unique gifts and abilities need to be used and developed. The church that encourages its members to use their gifts will be ENRICHED! **Ephesians 4:11-15**

**In Acts 6:2-4**, we notice how the apostles refused to be side-tracked from their ministry to preach the gospel. The church's problem was solved by appointing others to organize and run the other activities (wait on tables). The early church understood the purpose and diversity of each person and their contributions to the local church.

### **Observation 3: The purpose of Serving (Acts 6:7 And 1 Peter 4:11b)**

According to **1 Peter 4:10**, no member is without anything to contribute to the body of Christ. All of us have been given gifts and talents to serve like the early church. We are all needed for Abbey church to function well and grow.

One can't think of a greater purpose of serving than one recorded in **Acts 6:7**: *So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.* We need to copy how the early church avoided distraction and had put their eyes on the goal.

Apostle Peter, whom Jesus said the church would be built upon, mentioned a more telling purpose of serving: **That God may be glorified in everything**. The seemingly little acts of service that church members do brings glory to God. The following verses highlight strongly that serving others has this greater purpose (**1 Peter 4:11, Matthew 5:16 and 1 Corinthians 10:3**). The devil knows that if the body of Christ looks to the glory of God, they will get a deep fire to serve one another to his glory. When the church seeks to serve for the glory of God, the blessing of God follows.

God wants to use us to make a difference in his world and work through us. What excuse are you giving if you are not involved in any service or ministry? In the Bible, we see numerous examples of people who were not finished products yet, but God used them despite their weaknesses. Pastor Rick Warren gives a list of excuses that many in our bible story could have used to stop them serving their generation (Acts 13:36)

**Pastor Rick Warren** writes that Abraham was old, Jacob was insecure, Leah was unattractive, Joseph was abused, Moses stuttered, Gideon was poor, Samson was

co-dependent, Rahab was immoral, David had an affair and all kinds of family problems, Elijah was suicidal, Jeremiah was depressed, Jonah was reluctant, Naomi was a widow, John the Baptist was eccentric to say the least, Peter was impulsive and hot-tempered, Martha worried a lot, the Samaritan woman had several failed marriages, Zacchaeus was unpopular, Thomas had doubts, Paul had poor health, and Timothy was timid. There are many misfits, but God used them uniquely in his service.

**He will use all of us, too, if we stop making excuses.**

I want to serve the purpose of God in my generation  
I want to serve the purpose of God while I am alive  
I want to give my life for something that will last forever  
Oh, I delight, I delight to do Your will

I want to build with silver and gold in my generation  
I want to build with silver and gold while I am alive  
I want to give my life for something that will last forever  
Oh, I delight, I delight to do Your will

What is on Your heart? Tell me what to do  
Let me know Your will And I will follow You

I want to see the Lord come again in my generation  
I want to see the Lord come again while I am alive  
I want to give my life for something that will last forever  
Oh, I delight, I delight to do Your will

#### **PRAYERS FOR OTHERS: Steven Yeung**

**Lord Jesus,** *Thank you for the example of the early church and for teaching us that every person has a role to play. Just as the apostles appointed faithful servants to meet the needs of the people, we ask for your guidance in finding our place in your church.*

**Help us to find our gifting and use it to serve others with love and humility.**

*We pray for the new pastor Zoltan Biro. Lord, we ask you to equip him with wisdom, strength, and spiritual discernment. As you guided the apostles to focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word, may Zoltan be devoted to seeking You and leading with integrity, humility, and faith.*

**Prepare his heart and prepare us to receive him with unity and support.**

*Lord, we lift up the older people in the church and all who struggle during this cold weather. Protect them, provide for their needs, and surround them with care and warmth.*

**Help us to watch out for them and be ready to help.**

*We pray for all the Christians at Reading University as they hold their annual mission this week. Help them to be very bold and confident in you as they invite friends to the many events taking place.*

**May many students come to believe in you this week Lord Jesus**

*Lord we also remember the human pain in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza as these countries have so many grieving the loss of relatives, health and homes.*

***Come close to comfort and help we pray.***

***Fill us with Your Spirit as we serve, and may all we do bring glory to Your name.***

**In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.**

O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end;  
Be Thou forever near me, My Master and my Friend;  
I shall not fear the battle If Thou art by my side,  
Nor wander from the pathway, If Thou wilt be my Guide.

Oh, let me feel Thee near me; The world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle, The tempting sounds I hear;  
My foes are ever near me, Around me and within;  
But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer, And shield my soul from sin.

Oh, let me hear Thee speaking, In accents clear and still,  
Above the storms of passion, The murmurs of self-will;  
Oh, speak to reassure me, To hasten, or control;  
Oh, speak, and make me listen, Thou Guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised , To all who follow Thee  
That where Thou art in glory, There shall Thy servant be;  
And Jesus, I have promised To serve Thee to the end;  
Oh, give me grace to follow, My Master and my Friend.

Oh, let me see Thy footmarks, And in them plant mine own;  
My hope to follow duly Is in Thy strength alone.  
Oh, guide me, call me, draw me, Uphold me to the end;  
And then to rest receive me, My Savior and my Friend.

### **THE BLESSING**

As Joshua took the people of God into the promised land he said 'Choose yourself this day who you will serve. But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.'

Father God as we make our choice today, may you be with us as you were with Joshua. You said 'Be strong and full of courage. Do not be discouraged for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. He will never leave you, but will fill you with his presence until the very end of your life. 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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### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**This week Tuesday evening 20.00 to 20.30 on line zoom church prayer meeting – all welcome**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3952055548?pwd=Vw1pXF00Q0QfM9Qt6DBCDDBmRdFAadQ.1&omn=88603759703> Meeting ID: 395 205 5548 Passcode: LT

**Sunday March 2<sup>nd</sup>** - Renewing of our church Covenant in the service – commitment to love and serve God and each other, as together we reach out with love to our world.

**Sunday March 9<sup>th</sup>** Proposed baptism service – do talk to Jill, Simon or Celia if you would like to be baptised. Service will be followed by a church meeting for all members.

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:**

