

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Sunday Worship Service with Communion - 10:30am 21 June 2026
Bridget Gurney leading & Jill Bird preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



Covenant as Fellowship

Call to Worship

This is the time to worship God

He brings us life

This is the time to sing his praise

He brings us joy

This is the time to pray to him

He brings us forgiveness and renewal

This is the time to hear his word

He brings us guidance and hope

This is the time to show your love for him

He brings us love beyond our deserving

HYMN BPW 61

O give thanks to the Lord,
all you his people,
O give thanks to the Lord for he is good.
Let us praise, let us thank,
let us celebrate and dance,
O give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

JOANNE POND / © 1980 Thankyou Music

HYMN BPW 52

Jesus, we enthrone you,
we proclaim you our King,
standing here in the midst of us
we raise you up with our praise.
And as we worship, build a throne;
and as we worship, build a throne;
and as we worship, build a throne;
come, Lord Jesus, and take your place.

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FAMILY TIME

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

HYMN 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, O 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.

DAVE BILBROUGH / © 1980 Thankyou Music / CCL Licence Number: 1763

BIBLE READINGS: Philippians 1 1-11 Philippians 2 1-11

HYMN BPW 105

Speak, Lord, in the stillness,
speak your word to me;
help me now to listen
in expectancy.

Speak, O gracious Master,
in this quiet hour;
let me see your face, Lord,
feel your touch of power.

For the words you give me,
they are life indeed;
living bread from heaven,
now my spirit feed.

Speak, your servant listens—
I await your word;
let me know your presence,
let your voice be heard!

Fill me with the knowledge
of your glorious will;
all your own good pleasure
in my life fulfil.

EMILY M. CRAWFORD (1864-1927) / © Jubilate Hymns / CCL Licence Number: 1763

Sermon - Covenant as fellowship

Readings Philippians 1. 1-11 Philippians 2 .1-11

We are midway through our series on the meaning and significance of the word Covenant in the Baptist tradition. We are leading up to a special service when we will together renew our church covenant which is our commitment to each other as we rejoice in God's covenant with us.

So far we have been looking at the amazing ways God has revealed his Covenant heart to us – so much more than a contract. It is based on his faithful, unchangeable promises made to us in mercy and love. We looked at his promises through Noah to never again flood the earth, his covenant promises through Abraham to bless and preserve his people, and through the redeeming death and resurrection of Jesus to make us eternally his children.

Today we are moving on to look at what it means to work out this covenant relationship with each other. We are no longer orphans but beloved children of God, joined into a family. The New testament has various other pictures for this – joined as parts of a human body, joined together as bricks in a building, but perhaps most precious joined as closely as the members of a loving family. This is not a social club but the home of a vibrant caring loving family.

So which part of our covenant is relevant for today – I will read it out and then maybe we can slowly read it together. ***We are a church family in Reading, sharing friendship, time, encouragement, and care through every season of life*** So, we commit:

- to welcome people from every background, creating a place where all can belong, feel at home, and worship God together.
- to carry one another's burdens and to support one another in times of difficulty;
- to be patient with one another's weaknesses;
- to protect the unity of the church through peace, forgiveness, and love.

We are going to look at the letter Paul wrote to the church he had planted in Philippi. He wrote the letter from his first time in prison in Rome about AD 50. He had a very special love for this church, the first he planted in Europe. The letter is to thank them for their ongoing financial support for him – the only church to do this and also that they had generously sent one of their members, Epaphroditus, to look after him in prison. But it is also to encourage them that they are doing 'church' well. He starts his letter by saying they are living together in a way that brings him such joy. He always remembers them and prays for them with such thanks and joy. V 3-4.

How would Paul start his letter to the church in Abbey???

Cultures are all different, but many of us come from cultures where individualism and privacy are so highly valued. Our UK culture is summed up by the saying 'The Englishman's home is his castle'. Put up walls around yourself, don't let anyone know your troubles. 'Have a stiff upper lip'.

What about your culture???

Let's think for a minute about the word fellowship. We use it so commonly in church – have some fellowship over coffee! We advertise a fellowship lunch. But what does it really mean. Acts 2.42 says they devoted themselves to fellowship – surely it means more than a friendly chat!

The Greek word is *koinōnia*, which describes a deep spiritual partnership, shared identity. It involves mutual support, accountability. The same word in those days was used for Siamese twins, just think how closely they lived; actually joined and sharing one blood supply and often much else. That gives great depth to the idea of our common life together. If one dies they both die. What happens to one happens to the other.

So let's turn and look how Paul described church life in Philippi. He does it with such love!

Ch 4.1 Therefore my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, this is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends

Right from the start Paul sees the best in the Philippians. He encourages and gives thanks for all the good things he sees in their fellowship together. What a lovely spirit to have towards each other? Do we have it here – or are we quick to see what needs changing or complain!

He sets out standards for this common life. In chapter 1, we pick up these points

1. **No room for boasting or lording over others** v 1 I am your servant - you are the saints
2. He prays for them that their **love for each other will grow and overflow** 1. 9
3. They knew **they needed each other** 1. 27 They stood firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the gospel

Then the wonderful passage in Ch 2 to model themselves after Jesus himself. Remember in the English translation the you is a plural word. This gives it the true meaning.

So 'YOU' Abbey church

- Be encouraged as you are united together in Christ – Siamese twins!
- You together are comforted in his love
- You together have fellowship with the Spirit

- You together have tenderness and compassion for each other
- You together look to each other's interests not just your own
- You together count all others better than yourselves in humility

Your attitude in fact should be the same as JESUS – Jesus living in us and through us

There is so much in Philippians we could dwell on in this life together

- Do everything without complaining or grumbling 2.14
- Sort out disagreements quickly The two ladies in ch 4 – they were to help them agree with each other
- Be joyful always – don't be anxious - pray together about everything

As we prepare ourselves for Covenant Sunday let's be so thankful for our family here at Abbey and ask God to help us be more like the church in Philippi with joy!

To finish, let's remember again Paul's words in Ch4.1: Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, this is how you will stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

I pray for such an outpouring of God's love on us through our understanding of his COVENANT with us, that we truly become Jesus to each other in love and true fellowship.

HYMN BPW 472

Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
our mutual burdens bear,
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.

When for a while we part,
this thought will soothe our pain,
that we shall still be joined in heart,
and hope to meet again.

This glorious hope revives
our courage by the way,
while each in expectation lives,
and longs to see the day.

From sorrow, toil, and pain,
and sin we shall be free;
and perfect love and friendship reign
through all eternity.

JOHN FAWCETT (1740-1817) / CCL Licence Number: 1763

Communion

As we come to this very special time, our communion with each other and the Lord, let us listen to the account of the first supper from Corinthians as described by Paul

The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of 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 also 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.

Jesus said 'I am the bread of life'. As you take the bread and eat it remind you self that Jesus gives us life.

'This cup is the new covenant in my blood' said Jesus. He gave his life that we might have life. Give thanks to the Lord.

Prayer of thanksgiving

Jesus, you gave your life that we might have eternal life. You became a sacrificial lamb which had to be given for forgiveness for sins. But you did it once and for all of humankind. No more lambs need to be sacrificed. On the cross you forgave our sins. We stand here in your presence and say thanking for cleansing us and giving us life. **Amen**

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION Father God, we come before you today knowing and thanking you for your faithfulness in our lives and that your covenanted love is shown in everything that you do and say to each one of us. Forgive us Lord, for the times when we have not responded to you and gone our own way. Jesus, we lift to you the Nations and Countries at war and pray that you would be heard above the clamour and nations would end the strife and people could live in peace.

Spirit, we look to you to send your flame on each one of us that we would be bold and courageous in spreading your word, that Jesus would live in the hearts of all. and his Kingdom reign.

We pray for the Government of our own country that all that they do would benefit each one of us, that poverty is eradicated, that each person matters and is cared for.

We remember today with love our fathers' who taught and guided us from childhood into adulthood and into the next generation.

We lift these prayers and ourselves to you Lord, through Jesus your Son our Saviour. Amen

HYMN BPW 473

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

RICHARD GILLARD (b. 1953) / © 1977 Scripture in Song/ Thankyou Music / CCL Licence Number: 1763

BENEDICTION

May Father, Son and Holy Spirit bind us together in loving fellowship, today and through the coming week.
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**

Events to highlight this coming week:

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|----------------------------|-------|------------------------|
| Tuesday 23 rd | 8.00 | Zoom prayer meeting |
| Wednesday 24 th | 10.30 | Renew Wellbeing |
| | 12.00 | Bible Study |
| | 2.00 | This is Jesus – week 4 |
| Thursday 25 th | 10.30 | Bible Study |
| | 10.30 | Toddlers |
| Friday 26 th | 4.30 | Table Tennis Club |
| Saturday 27 th | | Abbey Walk |

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| Sunday 28 th 10.30 Worship Covenant as discipleship (Luke 14:25-33; Romans 12:1-13; Hebrews 10:15-25) |
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