


**ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, SIGHTHILL**  
**FAMILY SUNDAY SERVICE**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022**

 Open Doors

SSSH! IT'S TIME TO JOIN THE

**[SECRET] CHURCH**



**Song (lead by singing group): I have decided to follow Jesus**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_L9h9UjIkMM&t=24s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_L9h9UjIkMM&t=24s)

Today we join Open Doors to **Step into the Secret Church**  
– **without leaving our homes/ our church!**

We join congregations in places where meeting together is dangerous. Christians gather under the cover of darkness: in caves, forests and cellars, under bridges and even in prison toilets. But wherever they meet – they find Jesus there.

In a secret church gathering, we might create a hiding place or sing a worship song in whispers. Maybe we'll find ourselves hurriedly having to hide the evidence of our faith or whispering our opening song!

**Give thanks with a grateful heart**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=047xtru0ZRO>

**Chorus**

Give thanks with a grateful heart  
Give thanks to the Holy One  
Give thanks because He's given  
Jesus Christ His Son

**Verse**

And now let the weak say I am strong  
Let the poor say I am rich  
Because of what the Lord has done for us  
Ending: Give thanks

*CCLI Song # 20285*

**A prayer of St. Augustine**

Lord Jesus, let me know myself and know Thee, and desire nothing save only Thee. Let me hate myself and love Thee. Let me do everything for the sake of Thee. Let me humble myself and exalt Thee. Let me think nothing except Thee.

Let me die to myself and live in Thee. Let me accept whatever happens as from Thee. Let me banish self and follow Thee, and ever desire to follow Thee. Let me fly from myself and take refuge in Thee, that I may deserve to be defended by Thee. Let me fear for myself, let me fear Thee, and let me be among those who are chosen by Thee. Let me distrust myself and put my trust in Thee. Let me be willing to obey for the sake of Thee. Let me cling to nothing save only to Thee, and let me be poor because of Thee. Look upon me, that I may love Thee. Call me that I may see Thee, and forever enjoy Thee.

St. Augustine of Hippo, 354-430

**The Lord's prayer**

**Bible Readings: Acts 8: 1-8**

**The Church Persecuted and Scattered**

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup>Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. <sup>3</sup>But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

**Philip in Samaria**

<sup>4</sup>Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. <sup>5</sup>Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. <sup>6</sup>When the crowds heard Philip and saw the signs he performed, they all paid close attention to what he said. <sup>7</sup>For with shrieks, impure spirits came out of many, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. <sup>8</sup>So there was great joy in that city.

**Reflection: The church persecuted and scattered**

**Offering Song**

**The Old Rugged Cross**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qtOKcbOOQ6M&t=32s>

**Prayers for offerings**

Bountiful Lord, thank You that You are willing to take all that we offer to You and then multiply it for good. We know that we grow by giving in faith, gratitude, and even in want. For when we give, we give to You, and You multiply it beyond our wildest imaginations. Take all that we are and all that we have – our time, talents and money, and bless this community and grow Your church through our giving. Amen.

**Praying for a persecuted church**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Em0-eWtVzLs&t=34s>

**A Prayer of Protection for Those Experiencing Active Persecution**

God of the suffering and all in North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, Colombia, India, Libya, Eritrea, Yemen, Iran, Northern Nigeria, India to mention but a few who stagger under the weight of the cross of Christ, hear us as we seek to stand with those persecuted for being Christians. Your cross bearers in other lands are living reminders to us of the cost of discipleship.

While we are at ease in Zion, they are in an exile of pain and isolation. While we are feasting on the good things around us, they keep an involuntary fast. While we assume a future of well-being, they don't know if they will be alive tomorrow. While we wear the cross as a piece of jewelry, they bear it as an invitation to abuse, exclusion, imprisonment even death.

Turn our hearts to them in prayer and acts of compassion and justice. Thank you for breathing in them and in us the yearning for sharing one another's burdens. Loose their shackles and our complacency. Bind the forces of abuse and violence at work in their persecutors. In the silence, pray your mercy in us. Amen

### Prayer for ourselves and others

Holy One, we feel the chaos before creation in the very core of our being. The changing tides – first swelling with hope, then sliding toward despair. Waves of grief crash over us, shaking the foundations of our lives. We are buoyed with anticipation excited by what the future holds.

Our focus is drawn inward to the joys and concerns closest to us. Then our eyes search the horizons and see the fears and elation of our neighbours far away. I see the faces of my neighbours:

- fearful of rice shortages in **Liberia**
- empowered by protests in **Iran**
- grieving after a vicious attack in **Burkina Faso**
- living through uncertain economics in **China, Hong Kong, and Japan**
- celebrating marriage equality in **Cuba**
- disheartened as the war in **Ukraine** continues
- anxious as hurricane Ian bears down on the **United States**
- grateful for relief workers in **Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic**, and the Atlantic provinces of **Canada** in the aftermath of hurricane Fiona

Through it all, the highs, the lows, the uncertainty, the hope... we trust in you. For you spoke and the awe-inspiring diversity of creation came into being. Speak your words of hope, healing, redemption, love, and peace into our lives today.

**All: Recreate us... Restore us... Remind us... In your image... In life-giving relationships... In the divine dance... We feel the chaos before creation in the core of our being. And we know you are with us. Breathe**

**your spirit through our lives, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

### Closing song (Zoom service) The Old Rugged Cross

1. On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross  
The emblem of suff'ring and shame  
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain

**Chorus So I'll cherish the old rugged cross  
Till my trophies at last I lay down  
I will cling to the old rugged cross  
And exchange it some day for a crown**

2. O the old rugged cross so despised by the world  
Has a wondrous attraction for me  
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above  
To bear it to dark Calvary
3. In the old rugged cross stained with blood so divine  
A wondrous beauty I see  
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died  
To pardon and sanctify me
4. To the old rugged cross I will ever be true  
Its shame and reproach gladly bear  
Then He'll call me some day to my home far away  
Where His glory forever I'll share

CCLI Song # 19722

### Final prayer and blessing

Marked with the sign of the cross in baptism we accepted the freedom and power God gives to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.

We go forth in the freedom and power of the Holy Spirit to resist the evil and injustice inflicted on others, especially sisters and brothers in Christ.

We pray for them and for ourselves, asking that we find ways to act in love toward them. We are sent in Christ's name.

And as we go, may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and until He says to us, "Well done, my good and faithful friend." Amen