

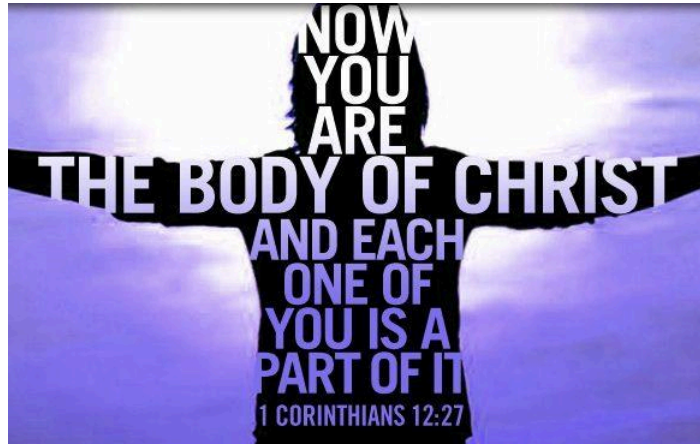
**Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading  
Worship Service with Baptism and Communion**

**10:30AM 19<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

**Simon Bird leading & Rev Dr Julia Binney Preaching**

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

**Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading**



**THEME: We are Family 2 – the body of Christ**

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. (Psalm 100:3)

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** (James 4:8, Jer 29:13, Matt 11:28)

Come near to God, **and he will come near to you.**

You will seek God and find him, **when you seek him with all your heart.**

Come to Jesus, all we who are weary and burdened, **and he will give us rest.**

**BP&W 20/MP650:**

The King is among us,

His Spirit is here!

Let's draw near and worship,

Let songs fill the air.

He looks down upon us,

Delight in His face,

Enjoying His children's love,

Enthralled by our praise.

For each child is special,

Accepted and loved,

A love gift from Jesus

To His Father above.

And now He is giving

His gifts to us all,

For no one is worthless

And each one is called.

The Spirit's anointing  
On all flesh comes down,  
And we shall be channels  
For works like His own.

We come now believing  
Your promise of power,  
For we are Your people  
And this is Your hour.

The King is among us,  
His Spirit is here,  
Let's draw near and worship,  
Let songs fill the air.

GRAHAM KENDRICK GRAHAM KENDRICK © 1981 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

**DECLARATIONS OF PRAISE:** (1 Pet 2:9, 1 Cor 3:16, 1 Cor 12:27)

Thank you that you chose us to be a special people

**We declare your praise**

We are a royal priesthood

**We declare your praise**

We are a temple of the Holy Spirit

**God's Spirit lives among us**

We are the body of Christ

**Each of us is a part of it**

**A PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

For those times when we have not loved you with all our heart.

Gracious God, **forgive us.**

For those times when we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves.

Gracious God, **forgive us.**

For those times when we have broken fellowship with our brother or sister.

Gracious God, **forgive us.**

For those times when we have thought more highly of ourselves than we ought.

Gracious God, **forgive us**

For those times when we have thought less highly of ourselves than you have made us.

Gracious God, **forgive us**

We remember the promise, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn 1:9)

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:** YOU ARE INVITED TO PRAY IN YOUR OWN 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.**

*An offering will be taken during the following song...If you would prefer to contribute electronically, please either use the card machine at the entrance of the sanctuary or scan the QR code on this sheet.*

### **MP151/BPW483**

For I'm building a people of power



For I'm making a people of praise  
That will move through this land by My Spirit  
And will glorify My precious Name  
Build Your church Lord Make us strong Lord  
Join our hearts Lord Through Your Son  
Make us one Lord In Your body  
In the kingdom of Your Son

DAVE RICHARDS/ROGER MAYOR © 1977 THANKYOU MUSIC.

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**GOSPEL READING:** John 1:10-18 (NIVUK)

**NEW TESTAMENT READING:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NIVUK)

### **SERMON: We are Family 2: The Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-27)**

The Apostle Paul wrote many letters to churches. He did so primarily in response to problems that had arisen within that church. Some of these letters make up part of the New Testament. We have much to learn from the mistakes made by the early church and those first followers of Jesus.

For example, the church in Corinth suffered from division, as Paul outlines in the early chapters of his first letter to them. 'One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ' (1 Corinthians 1:12). And he exhorts them to relational health and unity: 'I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose' (1 Corinthians 1:10). The Message interprets this verse more strongly, 'I'll put it as urgently as I can: you *must* get along with each other. You *must* learn to be considerate of one another, cultivating a life in common.' In other words, as Simon ended his sermon with last week, this kind of harmony in our relationships and mutual consideration takes intentional effort; we have to work at it.

Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians to help them with their relationships so they understood more about how they were to function together as church. He does this by describing the church as the body of Christ, as in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 – our passage for today. He doesn't really explain the imagery. He just presumes his readers know what he is talking about. Why does Paul refer to the church as the body of Christ and what can we learn from it about living and serving God together as his family?

## **1. One body – vs. 12,13**

Paul uses this imagery to illustrate the unity and diversity of the church. We can easily see how this works by looking at our own bodies (v.12). Our physical body is a unit that is made-up of many parts – limbs, organs, cells etc. – but no matter how many parts we are speaking of, they all make up one body. Jesus had a physical body in his years on earth. This embodiment is called the Incarnation. He died, rose again, ascended into heaven, poured out the Holy Spirit and created the church. The church is now his body, spiritually speaking. The incarnation of Christ on earth today is embodied by our physical bodies; one body with many parts unified and stuck together by the Holy Spirit, functioning like one body. Through the Holy Spirit, many individual Christians together make up the body of Christ in the world.

We are called to be like Jesus in the world. There is no longer one single physical Jesus on earth but millions seeking to live like Jesus and do what he did. But we are not called to be the same. When we become Christians we don't suddenly develop different personalities. We can and should be ourselves. The church is the one place where we should be able to be fully ourselves, not to play pretend but to be real before God and others, to be what God has made us to be.

The church is not a social club of like-minded people. We are a called out people belonging to God, those who have heard and responded to God's call. When we believe in Jesus, God's Son we become members of God's family. 'To all who received Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God' (John 1:12). It is our fellowship in Christ that unites us: 'We are all baptised by one Spirit into one body' (v.13). No matter who we are or where we come from we are one body made one by the Holy Spirit. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, we are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28).

## **2. Many members – vs. 14-20**

There is one body made-up of different parts and like all bodies these different parts have to function in the way they were designed. What are you designed for in the body of Christ?

The trouble in Corinth was that they weren't functioning as one body. There were divisions and factions.

The problem was one of status. Some of them thought they were more important than they actually were. In Romans 12:3, Paul tells us that we are not think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Jesus told a parable about being invited to a wedding feast. Don't sit in the place of honour because someone more important than you may have been invited and you will be asked to move and take a place further down the table. Jesus said, 'when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say, 'Friend, move up to a higher place...' (Luke 14:7-11).

Whilst we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, we are not to think less of ourselves than we ought either. This is equally wrong because it devalues how God has made us and what he has done in us. Also, we are not to refuse the invitation to go higher up the table when it comes to us. As Jesus warned, do not hide your light underneath a bucket (Matthew 5:15).

As with a physical body, every single member of the body of Christ is important and fulfils a function. Some functions are seen as insignificant or lowly but are absolutely vital or the body is not able to function healthily. Paul emphasises the point with a series of rhetorical questions (vs.14-17). Maybe some in Corinth were feeling dissatisfied with a gift they had and they wanted to be more high profile (they wanted seats higher up the table). Maybe others were feeling useless or worthless. The point Paul is making is that the body would not exist if everyone was the same and had the same gift or function. The body needs variety and different functions to survive (vs.18-20). The body works properly when all the different parts are working together as a team. No one is better than anyone else in God's family; everyone is equally valued by God.

## **3. All parts of the body are important – vs.21-27**

All the parts of the body are important and no part can be dispensed with. Everyone has a part to play. Whether it is an external part that is on show and public or internal and hidden. All are vital as part of the whole. The point about the body imagery is that all parts are related to each other.

The church models a different kind of society to the world. The Kingdom of God functions in a very different way from the world. Society says that we are to look out for number one. It encourages us to feed our self-centredness, to do the things we want to do and blow anyone else. The church is different. We look out for one another and we live dependent lives not independent lives. We are not isolated individuals but a Holy Spirit created community that is affected by one another like parts of a physical body affect each other. If one part is in pain the whole body is affected: 'There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it' (v.26). If one part falls away or is hurting then all hurt. If one part falls into sin then the whole body is affected because it is weakened as if it were diseased.

In church no longer can we think about ourselves only. We are responsible and accountable for our actions not only to God but, under God, to other people. This is good for us. If the hand is not functioning as a hand, what doesn't get done and how is the whole body affected? If the eye has wandered off, how can we see where we are going? We are not autonomous independent creatures but we are linked to others, integrated like parts of the body are linked together. Whilst all are different we are all called to fulfil different roles in the body of Christ. Our accountability includes testing these roles by having them confirmed and affirmed by the church. This requires mutual submission. We need to work together in ways that are complementary, valuing one another in unity and harmony in a way that reflects the very nature of God.

We are all, every single one of us, to seek to be and to do our very best for God in the way that he wants and in the way that he has gifted us. No more and no less. In order to truly function as a healthy body of Christ, we are to encourage one another to fulfil our God-given roles - not only for the sake of that person but for the health of the body as a whole.

**TESTIMONIES & BAPTISMS:** Sajjad Palani & Seyed Amirhasan Rasooli

'We were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body and we were all given the one Spirit to drink' (1 Corinthians 12:13).

**HYMN MP 988:**

How deep the Father's love for us,  
How vast beyond all measure,  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure.  
How great the pain of searing loss –  
The Father turns His face away,  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the man upon a cross,  
My sin upon His shoulders;  
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice  
Call out among the scoffers.  
It was my sin that held Him there  
Until it was accomplished;

His dying breath has brought me life –  
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything,  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom;  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
His death and resurrection.  
Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer;  
But this I know with all my heart –  
His wounds have paid my ransom.

STUART TOWNEND © 1995 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

### **MP54/BP&W 471:**

*Bind us together, Lord,  
Bind us together  
With cords that cannot be broken.  
Bind us together, Lord,  
Bind us together,  
Bind us together with love.*

There is only one God,  
There is only one King;  
There is only one Body,  
That is why we sing:

Made for the glory of God,  
Purchased by His precious Son;  
Born with the right to be clean,  
For Jesus the victory has won.

You are the family of God,  
You are the promise divine;  
You are God's chosen desire,  
You are the glorious new wine.

BOB GILLMAN © 1977 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC

## **RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

### **COMMUNION**

#### **WORDS OF INVITATION:**

Jesus says, 'Come to My table and with me dine  
Eat of my bread and drink of my wine.'  
He offered his body, he poured out his soul,  
Jesus was broken that we might be whole.

FROM BROKEN FOR ME BY JANET LUNT

## **DECLARATION:**

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation (koinonia) in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation (koinonia) in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf. (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)

## **THE INSTITUTION:**

The Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread

And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said,

“This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way after supper He took the cup saying,

“This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

For whether you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

This is the body of Christ, broken for you.

(take a piece of bread and eat as it is served to you)

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

(we drink together once all have been served)

## **PRAYER OF THANKS AND SENDING OUT**

**Father, we thank you and praise you,**

**that when we were still far away**

**you met us in your Son and brought us home and put us in a family.**

**Dying and living, he declared your love,**

**gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.**

**May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;**

**we who drink his cup bring life to others;**

**we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.**

**In Jesus Name, Amen**

## **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION:** Angel Yu

Lord Jesus, we pray for our King and government, asking for wisdom for the Prime Minister and all officials.

**Lord Jesus, may their policies address the needs of all citizens and make the best use of limited resources. Amen.**

Lord Jesus, we lift up those affected by wildfires in California, U.S.A. and earthquakes in Tibet, China and beyond.

**May Jesus calm these disasters and bring relief to the suffering through Your mercy and angels. Amen.**

We also pray for the ongoing wars in Ukraine and elsewhere. We thank you for the

ceasefire in Gaza, and pray for lasting peace and justice. We pray for those persecuted in dictatorial governments.

**Lord Jesus, please bring peace, end the wars, and deliver those suffering from persecution. Amen.**

Lord Jesus, we ask for Your mercy on the homeless in the U.K. during this cold weather.

**Lord Jesus, please provide them with shelter, protection, and guidance to find a safe place to stay. Amen.**

Lord Jesus, we ask for Your blessings upon our church family. Heal the sick, restore the injured, and grant our Iranian brothers and sisters their visas and residency. Guide each one to the right job and home. We pray for Zoltan's visit to preach next week and pray for wisdom for our members to discern if he is Your choice for our next minister. We especially ask for Your special blessing on Julia and Jim as they enter their retirement.

**Lord Jesus, please guide us as a church and raise up leaders to serve Your kingdom. Amen.**

Lord Jesus, we are one family in the church. Please guide us to love You more and to love one another more deeply. Draw the next generation closer to You each day.

**Lord Jesus, may everyone in the church grow nearer to You, follow Your will, and grow in love for You and one another daily. Amen.**

#### **MP428/BPW535:**

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him,  
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,  
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him:  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

TIMOTHY DUDLEY-SMITH © HOPE PUBLISHING, MICHAEL BAUGHEN © THE JUBILATE GROUP (VERSE 3 OMITTED)

## **THE BLESSING**

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. **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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**Church Information:**

**TODAY**

**After the service:** There will be a very short Church Meeting to agree two applications for church membership.

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**The Leadership Course Session 5:**

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – 2.30 pm in person in the Brookside room.

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025 – 7.30 pm on Zoom – please note change of details:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3952055548?pwd=Vw1pXF00OQfM9Qt6DBCDDBmRdFAadQ.1&omn=88603759703>

Meeting ID: 395 205 5548

Passcode: LT

**Zoltan's Visit:** Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January. Zoltan is preaching with a view to becoming the next Minister of Abbey Baptist Church. This service will be followed by a Q & A session to which everyone is invited.

**Baptismal Service:** The next baptismal service will be on Sunday February 2<sup>nd</sup> and another one is being planned already for March. If you would like to be baptised and/or become a Church Member please speak to Simon, Jill or Celia (the Pastoral Team).

If you would like to contribute financially to Abbey International Baptist Church electronically, please scan the QR code to pay:

**QR Code for Offering**

