

**Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading**  
**Sunday Worship Service with Communion**  
**10:30AM 19 July 2026**  
**Jill Bird leading & Rev. Zoltan Biro preaching**  
[www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk)  
**Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading**



As we come to the end of our series on the meaning of the BAPTIST COVENANT, we first remember and rejoice in our heavenly Father's Covenant with us. He is always faithful to his promises, powerful and full of goodness and unfailing love

**Praise the LORD, oh my soul. All my inmost being praise his holy name**

**Praise the LORD oh my soul and forget not all his benefits.**

**Who forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases, who redeems our lives from the pit and crowns us with love and compassion.**

**He remembers his covenant for ever, to a thousand generations** Psalm 103 and 105

#### **Hymn BPW 62**

1.O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder,  
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made;  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

Chorus 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!

2.And when I think how God, his Son not sparing,  
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;  
That on the cross, my burdens gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin:

3. When Christ shall come with shouts of acclamation,  
To take me home, what joy will fill my heart!  
Then I will bow in humble adoration,  
And there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

**But what is our response to our covenant keeping God?**

**To love the LORD our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our strength and all our mind and our neighbour as ourselves**

BPW 392

Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus thank You Lord for loving me.

Thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus thank You Lord for loving me.

**1** You went to Calvary and there you died for me thank You Lord for loving me

You went to Calvary and there you died for me thank You Lord for loving me

**2** You rose up from the grave to me new life You gave thank You Lord for loving me

You rose up from the grave to me new life You gave thank You Lord for loving me

BPW 326 SPOKEN

**Abba Father, let me be Yours and Yours alone. May my will forever be, ever more Your own  
Never let my heart grow cold Never let me go. Abba Father, let me be Yours and Yours alone**

## **FAMILY TIME**

*(\*An offering will be taken during the following song, after which teenagers and children will leave for their groups)*

**BPW 41**

Father we love you We worship and adore you Glorify Your Name in all the earth

**Chorus** Glorify Your Name Glorify Your Name Glorify Your Name in all the earth

Jesus, we love You We worship and adore You Glorify Your Name in all the earth

Spirit, we love You We worship and adore You Glorify Your Name in all the earth

**BIBLE READING 1:** 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:41-42

**BIBLE READING 2:** 2 Samuel 9. 1-7 and 13

**HYMN MP 37**

As the deer pants for the water, So my soul longs after You.

You alone are my heart's desire And I long to worship You.

**Chorus** You alone are my strength, my shield, To You alone may my spirit yield.

You alone are my heart's desire And I long to worship You.

I want You more than gold or silver, Only You can satisfy.

You alone are the real joy-giver And the apple of my eye.

## **SERMON** **Covenanting: Living Faithfully Together**

### **From Covenant Theology to Covenant Practice**

Over the past weeks we have travelled through the great biblical theme of covenanting. We have seen that covenant is not a human invention but God's chosen way of relating to His people. From Noah to Abraham,

from Sinai to David, and ultimately in the New Covenant established through Jesus Christ, God reveals Himself as the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God.

Today, as we conclude this series, we turn from covenant as a doctrine to covenant as a principle applied in our daily life.

**The question is simple: *How do covenant people actually live?***

To answer that question, we turn to one of the most beautiful relationships in all of Scripture, the friendship between David and Jonathan. They show us that covenanting is ordinary faithfulness made visible: love that commits, gives, protects, and perseveres.

**In their friendship, we see four focused marks of covenant life.**

*(I will hold up three separate lengths of cord, then a braided cord.)* On their own, each cord can be broken with enough force. But when the strands are intentionally bound together, they become much harder to break. Ecclesiastes says, "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Covenanting is the deliberate strengthening of the bonds God has already given us in Christ.

### **I. Covenanting creates unity** *(1 Samuel 18:1)*

"The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David."

Before Jonathan makes a covenant, his heart is already joined to David's. The Hebrew expression literally suggests that their lives became tied together. The relationship comes before the formal promise.

Not identical. Not dependent. But united in God's purposes. The church often assumes that unity simply happens. The Bible suggests something different. Unity is God's gift to us, but covenanting is how we acknowledge it, how we respond to it.

Every healthy marriage reaches a time when feelings wear thin, and we rely on commitment. Every healthy church reaches moments when friendliness becomes faithfulness. So what I want to say is that covenant is more than friendliness. It says, "I belong with these people, and I will walk with them faithfully even when we disagree."

### **II. Covenanting guarantees commitment** *(1 Samuel 18:3–4)*

What is commitment? "Commitment" is a promise or firm decision to do something. It refers to the willingness to dedicate your time and energy to a task or cause, or an obligation that requires your attention. In effect you restrict yourself, you give up your free will.

Jonathan does not merely feel warmth for David; he acts on it. He removes his robe, his armour, his sword, his bow, and his belt. Every item symbolised status, power, authority, and his future as heir to Israel's throne. Jonathan voluntarily lays them before David. Because covenant always involves self-giving.

Promises without sacrifice are merely good intentions. *(I will hold up a £20 note.)* This little piece of paper has value, not because of the paper or the ink, but because of the promise behind it. Relationships are similar. Marriages, friendships, and churches are not sustained by feelings alone; they are strengthened by promises faithfully kept.

Churches that annually do covenanting services simply say, "Lord, by Your grace, we renew our promise to live faithfully with one another." That promise, that commitment, shapes what we give, and how we speak with each other.

### **III. Covenanting grants protection** *(1 Samuel 19:1–7)*

In 1 Samuel 19, covenant faithfulness becomes support. Saul wants David dead, and Jonathan has every reason to stay silent, after all David is his rival. Instead, he speaks for David and places himself between David and danger.

*(I will hold up a small shieldlike object).* A shield is not mainly for attacking; it is for protecting. Jonathan became David's shield. In the same way, every conversation gives us a choice: will I become another spear thrown at my brother or sister, or will I become their shield?

Will I repeat gossip? Will I assume the worst? Or will I defend their reputation? Will I encourage reconciliation? Will I speak well of them when they are absent? Imagine what our church would become if

every member decided, that "When someone is not present, I will be their shield." That is covenant faithfulness: not only loyalty in private, but love that protects another person's name in public.

#### **IV. Covenanting requires Perseverance** *(1 Samuel 20:41–42)*

In 1 Samuel 20, David and Jonathan embrace, weep, and separate. The covenant does not remove grief, but it gives faithfulness a place to stand. Jonathan says, "Go in peace, because we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD." Their circumstances changed, but their covenant did not. When difficult days come, covenant reminds us: "By God's grace, I am already bound to Christ and to His people." So why renew our covenant each year? Because Scripture repeatedly shows God's people renewing covenant, not because God forgets, but because we do. Joshua renewed covenant. Josiah renewed covenant. Nehemiah renewed covenant. And every celebration of the Lord's Supper reminds us again and again of Christ's New Covenant.

But David and Jonathan's covenant is not the final word. It points us to Christ, whose covenant faithfulness saves us. Jonathan gave away his robe; Jesus laid aside the glory of heaven. Jonathan risked his future; Jesus gave His life. Jonathan interceded for David; Jesus intercedes for us.

Every covenant ultimately finds its fulfilment in Him. Therefore, when we renew our covenant with one another, we do so not to earn His love, but because we are anchored in it. A captain does not wait for the storm before checking the anchor. The anchor is made secure in calm weather because one day the wind will rise. Annual covenanting is like that. We renew our commitment while God grants peace, so that when trials come, we already know where we stand: together, anchored in Christ, and committed to one another. David and Jonathan show us that covenant is practical: it shapes our love, sacrifice, action, and perseverance.

My prayer is that we become a more covenantal church: a church that loves deeply, serves joyfully, forgives readily, speaks graciously, and perseveres faithfully.

May we become a covenant-renewing people, not out of duty, but out of gratitude for the One who has never broken His covenant with us. **Amen.**

#### **HYMN BP&W 358**

Take my life, and let it be Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise,

Take my hands, and let them move At the impulse of Thy love;  
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee,

Take my voice, and let me sing Always, only, for my King;  
Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from Thee,

Take my silver and my gold; Not a mite would I withhold;  
Take my intellect, and use every power as Thou shalt choose,

Take my will, and make it Thine; It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart; it is Thine own; It shall be Thy royal throne,

Take my love; my Lord, I pour, At Thy feet its treasure-store.  
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.

**Leonare and Man received into membership - Zoltan**

## COMMUNION

We take communion together to remember and celebrate Jesus's death for us – his NEW COVENANT of love and forgiveness. But we also say that by means of this amazing love, we can renew our commitment to love and serve each other.

**Amazing love, Oh what sacrifice, the Son of God died for us,  
Our debt he paid and our death he died, that we might live**

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 he took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the **new covenant** in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**BPW 486** As we are gathered, Jesus is here; one with each other, Jesus is here.  
Joined by the Spirit, washed in the blood, part of the body, the church of God.  
As we are gathered, Jesus is here, one with each other, Jesus is here.

**Sharing the Bread** So when we take and eat the Bread let us remember, that Christ died for us and feed on him in our heart by faith with thanksgiving. Today let's wait and eat the bread all together as a sign of our commitment to each other.

**Sharing the Wine** Drink this and remember that Christ's blood was shed for you and be thankful.

**BPW 484** Let there be love shared among us Let there be love in our eyes  
May now Your love sweep this nation. Cause us oh Lord to arise  
Give us a fresh understanding Of brotherly love that is real,  
Let there be love shared among us, Let there be love

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION Angel

### 1. Prayer for World Conflicts

Heavenly Father, we pray for peace and healing in our world. We lift up the Middle East, Ukraine, Israel, Palestine, and all nations facing conflict and suffering.

**Lord, bring peace to our world, protect innocent lives, comfort those who are hurting, and guide leaders to seek justice and reconciliation.**

Lord Jesus, please strengthen Your church to be faithful witnesses of Your love, hope, and peace.

**May people find hope and security in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

### 2. Prayer for the Bangkok Fire

Heavenly Father, we pray for everyone affected by the fire in Bangkok. Comfort those who have lost loved ones, heal the injured, and protect those responding to this tragedy.

**Lord Jesus, bring comfort, strength, peace, and hope to all those affected. In Jesus' name, Amen.**

### 3. Prayer for Our Church Ministries

Heavenly Father, we pray for all our church ministries: Renew Wellbeing, Bible Study groups, Discipleship – First Step Groups, Toddlers Group, "This Is Jesus" Group, Sunday School classes, outreach programs and the Table Tennis Group.

**Lord, bless every ministry, guide those who serve, and use them to bring people closer to Jesus and grow Your kingdom.**

May every ministry faithfully point people to Christ and bear lasting fruit.

**In Jesus' name, Amen.**

#### **4. Prayer for Our Church Family**

Heavenly Father, we lift up our church family to You. Help us draw closer to Jesus, listen to Your voice, and follow Your ways.

**Lord, bless those applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain and settlement visas, those who are unwell, those seeking jobs, and every family in need of Your grace and provision.**

We pray for the next generation—that they will grow in faith, remain focused on Jesus, and stand firm in Christ.

**Lord, guide our next generation, and bless our graduates, and provide them with loving spiritual communities where they can grow.**

May our lives bear spiritual fruit and may we faithfully share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**In Jesus' name, Amen.**

#### **HYMN BPW483**

For I'm building a people of power  
And 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*

#### **BLESSING**

**LORD send us out today in the power of your unfailing love, that we may both love you and love one another**

**In Jesus name 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.

---

**After the service today: Cantonese bible study and First Steps course**

#### **Events to highlight next week**

|                          |         |                        |
|--------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup> | 8.00 pm | ZOOM prayer meeting    |
| Wednesday 22nd           | 10.30   | Renew Wellbeing        |
|                          | 12.00   | Bible Study            |
|                          | 2.00    | This is Jesus – Week 6 |
| Thursday 23rd            | 10.30   | Bible Study            |
|                          | 10.30   | Toddlers               |
| Friday 24th              | 4.30    | Table Tennis Club      |



**QR Code for Financial Offering**