

# ST NICHOLAS CHURCH, SIGHTHILL

## SUNDAY SERVICE

24 JULY 2022

*The believers shared their possessions*

### Call to worship

O God, the protector of all who trust in You, without You nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Increase and multiply upon us Your mercy, that with You as our ruler and guide we may so pass through things temporal that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever and ever.

### Come Down, O love Divine

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jr\\_5w1qqJeY&t=18s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jr_5w1qqJeY&t=18s)

1. Come down O Love divine  
Seek out this soul of mine  
And visit it with your own ardour glowing  
O Comforter draw near  
Within my heart appear  
And kindle it your holy flame bestowing
2. There let it freely burn  
Till earthly passions turn  
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming  
And let your glorious light  
Shine ever on my sight  
And make my pathway clear by your illuming
3. Let holy charity  
My outward vesture be  
And lowliness become my inner clothing  
True lowliness of heart  
Which takes the humbler part  
And for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing
4. And so the yearning strong  
With which the soul will long  
Shall far surpass the power of human telling  
For none can guess its grace  
Till we become the place  
In which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling

CCLI Song # 3260959

### Opening Prayer

Most Holy God, we take this moment to pause, and wonder, and bless. Your greatness by Your nearness. Your judgment balanced by Your mercy. How we should praise You! As we still ourselves before Your majesty, and wait in awe, yet we are also bold to lift up our eyes to see You, face to face.

This day, Lord, we sing Your praises! This day, Lord, we rejoice in Your generosity! This day, Lord, we are glad You continue to reach out to us, even us, with love.

O gracious God, have mercy on us. Forgive us when and where we have failed you in our words, thoughts and actions. Remake us, redeem us, restore us. When all seems lost beyond hope yet still You reach out in tenderness and kindness to make that difference in our hearts and souls and minds, to reinstate the broken relationship, to give us the second chance we sorely need.

Lord, open our eyes that we may see you in our brothers and sisters. Lord, open our ears that we may hear the cries of the hungry, the cold, the frightened, the oppressed. Lord, open our hearts that we may love each other as you love us. Renew in us your spirit. Lord, free us and make us one. Through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, Amen



## Bible Readings: Acts 4: 32-37

**All the believers were one in heart and mind.** No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

**Children's address: We all have gifts to share**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8vfPPfQ0bo>

**Reflection: The believers shared their possessions**



In our affluent, materialistic society, raising our income and accumulating more assets is something of a national obsession. But in our Bible reading we meet a very different kind of society. We meet a Christian community – the first Christian community – who were committed to giving away everything they had. I wonder what motivated them to be so generous with their wealth? Also, should we, Christians today also consider doing likewise?

What is remarkable about the generosity of this first church is that it was entirely voluntary, and it was so sacrificial. They were willing to let go of their possessions if they saw a need that had to be met in the wider church. We read in verse 36 that *"Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas ... sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."* There is no doubt that the Lord Jesus would have approved of Barnabas' sacrificial giving. I'm sure we all know the story of the generous Widow. The widow's small but sacrificial giving was pleasing to Jesus, and the sacrificial giving of generosity of Barnabas would have pleased him too.

Having read about the great generosity of the first Christians, it is important to remind ourselves why these first Christians were motivated to give so freely and sacrificially. They knew they were children of a generous

God. Their generosity was a grateful response to the generosity and grace that he had shown to them.

For a start, those early Christians knew that God had given them his Son. They knew that God had been willing to sacrifice his Son Jesus for their salvation. As well as giving his Son, God had also given those first Christians his Holy Spirit. The climax of our passage last week was when God filled that first church with his Spirit. And one of the greatest things that God's Spirit does in Christians is to change our hearts. He changes our hearts to help us love God, and he changes our hearts to help us love God's people. As we grow in our Christian faith we should not be surprised if our love for our Christian brothers and sisters increases – it's a sign that the Holy Spirit is at work in us.

**Offering Song: We are an offering by C Christian**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UW7lxAiPSc&t=51s>

**Prayers for offerings**

Gracious Lord, when we review the ways in which You continue to break in upon our lives, showering us with gifts and wonder, we are reminded how we, in our living should emulate that same generosity.

Remind us the best giving is cheerful, and that the unclenched hand is more fitted to sharing. Accept what we offer: our time, our talents and our money, and all that we have and are. So that this world, our world, Your world, need not be gripped by fear or want, or lack of shelter, or lack of friends. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

**Prayers for others and ourselves**

As we draw close to you in prayer, Holy One, we struggle to put words to the cries of my heart and soul. As we read the news of the world, it is a challenge to remain positive and hopeful. So much pain, so much hurt, so much grief, so much destruction. We long for the day when the words of the prophet ring true, "They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9 NRSV)

Lord, our innermost being yearns for that day even as we read the headlines:

- Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov says the Russian military focus in Ukraine is no longer "only" the east of the country.
- The Office for National Statistics in the United Kingdom announced that Covid infections have continued to climb, with one in every 18 people currently having the virus
- Australia is anticipating a devastating report about the state of the environment, including 19 ecosystems reported to be on the brink of collapse

- Wildfires continue to rage in Greece, Spain, and Italy and here in the UK - worsened by a heatwave in the region

Although it would be easy to focus on the pain, to lose hope for reconciliation, we are reminded of the Proverb: "The hearing ear and the seeing eye — the Lord has made them both." (Proverbs 20:12 NRSV).

Give us eyes and ears, O God, yes, to witness the pain and heartache, but also to testify to your redeeming presence in the world: Propel us by your Holy Spirit, God of the Ages, to use the gifts we have been given to work toward wholeness and healing in a fragmented and hurting world.

*Loving Heavenly Father,*

*You are loving and compassionate,  
Your mercy knows no bounds  
As human beings, we are  
so prone to judge,  
to criticise and to see others  
from our own limited viewpoint  
We are self-focused by nature;  
and that may have been magnified  
by this prolonged season of uncertainty  
We pray for our own hearts;  
give us Your compassion  
for the people around us  
Help us to remember that  
it's not all about us  
We pray for loving, gracious attitudes  
towards others  
Do not let our love for our neighbour  
go cold  
Help us to see others through Your eyes*

Bind us together, Loving One, to be patient and mercifully kind, not envying, boasting, prideful, or rude. Not selfish, short-fused, scorekeeping, or spiteful. But rejoicing in the goodness within and around us. We know we need you, Gracious God, remind us that we need one another as well. And sustain us, together, for the work to which you call us. Today, tomorrow, and always. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Closing Hymn (Zoom): Lord of all hopefulness**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSHGTCZwAtw>

**Lord of all hopefulness (Slane – Be Thou my vision)**

1. Lord of all hopefulness  
Lord of all joy  
Whose trust ever child-like  
No cares could destroy  
Be there at our waking  
And give us we pray  
Your bliss in our hearts Lord  
At the break of the day

2. Lord of all eagerness  
Lord of all faith  
Whose strong hands were skilled  
At the plane and the lathe  
Be there at our labours  
And give us we pray  
Your strength in our hearts Lord  
At the noon of the day
3. Lord of all kindness  
Lord of all grace  
Your hands swift to welcome  
Your arms to embrace  
Be there at our homing  
And give us we pray  
Your love in our hearts Lord  
At the eve of the day
4. Lord of all gentleness  
Lord of all calm  
Whose voice is contentment  
Whose presence is balm  
Be there at our sleeping  
And give us we pray  
Your peace in our hearts Lord  
At the end of the day

CCLI Song # 4778835

**Final prayer and blessing**

Into every relationship that is dear to us, into every relationship that is hard for us, send health, and steadiness, and hopefulness, modelled upon the relationship You, loving God, have with us. And the blessing of God Almighty, known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you all, this day, and forevermore. Amen

