

Well hello and welcome once more to Kirkgate Parish Church service for the 15th November 2020. This is my last service recording before your new minister Nigel takes over. I would like to say a big thank you to all for the love and the friendships both Deirdre and I have been given over the past nearly two years being with you.

Nigel will be inducted into the charge at Kirkgate next Thursday 19th at 7pm and it is hoped we can stream that live with cameras and audio for you. Unfortunately I cannot give more details of this right now but you are asked to keep looking at the web site and Stuart will place information there on how to tune in, over the next few days after Monday next.

Can I also say a big thank you to Stuart once more for a lovely 'Kirkgate by Requests' last Sunday evening. If you haven't listened in yet please do, it will help relax you and bring comfort and a sense of nostalgia all as one.

Let us once more worship and bring Glory and Honour to God in the name of the Son and by the beauty of the Holy Spirit living within us. As always I am hoping to leave you with a word of encouragement and motivation for today and for the future.

Call to worship: *Jeremiah 6:16*

This is what the Lord says,
"Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is,
and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls"

Our opening Hymn is
CH4 336 Christ is our Light! the bright morning star
with that familiar and comforting tune Highland Cathedral.

1. Christ is our light! The bright and morning star
covering with radiance all from near and far.

Christ be our light, shine on, shine on we pray
into our hearts, into our world today.

2. Christ is our love! Baptised that we may know
the love of God among us, swooping low.
Christ be our love, bring us to turn our face
and see in you the light of heaven's embrace.

3. Christ is our joy! Transforming wedding guest!
Through water turned to wine the feast was blessed.
Christ be our joy; your glory let us see,
as your disciples did in Galilee.

Let us pray our prayer of Approach and confusion before the Lord.
Let us pray.

Loving Lord God,
Yours is the path of righteousness
Yours is the way of truth and love
We bow before Your throne of grace as we gather to worship You this day.
Lift our Spirits Father God,
Open our minds anew to the wonders of Your Kingdom,
for we seek to come close to You as You have come close to us.

In all we do and say may we live in the ways of the Lord.

Reveal for us new ways to understand Your powerful word of life in our
Bibles for we confess that we forget to read scripture as often as we should.
Prompt our minds to awaken to the need of prayer for we forget to pray as
often as we have opportunity.
Open the shutters of our hearts that we might see and understand our
purpose as we forget to look with compassion on our needy community
around us.
Lord forgive us our complacency and tardiness.

Forgive our weak efforts to live as You command in love and selflessness.
In all of our days we seek a closer walk with You even now as we gather to
learn more of You and to feel Your presence by Your Spirit.

We pray that we will remember who we are in You Lord Jesus. Help us to
discover more of You through the word, through the teaching and preaching
and in our prayers.

In particular the prayer you taught Your disciples when we say together

**Our Father who art in Heaven
Hallowed be Thy name,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors,
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For Thine is the Kingdom the power and the glory
for ever
Amen.**

[Amen](#)

[Our Bible passage is taken from Pauls letter to the church in Ephesus.
Ephesians 6 verses 10-20 \(NKJV\)](#)

[The Whole Armour of God](#)

[Let us hear the word of God.](#)

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His
might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to
stand against the [b]wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against
flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the
rulers of [c]the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness
in the heavenly *places*. 13 Therefore take up the whole armour of God,
that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all,
to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

[My Sermon Reflection today is entitled - Bravely taking our stand for Christ.](#)

In our time almost two years we have journeyed together it has been a time of joy and love. Peace and expectation, much work and hope for the future. It seems fitting then to move to a final word of encouragement and challenge. It is my parting shot for you, if you like.

What better passage to bow out on and to leave you looking upwards than this amazing metaphorical journey with Paul as he sits in his lodgings in Rome chained to a Roman soldier at the wrist and allowed freedom to communicate with those he loved across the churches he once visited and birthed to give them succour and lift their spirits.

If you read the whole of Ephesians the first five chapters are wonderful as we hear of God creating us to be His family, unified and worshipping giving Him the Glory and Honour He deserves.

But then there is a reality check that Paul must give in chapter 6. A sharp contrast perhaps to the idyllic thoughts we might possess. The hard way of the Christian walk. The battles that will stir us as we travel the road of life. a bit of a warning then, but tempered with hope and promise also that we are not to battle alone.

So Paul sits and looks at the soldier to whom he is chained. He might look at his armour. Paul thinks of Isaiah

Isaiah 59 17 (NIV)

**He put on righteousness as his breastplate,
and the helmet of salvation on his head;**

He recounts the metaphors of the armour of God. Perhaps one of your favourite topics in Sunday School in the past as you grew up in the church family.

Paul describes all the powers of darkness, authorities of all kinds of evil spirits that would be very real to those in the ancient city of Ephesus. Many of the converts practiced sorcery for we learn of them burning all those scrolls of spells and potions after becoming Christians and learning about Jesus.

Paul was convinced of cosmic battles raging all around us. We just choose not to see or feel it most of the time.

That is why we must put on the armour of God in preparation for the fight, but also in defence. A way God has graciously allowed us to keep ourselves from temptation and a way of holiness and righteousness that never fails us. Love is a powerful weapon and foils satan's plan at every turn.

Let me quickly remind you of some of the amazing qualities such protective armour offers.

There is the belt of truth. It was the belt which went round the soldier's tunic and from which his sword hung and which gave him freedom of movement. Others may guess and feel their way; Christians move freely and quickly because they know the truth.

There is the breastplate of righteousness. When we are clothed in righteousness, we are impregnable. Words might not be too effective a defence against accusations, but a good life is. The only way to meet the accusations against Christianity is to show how good a Christian can be.

There are the sandals. Sandals are a sign that one is equipped and ready to move. The sign of Christians is that they are eager to be on the way to share the gospel with others who have not heard it.

There is the shield. The word Paul uses is not that for the comparatively small round shield; it is the word used for the great oblong shield like a big wooden door.

One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with fibres of rope dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked rope was set alight and the dart was thrown. The great oblong shield was made of two sections of wood with wet leather to the face.

When the the fiery dart hit the shield the flame was put out. Faith can deal with the darts of temptation. For Paul, faith is always complete trust in Christ. When we walk closely with Christ, we are safe from temptation.

There is salvation for a helmet. Salvation is not something which only looks back. The salvation which is in Christ gives us forgiveness for the sins of the past and strength to conquer sin in the days to come.

There is the sword; and the sword is the word of God. The word of God is both our weapon of defence against sin and our weapon of attack against the sins of the world. We can never win God's battles without God's word of life.

Finally, Paul comes to the greatest weapon of all—**and that is prayer.** We shall consider that in a moment.

Now something I want to encourage you with today is this. Look at the tenses of the passage on the armour of God. What do we see. Past present and future tenses.

We are not starting out from scratch right now. We already have some of the armour placed upon us because we confess Jesus our Lord and Saviour. We have already gained some of it,

Verse...

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15** and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
in Christ Jesus we have already gained these things,

then verse **16** above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. That is now, take it up this shield

verse **17** And take the helmet of salvation, take it for now and for the future protection, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; **18** praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, all for the future use both now and forever.

In order to achieve our goal of living a Kingdom lifestyle we are to make a stand. We are to keep the faith, not to waver, not to retreat. Notice there is no mention of a back plate for protection. We are never to run from the battle, but to stay put, standing firm. Standing up for truth.

Stand firm. There is no mention by Paul of marching forward. It is like standing at the barricade not letting satan in to do his destructive work of dividing and conquering. Not letting Him take a perfectly good church family and sow the seeds of discontent - an 'us and them' culture of criticism and judgement. He will tell the biggest of lies to anyone with a pinch of pride.

“You are better than them, you should be given recognition for all the years of hard work you have done for the church”. I mentioned that last week that battles are more nuanced these days, we have an enemy living within and that might mean on a personal basis as well. All the more reason to reflect on our own motives and feelings.

Are we loving others?

Are we putting ourselves last?

Are we putting Jesus first?

Are we clad in that armour God provides and wearing it bravely in Jesus name.

Wielding our two edged sword of truth that comes from the word in our Bibles. When Jesus spoke in the book of Revelation, John tells us his speech came like a two edged sword coming from his mouth. The word is powerful. When God speaks captives are freed and the wounded healed.

Now with all that armour on we can stand there looking good or we can move into action. But what we need more than anything else is the overall covering of prayer. Paul tells us to pray, not just now and again, but all the time. We need prayer warriors to recognise the need for deep sincere constant prayer. That covering is like the barrage of artillery over our heads, disrupting, removing and blasting away the evil that lives in the darkness of human hearts before us. Paul asked for that prayer to help him face the terrible approaching darkness in his life. So that he might bravely keep the faith in all his trouble.

With your armour on, sword at the ready, prayers for encouragement and strength to your arm, in the army of God I ask you ‘are you ready?’

Are you motivated for whatever the future holds standing alongside your new general who will be with you soon in Nigel.

What amazing things will you find along the way?

That is the unknown I suppose, but you must be ready and watchful.

This priority area has fortresses of darkness, poverty of spirit, poverty of temporal things as well. Over this last few months nearly two years maybe even beyond that has been a time of standing fast.

Of preparation,

Of getting ready.

The bigger picture is yet a blur but there is every promise of great things to come from and be done by this church family. I for one will be watching and praying for you and seeing this church emerge once more when all this lock down is over to a waiting community in need of peace love and hope.

We heard this week that a vaccine might be on its way against covid, that is good news, but then we still need to remember that there is an epidemic of

spiritual blindness to be cured. A whole nation in need of the love of Christ to heal it and to mend division and distrust.

Let us take our stand. An immovable stand for love, decency, peace, justice and hope for all and as we live in the ways of Jesus our Lord and Saviour letting no fiery darts breach your defences.

God bless us as we move into another chapter of eternal life both in this church and out there in the parish and beyond.

In the name of God the Father God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Let us sing, listen or remember in our heads and hearts that rousing hymn by Charles Wesley.

CH4 515 Soldiers of Christ arise and put your armour on.

1

Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies,
Through His eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of Hosts,
And in His mighty pow'r,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.

2

Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued;
And take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God,
That, having all things done,
And all your conflicts past,
Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone,
And stand complete at last.

(Not in CH4)

Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul,
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole.
To keep your armour bright
Attend with constant care,
Still walking in your Captain's sight
And watching unto prayer.

(Not in CH4 but very apt)
Pray, without ceasing pray,
Your Captain gives the word;
His summons cheerfully obey,
And call upon the Lord:
To God your every want
In instant prayer display;
Pray always; pray, and never faint;
Pray, without ceasing pray.

3From strength to strength go on;
Wrestle, and fight, and pray;
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day:
Still let the Spirit cry
In all His soldiers, "Come!"
Till Christ the Lord descend from high,
And take the conquerors home.

Now we come to our prayers for thanksgiving and intercession. I will pray about the Covid 19 pandemic, the church family and then give time for personal prayers for the world for the church and for ourselves and those we love.

Let us pray.

Loving Lord God.

The year 2020 is slipping by and we see the blossom and leaf fade and fall. We feel the darkness of the night approaching too early. Winter comes to dampen the Spirits for many once more.

Father God there are many who will suffer from the darkness and damp conditions. There are many who were hanging on a thread of existence in the sun and now find despair and mental break down at the thought of another day let alone months of 'lock down' due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Lord in Your mercy draw close to those who are suffering mental fatigue with all these restrictions, never being able to meet up and touch one another in the bond of human companionship.

We pray especially for the elderly who face another Christmas on their own, families that struggle to make ends meet because of lock down and lack of employment.

Lord in Your mercy help us to help them where we can as a church family.

Help us to be active in the community hubs and bringing love and compassion to a needy neighbourhood.

We think of further afield and those across this world who don't have the same medial facilities that we have. Where the Covid virus can spread uncontrolled and cause death and illness in its wake.

Lord in Your mercy come close to those who are fearful for their safety and that of their families at this uncertain time as they try to keep safe from the virus.

We give our thanks for those nearing the completion of trials that will open the opportunity for a vaccine to be given out to all those who are at risk. Father we thank you for prayers answered and for those on the front line in the scientific fields who have worked tirelessly for this.

Help those governments to organise correct distribution, prick the consciences of those who would put a high monetary price on these drugs that might debar some countries access to enough vaccine for their people.

Lord for those in hospital and for those self isolating we pray for healing that they might be safe and well. We pray for those who have lost loved ones to the virus, some close by us, that they will find comfort in You and your peace will be upon them in their grieving.

Lord for the church and for Kirkgate we offer our lives in servitude to You once more that You might guide us to the places where You would have us make our stand for Christ. Show this church a new way to be the church of the community. To serve and to bring comfort and the Gospel of life where it is needed.

We pray for the new minister Nigel as he comes to be the shepherd of this flock. Guide him strengthen his ministry, settle his family as if coming home.

Lord God we know there are many massive challenges across this world, some that we feel are beyond our simple prayers, but we know You are a God who answers even the simplest of prayers brought in sincerity from the pure heart, from the ones who love Jesus and so we bring our own prayers for the world before you now in this time of silence.....

Lord God we remember You built this church family from nothing, restore it with new people and young people and all people who seek to know Jesus. for those matters of church here and across this land we now bring our silent prayers.....

Lord for ourselves and for those we know and love there are many trials and tribulation, many joys and matters we need to bring in thanksgiving for the blessings you have allowed us so we remember those things that trouble us

or delight us now in our time of continued silent prayer.....

Heavenly Father we ask that You hear all these the prayers of Your children who have brought to You a love offering in the collection here and at the bank by direct debits and pray that it might aid the furtherance of Your Kingdom works on earth and to that end we commit it into Your care and guidance now.

And so Abba Father in all these things we pray about before us for today, tomorrow and beyond we bring leave our silent and spoken prayers with You in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus.
Amen

Well it has been a great privilege and pleasure to travel some of the road with you all. Deirdre and I will miss you that is for sure. I want to thank you too for allowing me such freedom as was my want to preach and to teach with no barrier. We tried to learn some new songs and God willing you will learn many more over the coming years.

I don't like to single out anyone in particular, but I will anyway for I have a special great debt of gratitude to Stuart for the way he has managed to keep all my wayward ramblings on the web and loud enough for you to hear even now. Thanks Stuart, bless you as you move forward with new technology and sounds.

My saving angel who provided me with coffee to wake me up of a Sunday morning as I stumbled in - thank you Mima. And the many many others who I have much gratitude for, to you all my heartfelt thanks.

Be blessed in the Lord and pray for each other and pray for Nigel also as I know you will. If I get a chance I will look in from time to time, but it is now for me to be less and for Nigel to be more. Love him and his family, take care of them as you did for us and God bless you in your continued journey along the road with Jesus.

Vivien. Call her up.

Our closing hymn today is another good rousing one, seems we are all about fighting today. But fighting with love and compassion however.

CH4 517 Fight the good fight with all your might.

1 Fight the good fight with all thy might!
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life, and it shall be

Thy joy and crown eternally.

2 Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

3 Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide;
His boundless mercy will provide;
Trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

I love this verse 3 it speaks of casting care and fear - feel the fear and do it anyway would be a good motto!)

4 Faint not nor fear, His arms are near,
He changeth not, and thou art dear;
Only believe, and thou shalt see
That Christ is all in all to thee.

Blessing

Along the road there will be challenges, there will be great joy, there will be tribulation.

Along the road there are corners and cross roads and hills and valleys,
Life promises never to be dull with God taking the foremost, life will always reward those who share the love of Christ, those who walk in the ways of our Lord and Saviour

So now keep on, bravely walking in the light, with courage, resolve and gladness of heart together as one in Christ and let no forces of evil breach your defences.

For we all go in joy and peace and we will all have the blessing of God almighty Father Son and Holy Spirit travelling with us now and forever more Amen.