

Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Pentecost Sunday Worship Service
with Children's Dedication
10:30AM 24 May 2026
Selina Chan leading & Rev. Dr. Zoltan Biro preaching
www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk
Find us on Facebook @Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



THEME: Our fellowship in Christ (Colossians 3:18-4:6 & Acts 2:40-44)

Good morning, dear brothers and sisters. Just a recap of what we learned from last Sunday's service: we are called to walk in holiness as part of our new life in Christ. As Jill reminded us, Jesus says that if we love Him, we should obey His commands (John 14:15). Indeed, love is the motivation for our pursuit of holiness.

Today is Pentecost, marking the birth of the Church and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Let us be enlightened by Zoltan as he shares with us how we should practise our fellowship in Christ.

CALL TO WORSHIP

People of God, come with joyful hearts on this Pentecost day.
The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon every one of us.
Where there was fear, God brings courage.
Where there was division, God creates one body in Christ.

As the early believers devoted themselves to fellowship, prayer, and the breaking of bread, so we gather today in unity and love.

Let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, and let our words be filled with grace and thanksgiving.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill this place and renew Your people.

Let us worship God together. Amen.

Hymn MP 241

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Move among us with holy fire,
As we lay aside all earthly desires,
Hands reach out and our hearts aspire.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Let the breeze of Your presence blow,
That Your children here might truly know

How to move in the Spirit's flow.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Please accomplish in us today
Some new work of loving grace, we pray -
Unreservedly - have Your way.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

CHRIS BOWATER © 1986 SOVEREIGN LIFESTYLE MUSIC.

FAMILY TIME - CHILDREN'S DEDICATION

In the name of Jesus Christ, we welcome this morning three families who come to give thanks with us for the gift of their children Moses and Agnes who came with Grace. Ezra and Taisuki who come with Kaleb. Arthur and Kristy who came with Eitan. Jesus was presented by his parents in the Temple. In turn, he took young children in his arms and blessed them. Celebrating the gift of life and the faithfulness of God, we are going to covenant together, as parents and as a church, making promises before God for the sake of these children. Here we share joy over the gift of *these children* and praise God, the giver of all life. We celebrate family life, acknowledging that children are not the property of parents but, they are persons with whose welfare and nurture, we are all entrusted. Concerned about the dangerous world into which they are born, and honestly aware of the sinfulness which will soon mar their lives, we here pray in trust that God will bless and protect them. Together we celebrate the importance of community and the truth that parents and children need not be alone. Here we confess and proclaim that all our hope rests in Jesus Christ and the best we can want for our children is that they become his true disciples. Scripture calls us to see in children a sign of the kingdom of God. *These children* are living sign that God welcomes us without condition lavishing love and grace on all who come to him with empty hands and open hearts.

Readings

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Matthew 18:1-5

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Mark 10:13-16

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lord God, creator of all things, giver of life, we praise you. You are the loving parent of each person and joyfully we thank you now for the gift of new life in the birth of these children. For all that you have given, and will give to us, through *them*, and for the possibilities of *their* new life, we thank you. For the love which has called *them* into existence, for the love and hope *they* have awakened, and for the care which surrounds *them*, we give you our thanks and praise. in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Promises

Moses and Agnes, do you thank God for the gift of your child, and do you accept the joys and duties of parenthood?

Gladly, we do.

Do you promise to bring your *daughter* up within the Christian community, and, by God's grace, so to live that *she* will be nurtured by Christian love and surrounded by the life of Jesus?

As disciples of Jesus, we do.

Fung, Will you promise to love and help care for your *sister*?

Yes!

Ezra and Taisuki, do you thank God for the gift of your child, and do you accept the joys and duties of parenthood?

Gladly, we do.

Do you promise to bring your *son* up within the Christian community, and, by God's grace, so to live that *he* will be nurtured by Christian love and surrounded by the life of Jesus?

As disciples of Jesus, we do.

Arthur and Kristy, do you thank God for the gift of your child, and do you accept the joys and duties of parenthood?

Gladly, we do.

Do you promise to raise your *son* up within the Christian community, and, by God's grace, so to live that *he* will be nurtured by Christian love and surrounded by the life of Jesus?

As disciples of Jesus, we do.

Addressing the congregation

Gathered here as members of this congregation and as representatives of the wider church of God, do you promise to offer these children and *these* families your love and support, and, being faithful in prayer, will you share your faith with *them* by word and example? If you will promise this, please stand.

The minister addresses the children

We rejoice, for you are God's gift to us.

May all of you grow strong in the knowledge and love of God;

we pray that one day you all will be disciples of Jesus Christ,

following him through the waters of baptism and in a life of faithful witness;

May one day Grace, Kaleb and Eitan bear the fruit of his Spirit and live his great gift of love.

Grace, the Lord bless you and guard you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace. **Amen.**

Kaleb, the Lord bless you and guard you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace. **Amen.**

Eitan, the Lord bless you and guard you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace. **Amen.**

Meeting the Congregation

The children of the church may be invited to come forward and greet the child. They will sing a song.

Grace, Kaleb and Eitan these are your friends and family. You are a gift to them and a sign from God that we must all come as little children, with empty hands and open hearts. Come and meet them, that they may thank God for you.

Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of these children and now pray for their protection and flourishing. We live in a difficult and dangerous world and we ask that you will keep them safe from harm.

We pray for these families, for *Moses and Agnes, for Ezra and Taisuki and for Arthur and Kristy* and ask for your help in the care and nurture of *Grace, Kaleb and Eitan*. We pray *they* might know your love through their love, discover your guidance through their guidance and come to trust in you and become a disciple of Jesus. This we ask in the name of our saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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

Song MP 18

All over the world the Spirit is moving,
All over the world as the prophet said it would be;
All over the world there's a mighty revelation
Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

All over His church God's Spirit is moving,
All over His church as the prophet said it would be;
All over His church there's a mighty revelation

Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Right here in this place the Spirit is moving,
Right here in this place as the prophet said it would be;
Right here in this place there's a mighty revelation
Of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

ROY TURNER © 1984 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

PRAYER

Gracious God,
we praise You for the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost.
You gather people of different nations into one family and fill Your Church with life and hope.
We thank You for the fellowship and for Your call to live in Your way. Amen.

Merciful Lord,
we confess that we do not always live as Your people.
Our words are not always gracious, our hearts not always loving, and our lives not always faithful to Your calling.
Forgive us and renew us by Your Spirit.
Clothe us with compassion, humility, kindness and patience,
so that our lives may reflect the love of Christ.
**Fill us again with Your Holy Spirit,
and send us out to serve You with joy and courage;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

BIBLE READING 1: Colossians 3:18-4:6

BIBLE READING 2: Acts 2:40-44

HYMN

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me,
Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me.
Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God,
move among us all;
make us one in heart and mind,
make us one in love,
humble, caring,
selfless, sharing.

Spirit of the living God,
fill our lives with love.

DANIEL IVERSON (1926) v1; MICHAEL BAUGHEN v.2 © 1978 HOPE PUBLISHING

SERMON

Our Fellowship in Christ

Colossians 3:18–4:6 and Acts 2:40–44

As we come to the final message in our series through Colossians, we have seen again that the Christian life is completely rooted in the risen Christ. Paul has shown us who Christ is, what Christ has done, and how everything changes when Christ becomes central in our lives. Now, as he closes the letter, he brings all that glorious truth right down into ordinary life. He speaks about households, work, prayer, and witness. In other words, he shows us that being rooted in Christ is not only about what we believe on a Sunday; it is about how we live with one another every day.

That is especially fitting on Pentecost Sunday, because Pentecost reminds us that the church is a people formed by the Holy Spirit. The message before us today is simple and challenging, if Christ has truly risen and if Christ truly reigns, what should our relationships would look like? Now on a day when we had children dedications, we absolutely can see that faith is not lived in isolation but in community, in homes, in friendships, and in the shared life of the church. So

Think for a moment about a tree. When you look at a healthy tree, the first thing you notice is not the roots. You notice the trunk, the branches, the leaves, perhaps even the fruit. But all that visible life depends on something hidden beneath the ground. If the roots are deep, the tree stands firm. If the roots are healthy, the fruit appears in season. In the same way, when our lives are rooted in the risen Christ, the evidence will show up in visible ways: in how we speak, how we love, how we work, how we pray, and how we treat one another.

So let us walk through this passage together and see four ways fellowship in Christ takes shape: it begins at home, it shapes everyday conduct, it is sustained through prayer, and it becomes our witness to the world.

I. Fellowship in Christ begins at home (Colossians 3:18–21)

Paul begins with the closest relationships: husbands and wives, parents and children. That is striking, because if we were writing the letter, we might begin with church meetings or public ministry. But Paul begins in the home. Why? Because spiritual life is first tested there. It is one thing to sing about grace in a congregation; it is another thing to show grace in the kitchen, in the car, at the dinner table, and in the ordinary pressures of family life.

The risen Christ does not only transform what happens in worship services. He transforms marriages, parenting, attitudes, tone of voice, habits of patience, and the words we speak when nobody else is listening. If Christ is Lord, then He must be Lord of the unseen places as well as the public ones.

a. *Relationship between wives and husbands,*

Paul calls for a pattern of respect, love, sacrifice, and gentleness. This is not the language of power games; it is the language of Christlike love. The home is to be a place where self is not enthroned and where love does not keep score. In this passage love and submission is interdependent. Submission won't happen unless love is present, and love will not be sustained unless submission exists.

Let me illustrate this with the picture of two people carrying a table together. If one insists on going their own way, the table bangs into walls, scrapes the doorway, and becomes frustrating to move. But when both listen, adjust, and bear the weight together, what looked hard becomes possible. Many homes do not need a dramatic miracle first; they need daily surrender, mutual care, and the grace to say, "I was wrong," and "Please forgive me."

b. *Relationship between parents and children.*

In the next verse the writer says, "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." Paul understands something deeply important: it is possible to control behaviour

while crushing the heart. It is possible to demand obedience without nurturing trust. But Christian parenting is not merely about managing children; it is about guiding their souls.

Here is a simple lesson. This small oak tree, cannot be treated the same way as a mature tree. How can you make it grow faster. Shall I pull it upward? NO. You water it, place it in the light, protect it from harsh conditions, and tend it patiently. Children are similar. They need truth, yes; they need guidance, yes; but they also need tenderness, encouragement, and consistent love.

Today's children dedication wasn't only about bringing children to God; it was also about dedicating ourselves. Parents are saying, "By God's grace, we want to raise this child in the ways of the Lord." And the church is saying, "By God's grace, we will pray, encourage, support, teach, and model Christ before them."

Children often understand the gospel first through the relationships they see. They learn what grace sounds like when they hear an apology. They learn what faithfulness looks like when they see prayer in difficulty. They learn what church means when they experience kindness from the people of God. Long before they can explain doctrine, they are learning it through our actions. Our fellowship begins at home, but it must not end there; it stretches outward into the household of faith.

II. Fellowship in Christ shapes everyday conduct (Colossians 3:22–4:1)

Paul then speaks about work and responsibility. In the ancient world, these instructions addressed slaves and masters but the principle reaches into every workplace, every classroom, every task, and every area of responsibility today. When Paul wrote this letter, half of the people on the streets of Rome were slaves. They were, cooks and maids of course, but they were also teachers and doctors and people who worked in the building industry and various businesses.

Paul says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord." That means the Christian faith is not confined to church services or private devotion. It reaches into emails, spreadsheets, school runs, meetings, laundry, caregiving, studying, volunteering, and every hidden task that no one applauds. Because if we belong to Jesus, then no part of life is spiritually neutral.

Imagine a carpenter making a table. If he knows no one will ever look underneath it, he may be tempted to leave the underside rough and unfinished. But a craftsman with integrity works carefully even where the eye does not see. Why? Because the standard is not simply public approval; it is the quality of the work itself. If something is worth doing it is worth doing well. But a Christian should also work with integrity because the Lord sees what others overlook.

Being rooted in Christ affects our honesty, our attitude, our integrity, and the way we treat people. It reshapes ambition. It softens pride. It confronts laziness. It corrects harshness. It means people should meet something of Christ through our fairness, our humility, our kindness, and our faithfulness.

What this means is that fellowship is not limited to Sunday morning coffee time. We do not leave our discipleship at the church door and pick it up again next week. If Christ is truly Lord, then our work changes, our treatment of others changes, and our priorities change. The person who serves quietly, keeps their word, refuses to cut corners, and treats others with dignity is preaching a sermon long before they speak one.

III. Fellowship in Christ is sustained through prayer (Colossians 4:2–4)

Paul now turns to prayer and says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." Strong fellowship is not sustained merely by activity, organisation, or good intentions. It is sustained by dependence upon God. Prayer unites believers, deepens love, and keeps Christ at the centre.

Let me put it this way, prayer is to the church what breathing is to the body. You can have structure, bones, and muscles, but without breath there is no life. In the same way, a church may have meetings, calendars, plans, and programmes, but if prayer is absent, something vital is missing. Prayer is not an optional extra for especially devoted Christians; it is the lifeblood of fellowship.

Even Paul, the apostle, asks the church to pray for him. That should humble us. If Paul needed prayer, then certainly we do as well. We all depend upon God's strength, wisdom, and grace. Pentecost reminds us of exactly that. The church was born in dependence upon the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, the believers were not united by celebrities or their preference, but by God's presence. Their life together was marked by devotion, generosity, gladness, and shared worship.

So, if we want stronger fellowship, we must become a praying people. Pray in your home. Pray with your children. Pray before difficult conversations. Pray for those who serve. Pray for those who are suffering. Pray for open doors for the gospel. And pray with thanksgiving, because gratitude protects prayer from becoming a list of anxieties and turns it into an act of trust.

IV. Fellowship in Christ becomes our witness (Colossians 4:5-6)

Paul finishes with how believers relate to the outside world: "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders... Let your conversation be always full of grace." Christian fellowship is never meant to become isolated or narrow-minded. A church rooted in Christ should reflect Him publicly. What happens among us should become visible through us.

Consider scent for a moment. You do not have to announce that a room has fresh bread, coffee or flowers; the aroma reaches people before any explanation does. In a similar way, gracious speech, patient conduct, and genuine love have a spiritual fragrance. People may not know all the words for what they are sensing, but they can often tell when something different is present.

That is why our witness is strengthened when our fellowship is genuine. People may forget sermons, but they often remember kindness, grace, patience, and love. They remember whether they were welcomed. They remember whether they were listened to. They remember whether the people of Christ looked anything like Christ.

So let us ask the Lord to season our words with grace. In a harsh age, let the church speak with kindness. In a cynical age, let the church speak with hope. In a noisy age, let the church learn the wisdom of listening well. Our words should not be weak, but they should be gracious; not vague but seasoned with truth and mercy.

Paul ends Colossians not with abstract theology but with relationships, because the risen Christ changes homes, churches, conversations, workplaces, and communities. As we conclude this series, we remember that we are filled with Christ, freed by Christ, made new in Christ, and brought together in Christ. The gospel is not merely something we agree with; it is something that reshapes the way we live together.

May our fellowship show the reality of the risen Christ to one another and to the world.
May our homes bear witness to His peace,
May our work reflect His lordship,
May our prayers reveal our dependence,
May our words carry His grace.
May the Holy Spirit, poured out at Pentecost, make us into the kind of church where Jesus is not only preached but seen. Amen.

Hymn MP 25

All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

Chorus

*I surrender all, I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Saviour, I surrender all.*

All to Jesus I surrender, Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken;
Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Saviour, wholly Thine;
Let me feel Thy Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.

All to Jesus I surrender, Lord, I give myself to
Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me.

All to Jesus I surrender, Now I feel the sacred flame.

Oh, the joy of full salvation! Glory, glory to His name!

JUDSON W VAN DE VENTER (1855-1939)

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (Lam & Selina)

Dear Father God, The wind has blown, the fire has fallen, and we hear once again the voice of Pentecost crying out: *“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”* Lord, help us to leave behind the noise and distractions of this world, and lead us into the renewing breath of Your Holy Spirit.

This world is far from peace. The suffering in Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, and Ukraine seems never-ending. The Strait of Hormuz remains under tension, and the threat of war continues to spread fear among nations.

Lord, we pray for RESCUE. We beg for PEACE. Amen.

Merciful God, our leaders are struggling to lead with wisdom and compassion. Retail shops and restaurants are burdened by rising costs and heavy business rates. Inflation continues to rise, while energy and food prices place many families under great pressure. The number of homeless people is increasing, and many have lost their jobs and livelihood. **Lord, we ask for COMPASSION. We beg for AFFORDABILITY. Amen.**

Loving Father, our medical system is under strain. The sick, especially those suffering from mental illness, are often not receiving the care they need. Many patients face long waiting lists and delayed treatments, while doctors, nurses, and carers are exhausted and overstretched. **Lord, we long for HEALING. We beg for HOPE. Amen.**

Dear Lord, bless our Church and our fellowship with faith, love, and joy. Open before us a door that leads us ever closer to You, our eternal home. **May the mystery of Your grace shape our lives and become our everlasting hope and destiny.**

We must not forget the charities we support through our Home Mission: CCA, CIRDIC, REInspired, Mustard Tree, the Bower Family, as well as Ray Lam and his family. Strengthen their hands, Lord, as they pursue these good causes in Your mighty name. Provide them with wisdom, resources and resilience.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Hymn MP 1004

O God of burning, cleansing flame: send the fire!
Your blood-bought gift today we claim:
send the fire today!
Look down and see this waiting host,
And send the promised Holy Ghost;
We need another Pentecost!
Send the fire today!
Send the fire today!

God of Elijah, hear our cry: send the fire!
And make us fit to live or die: send the fire today!
To burn up every trace of sin,
To bring the light and glory in,
The revolution now begin!
Send the fire today!
Send the fire today!

It's fire we want, for fire we plead: send the fire!

BENEDICTION

Go now in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.
May your speech always be gracious,
your fellowship filled with love,
and your lives marked by generosity and joy.

The fire will meet our every need: send the fire today!
For strength to always do what's right,
For grace to conquer in the fight,
For power to walk the world in white:
Send the fire today!
Send the fire today!

To make our weak hearts strong and brave:
send the fire!
To live, a dying world to save: send the fire today!
Oh, see us on Your altar lay,
we give our lives to you today,
So crown the offering now we pray:
Send the fire today!
Send the fire today!
Send the fire today!

WILLIAM BOOTH. ADPT. LEX LOIZIDES. COPYRIGHT © 1994

KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

As the believers at Pentecost were sent into the world with courage and hope, so may you go to serve our Lord in the power of the Spirit.

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 next week:

Tuesday 26 th	8pm	Zoom Prayer
Wednesday 27 th	10:30am	Renew Wellbeing
	12noon	Bible Study
Thursday 28 th	10:30am	Bible Study
	10:30am	Toddlers

QR Code for Financial Offering:

