

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

WORSHIP SERVICE WITH BAPTISMS

10.30 AM 2ND FEBRUARY 2025

REV DR JULIA BINNEY LEADING & REV DR JIM BINNEY PREACHING

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk.

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THEME: 'We are Family 3... The Priesthood of All Believers (1 Peter 2:9)

A CALL TO WORSHIP: *from Psalm 95*

Come, let us sing to the Lord!

Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing songs of praise to him,

For the Lord is a great God, a great King above all Gods.

Come, let us bow before the Lord in worship.

For we are the people of God, the flock under his care.

HYMN BP&W 15:

Let us sing to the God of salvation,
let us sing to the Lord our rock;
let us come to his house with thanksgiving,
let us come before the Lord and sing!

*Praise our maker, praise our saviour,
praise the Lord our everlasting king:
every throne must bow before him
God is Lord of everything!*

In his hand are the earth's deepest places,
and the strength of the hills is his;
all the sea is the Lord's, for he made it
by his hand the solid rock was formed.

Let us worship the Lord our maker,
let us kneel to the Lord our God;
for we all are the sheep of his pasture
he will guide us by his powerful hand.

Let today be the time when you hear him!

May our hearts not be hard or cold,
lest we stray from the Lord in rebellion
as his people did in time of old.

RICHARD BEWES (1934-2019) BASED ON PSALM 95

A PRAYER OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION: *based on Psalm 95*

Lord God, we come into your awesome presence with joy and thanksgiving.

For you are our great God. The Lord and King of our lives.

We bow down in worship before the Lord our maker.

In your hands are the depths of the earth, the mountains and the seas are yours and your hands formed the dry land.

For you are our God and we are the people of your pasture, your chosen ones.

Help us not to harden our hearts to your word but be fully open to your love and care.

Lord God, we confess that we own you with our lips but often deny you in the way we live our lives.

Forgive us. Re-make us in Christ Jesus and inspire us by your Holy Spirit so that others may see that we love you and know you as Lord and King.

May we be bound together as your church, the body of Christ, one in heart and mind.

Receive our thanks and praise through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. 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.**

PRESENTATION: Richard Kingston

FAMILY TIME: Tug o' War

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

MP 734: *(2 verses)*

We really want to thank you, Lord,

We really want to bless Your name,

Hallelujah! Jesus is our King!

We really want to thank You, Lord,

We really want to bless Your name,

Hallelujah! Jesus is our King!

We thank You, Lord, for Your gift to us,

Your life so rich beyond compare,

The gift of Your body here on earth
Of which we sing and share.

We thank You, Lord, for our life together,
To live and move in the love of Christ,
Tenderness which sets us free
To serve You with our lives.

ED BAGGETT © 1974, 1975 CELEBRATION/ KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 5:13-16

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE READING: 1 Peter 2:4-10

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

SERMON: THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS (1 Peter 2:9)

On Sunday mornings we are exploring the various facets of what it means to be part of a local church such as Abbey International Baptist Church. We have entitled this series *We are Family* because being part of a local church is relational not institutional. This morning we are thinking about what is known as 'the priesthood of all believers'.

The concept of the 'priesthood of all believers' is a fundamental doctrine in many Christian traditions, particularly within Protestantism. Rooted in the teachings of



the New Testament, this doctrine asserts that every Christian has direct access to God and can communicate with him without the need for an intermediary priest. It underscores the theological belief that all believers share a common priestly status and responsibility.

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers gained prominence during the Reformation in the 16th century. Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin championed this idea, challenging the prevailing Catholic Church's structure, which emphasized a distinct and elevated priesthood class. Luther, in particular, argued that all baptised Christians are priests and that there is no essential difference between clergy and laity concerning their access to God. Luther contended that the Roman Catholic Church had created a false division between the 'spiritual' and the 'realistic' raising clergy above ordinary people. He argued that all Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are consecrated as priests and share in the common priesthood of Christ.

This doctrine is grounded in various passages from the New Testament. Key verses include 1 Peter 2:9, which describes believers as a 'royal priesthood,' and Revelation 1:6 which speaks of Christians being made 'a kingdom, priests for God.' These scriptures emphasize the collective spiritual authority and responsibility given to all believers. While the New Testament provides the primary basis for the doctrine, the Old Testament also offers parallels. For instance, the nation of Israel was called to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6). This foreshadowed the universal priesthood that would be recognised in the New Testament church, where distinctions between priests and ordinary people are dissolved.

The priesthood of all believers has profound implications for Christian life and practice.

1. Direct Access to God Through Jesus Christ

One of the most significant implications is that we have direct access to God in and through Jesus Christ. Before the Reformation the Western Church was exclusively Roman Catholic and effectively dominated by its Priesthood. In their ignorance the vast majority of people believed that they could only find God through the mediation of their Priests. Martin Luther (himself a Roman Catholic Priest) effectively shattered this heresy and pointed us to Jesus as God's great High Priest – the only One we need to find our way to God. Jesus perfectly fulfils the role of priest – representing God to humanity, and humanity to God (Hebrews 4:14-16). In his Incarnation and Passion Jesus became 'the One mediator who can reconcile God and humanity' (1 Timothy 2:5 NLT). The word 'mediator' means 'bridge builder. Jesus rebuilt the broken bridge between God and humanity and made a way back to God possible for us all. Thus we do not need a human mediator to approach God but, through Jesus Christ, the ultimate High Priest, we can 'come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most' (Hebrews 4:16 NLT).

This personal relationship with God, however, also fosters a deeper sense of spiritual intimacy and responsibility.

2. Called to Represent God to Humankind

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers also encourages every believer to engage in ministry and service. It democratizes the mission of the church, empowering all Christians to use their gifts for building up the body of Christ and the advancement of God's Kingdom. This active involvement contrasts with passive attendance, highlighting the communal and participatory nature of the faith. It affirms the equality and dignity of all members of the Christian community, encouraging active participation and service. Believers are called to minister to one another, offer spiritual sacrifices, and above all bear witness to God's truth in the world. As Jesus himself

said, 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere' (Acts 1:8 NLT).

How do we best do this? By following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21) our great High Priest, who went around doing good (Acts 10:38). By being 'salt and light' (Matthew 5:13-16) – bringing flavour and light into our tasteless, dark world; and being 'yeast' (Matthew 13:33) – causing people and situations around us to rise up and achieve their full potential in God. We need to 'walk the walk (as well as) talk the talk'.

3. Called to Represent Humankind to God

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers also underlines the other side of the priestly coin – like Jesus himself we need to represent humankind to God through our intercession for them. As we saw at the beginning of the year, right now in Heaven Jesus is prayerfully interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25). If nobody else is praying for us... Jesus is! We saw then that Jesus' very presence at the Father's right hand is intercession – he is the reason why we can confidently approach God. Now whilst we cannot intercede for our fellows human beings in that way, we can intercede for them through our prayers. As James tells us 'the earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results' (James 5:16). When Julia and I came to Abbey in 2018 our original vision was for Abbey to become an international, intercultural church... *and prayer centre!* We need to constantly keep in mind the words of Jesus (citing Isaiah 56:7): 'My house will be called a *house of prayer* for all nations' (Mark 11:17). Intercessory prayer (prayer for others) has become the 'Cinderella' of the church (relegated to the sidelines)... but if we do not pray for the church and the world, who will?

4. Called to Be a Team Player

Despite its empowering message, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers has sometimes been misunderstood or misapplied. Some critics argue that it can lead to a diminished respect for ordained ministry and ecclesiastical authority. Some years ago it became popular to replace the phrase 'the priesthood of all believers' with 'every member ministry' in an attempt to update the concept. Whilst this helped to emphasise and clarify the importance of individual gifting within the body of Christ it undermined the fact that our individual ministry gifting is only effective in as much as it is a sharing in the ongoing priestly ministry of Jesus himself rather than in our own strength.

However, proponents assert that the doctrine does not abolish the need for pastoral leadership but rather redefines it within the context of mutual submission to one another. Thus if someone thinks they are called to be an 'apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher' (Ephesians 4:11) for example... that calling has to be tested by their fellow believers. Thus Paul Beasley Murray describes the Baptist perspective on this as 'the ministry of all and the leadership of some.' Balancing the principle of equality with the need for order and structure in the church is essential. The New Testament itself recognizes various roles and functions within the Christian community, such as pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, and so on. But these roles are meant to equip and serve the body, not to create an elite class of spiritual professionals. What is important is that each of us finds his or her place in the team, so to speak, and does not play out of position. As David Huggett's book (written 50 years ago now) challengingly puts it: *Put Me in My Place, Lord*.

The priesthood of all believers is a transformative doctrine that has reshaped the landscape of Christianity. It affirms the inherent worth and spiritual capacity of every Christian, fostering a vibrant and participatory faith. By recognizing the shared priestly calling, believers are encouraged to live out their faith with boldness, humility, and a deep sense of community. As

the church continues to navigate the complexities of modern life, this doctrine remains a vital reminder of the priestly dignity and responsibility that belongs to all who follow Christ.

TESTIMONIES AND BAPTISMS – IRENE CHENG AND ENI DHEKALI

MP 1334: https://youtu.be/a3HH_-1Zbs?si=IEBdbY9jl5yzqJTx

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly trust in Jesus. Name. *(repeat)*

*Christ alone, cornerstone,
Weak made strong in the Saviour's love,
Through the storm, He is Lord
Lord of all.*

When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
My anchor holds within the veil.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless stand before the throne.

VERSES: EDWARD MOTE (1797-1874)

ADDITIONAL WORDS: JONAS MYRIN, REUBEN TIMOTHY MORGAN AND ERIC LILJERO © 2011 HILLSONG MUSIC PUBLISHING

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS: – Lam Yee and Selina Chan

Dear Father God,

We gather here today at Abbey Baptist International Church with hearts full of gratitude. Thank You for bringing us together to worship and seek Your presence among us.

We lift up those suffering from the devastation of wars. **For those who have lost family, homes, and hope, we ask for Your mercy. Bring healing to broken hearts and restore peace to Your people. Amen.**

We also turn our eyes to the challenges of caring for Your creation. Climate change has brought fires, floods, and droughts. **Lord, we ask for Your help in healing the Earth and guiding us to be faithful stewards of what You have entrusted to us. Amen.**

Many are struggling—here in Reading, across the U.K., and throughout the world. The sick, the poor, and the underprivileged need Your comfort and provision. **Grant wisdom and compassion to those in positions of power, and be near to all who call on You. Amen.**

We thank You for Reverend Drs. Julia and Jim Binney, whose faithful service has blessed this Church. **As they step into retirement, we pray for Your continued guidance and blessings in their new chapter. Amen.**

Lord, keep us strong and united as Your family. You are our God, and we are Your people. May Your will be done here and everywhere. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

PRAYERS OF BLESSING: Sophia Ng, Paniz Kaboutrangi, Titus Chan

We thank GOD for bringing Irene and Eni here today to baptism, GOD please help Irene and Eni grow closer to you. Give them hope and guidance. Let them live in the joy of GOD. Help them remember your words even in hard times. Leave Irene and Eni into GOD's hand. **Amen**

Dear Lord, We thank You for the blessing of Irene and Eni as they enter into Your grace through baptism. May Your love shine upon them, guiding their hearts and souls toward Your truth. Fill their lives with faith, joy, and peace, and keep them always in Your care. **Amen.**

Thank you God today. We come with our hearts full of faith, faith in your goodness, faith in your power, and faith in your unfailing love. May father God bless Eni. You give him and guide him new life today. You're lighting his path. Be blessed by god.

We pray all in your precious name, Jesus, **Amen**

BP&W 406:

Church of God, elect and glorious,
holy nation, chosen race;
called as God's own special people,
royal priests and heirs of grace:
know the purpose of your calling,
show to all his mighty deeds;
tell of love which knows no limits,
grace which meets all human needs.

God has called you out of darkness
into his most marvellous light;
brought his truth to life within you,
turned your blindness into sight.
Let your light so shine around you
that God's name be glorified;
and all find fresh hope and purpose
in Christ Jesus crucified.

Once you were an alien people,
strangers to God's heart of love;
but he brought you home in mercy,
citizens of Heaven above.
Let his love flow out to others,
let them feel a Father's care;
that they too may know his welcome
and his countless blessings share.

Church of God, elect and holy,
be the people he intends;
strong in faith and swift to answer
each command your master sends:
royal priests, fulfil your calling

through your sacrifice and prayer;
give your lives in joyful service –
sing his praise, his love declare.

JAMES E. SEDDON (1915-83) BASED ON 1 PETER 2:9-11

THE BLESSING:

As you go, inspired by God's unconditional love,
Walk through the world with mercy in your hearts.
Let your lips speak forgiveness and your hands be ready to bless.
Live out God's call on your life to his glory.
And so may God bless you and keep you today and always.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. 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.**

Church Information:

TODAY

After the service: SPECIAL CHURCH MEETING

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

The Leadership Course Session 6:

- Tuesday 4th February 2025 – 2.30 pm in person in the Brookside room.
- Friday 7th February 2025 – 7.30 pm on Zoom. Details: -
Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3952055548?pwd=Vw1pXF00Q0QfM9Q6t6DBCDDmRdFAadQ.1&omn=88603759703>
Meeting ID: 395 205 5548 Passcode: LT

Julia and Jim's Farewell Service is on **9th February** and will be followed by a church lunch.
Everyone is welcome.

Baptismal Service: Another baptismal service is being planned for March. If you would like to be baptised and/or become a Church Member please speak to one of the Pastoral Team, namely Simon Bird, Jill Bird or Celia Chan.

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:

