

Church Together

Responding To God's Promises By Looking Forward

17th November 2024



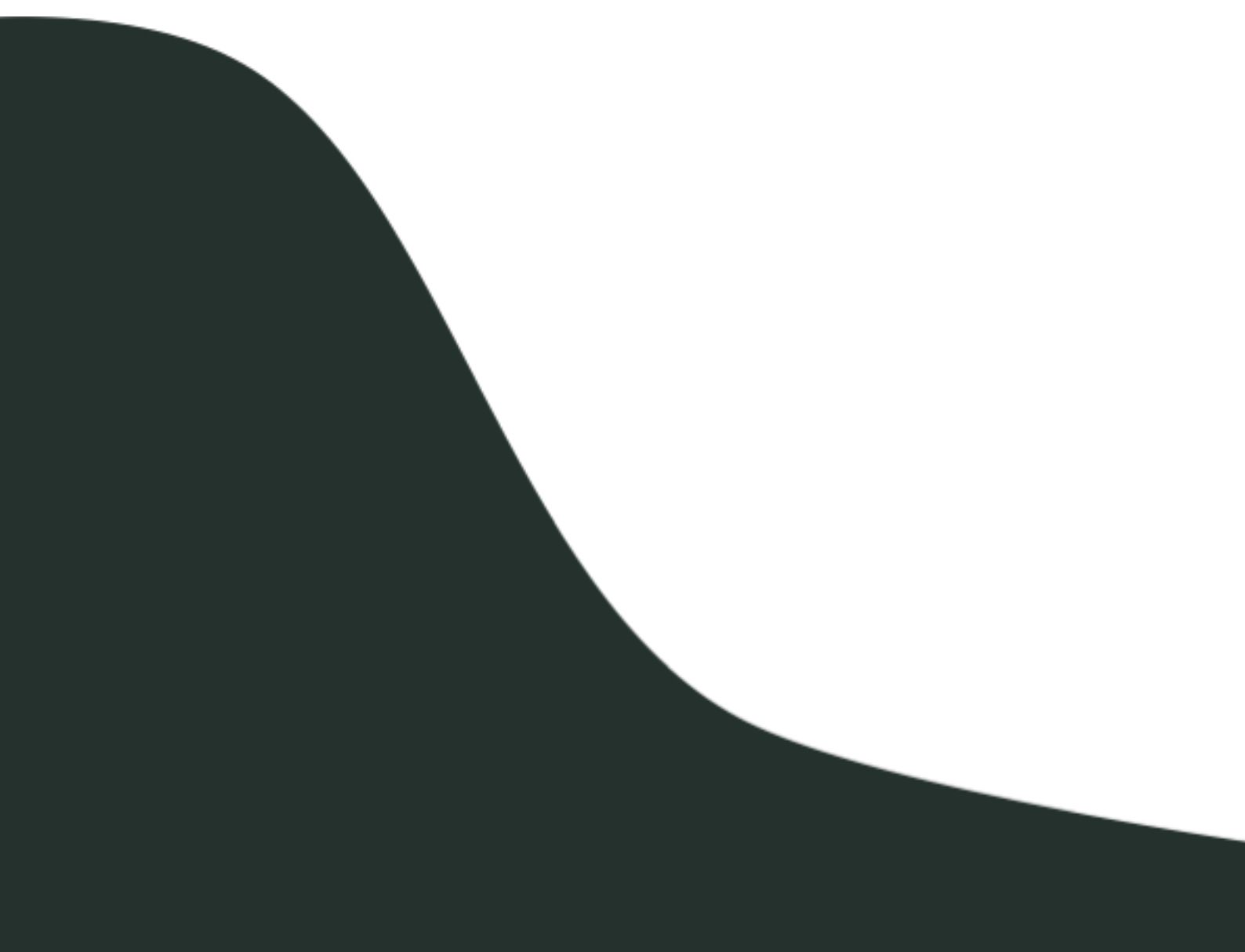
Welcome

In today's Service we will be looking at: **Ezra 6 v. 1 – 22**

The theme for our service today is: **Responding To God's Promises By Looking Forward**

Our service today also includes: **Communion**

We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for today's service and that you would be able to **Know That God Has A Future Plan Especially For You!**



Call To Worship

Psalm 62 v. 5 – 8 NLT

I wait quietly before God,

For my hope is in him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation,

My fortress where I will not be shaken.

My salvation and my honour come from

God alone.

He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy

Can reach me.

O my people, trust in him at all times.


Pour out your heart to him,

For God is our refuge.

Opening Prayer


Father God, We praise You today for all that You have done in our lives. You are faithful even when we are faithless. Your love pursues us even when we are unlovable. Your forgiveness covers our sins and frees us from its penalty. We praise You for your love and faithfulness towards us. Your presence in our lives changes everything, empowering us to live each moment of every day, content in knowing You are in control. As we face today, Lord, remind us that no matter what happens, we can praise You! In Your Name we pray.

Amen



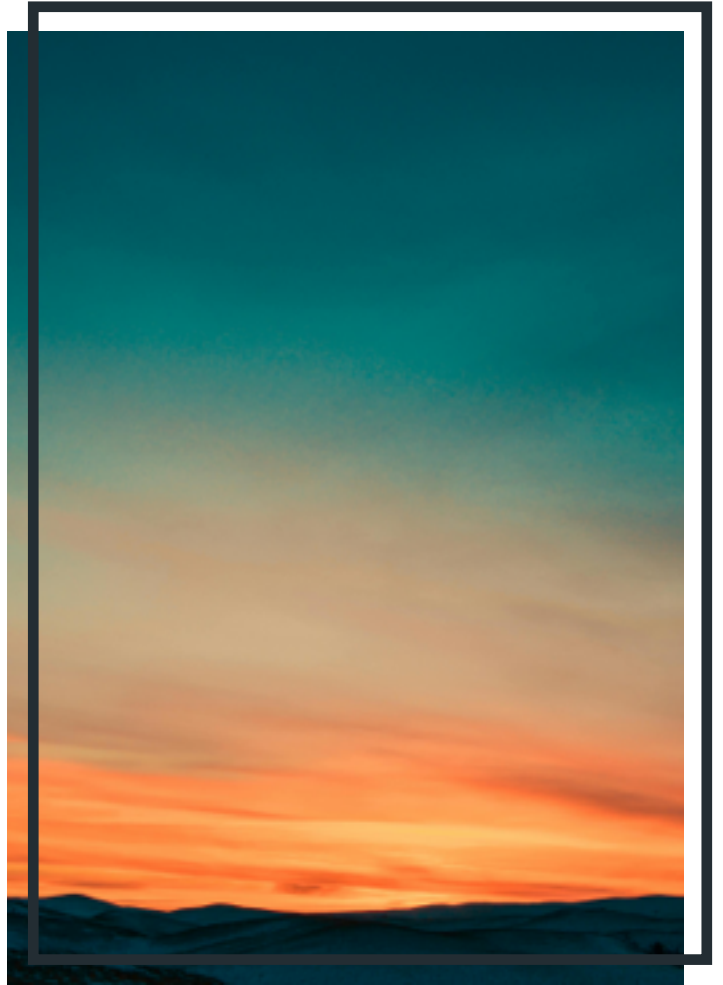
Your past will not determine
the future that God has for you.

Joseph Prince

 quotezlandy

Song Suggestion

Morning Has Broken



Bible Reading

Ezra 6 v. 1 – 22 NIV

The Decree of Darius

6 King Darius then issued an order, and they searched in the archives stored in the treasury at Babylon. 2 A scroll was found in the citadel of Ecbatana in the province of Media, and this was written on it:

Memorandum:

3 In the first year of King Cyrus, the king issued a decree concerning the temple of God in Jerusalem:

Let the temple be rebuilt as a place to present sacrifices, and let its foundations be laid. It is to be sixty cubits high and sixty cubits wide, 4 with three courses of large stones and one of timbers. The costs are to be paid by the royal treasury. 5 Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon, are to be returned to their places in the temple in Jerusalem; they are to be deposited in the house of God.

6 Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and you other officials of that province, stay away from there. 7 Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.

8 Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God:

Their expenses are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop. 9 Whatever is needed—young bulls,

rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and olive oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail, 10 so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.

11 Furthermore, I decree that if anyone defies this edict, a beam is to be pulled from their house and they are to be impaled on it. And for this crime their house is to be made a pile of rubble. 12 May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem.

I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence.

Completion and Dedication of the Temple

13 Then, because of the decree King Darius had sent, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates carried it out with diligence.

14 So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. 15 The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

16 Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy. 17 For the dedication of this house of God they offered a hundred bulls, two hundred rams,

four hundred male lambs and, as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve male goats, one for each of the tribes of Israel. 18 And they installed the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their groups for the service of God at Jerusalem, according to what is written in the Book of Moses.

The Passover

19 On the fourteenth day of the first month, the exiles celebrated the Passover. 20 The priests and Levites had purified themselves and were all ceremonially clean. The Levites slaughtered the Passover lamb for all the exiles, for their relatives the priests and for themselves. 21 So the Israelites who had returned from the exile ate it, together with all who had separated themselves from the unclean practices of their Gentile neighbours in order to seek the Lord, the God of Israel. 22 For seven days they celebrated with joy the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because the Lord had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

Building A Better World

When we come to our prayers of Intercession later in the service we will be including prayers for COP 29, but what is COP 29 all about. The following might help us to understand a little more before we pray.

COP 29 - CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

COP 29 is the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11th to 22nd November 2024.

UN Climate Change Conferences (or COPs) take place every year, and are the world's only multilateral decision-making forum on climate change that brings together almost every country on Earth.

To put it simply, the COP is where the world comes together to agree on the actions to address the climate crisis, such as limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius, helping vulnerable communities adapt to the effects of climate change, and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

COP 29 will bring together world leaders and negotiators from the member states (or Parties) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to further global progress, with business leaders, young people, climate scientists, Indigenous Peoples, and civil society sharing insights and best practices to strengthen global, collective and inclusive climate action.

Among the key priorities of COP 29 are securing a new

goal on climate finance, ensuring every country has the means to take much stronger climate action, slashing greenhouse gas emissions and building resilient communities.

Also in focus will be the next round of national climate plans, or NDCs, currently being developed by countries ahead of next year's deadline and ensuring these bolder, fully implementable and investable strategies and targets are economy-wide, focus on transitioning away from fossil fuels, and keep the world on track to 1.5 degrees of warming.

Note that officially, COP 29 stands for the 29th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a landmark international treaty agreed in 1992, and parent treaty to the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Song Suggestion

Great Is Thy Faithfulness



Church Together

Thought

We've been looking over the last several weeks at the account of the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem from the book of Ezra. Just when it all seemed to be going so well, Ezra's account now outlines for us some of the problems faced by the Jews in rebuilding the Temple. But before we look at some of those problems, it's helpful to see that Ezra doesn't always tell the story in a strictly linear way. In fact, he jumps about a bit in **Ezra 4**, because his focus is clearly on a theme - opposition.

Reading about the difficulties faced by the Jews makes the final completion of the temple seem even more remarkable: a testimony to God's faithfulness and his supreme ability to move in and through people to work out his purposes - whatever the problems that are being faced!

The opponents of the rebuilding of the temple evidently tried several different tactics: discouragement, instilling fear, and frustrating their plans. Although none of these seem to have been actual physical threats, let's not underestimate the power of constant psychological attack in undermining the work of a group of people, when they are trying to accomplish what God is asking them to do!

The opponents also issued formal complaints, alleging that the Israelites would use their newfound security to rebel against the king's authority. One of these

complaints succeeded in halting the rebuilding work for a while. But in a delightful twist, the other provided more encouragement to complete the building and a further release of resources from the royal treasury!

However, there is a second, more surprising source of opposition hinted at here and developed in much greater detail in the prophecy of Haggai: the people lost their focus on the Temple and instead poured time, effort and resources into building and embellishing their own homes. In fact, it has been suggested the wrong priorities and focus of the people were more to blame for halting the rebuilding programme than the combined efforts of the opponents!

Remember that it's not only external forces that prevent people from doing things for God – but also the power of things within us, too, such as fear, complacency and competing priorities.

The Olympic Games that occurred during the summer were a powerful witness and celebration of human achievement, and I was struck by what it costs to compete at that level. Having watched people train to the point of collapse, compete in extreme pain, and tell their stories of success despite very difficult personal circumstances, their achievements take on even greater significance.

So, why do we fool ourselves that things will be easy? If something is worth doing, it will be opposed – from outside, and perhaps, more disturbingly, from deep within us. The question is: will we and are we prepared to overcome?

Just as an Olympic athlete focuses on the hope of glory, so do we! But ours is not in terms of a gold medal and a

standing ovation, but in what God promises us.

Isaiah's beautiful picture found in **Isaiah 52 v. 1 – 12** has given people hope through the centuries: a hope that we can be strong, magnificent, free, redeemed, saved!

The salvation and peace celebrated by the Jews on the completion of their temple was, in one sense, a real, tangible set of new circumstances. For all of us who follow Christ, this promise has a deeper spiritual dimension, with the power to transform our situations now – and to provide real hope for the future.

So, what can we take from this passage, as we approach the end of another year, into the future?

Few people like paperwork, red tape, officialdom, legal details or filling in forms – except, may-be, lawyers! We tend to think that this is something new, but in the Babylonian empire there were officials, record offices and a huge amount of written law.

In Ezra 4, 5 we see: enemies who tried to infiltrate (**Ezra 4 v. 1, 2**), discourage (**Ezra 4 v. 4**), bribe and corrupt (**Ezra 4 v. 5**); opposition and correspondence that went on for years (**Ezra 4 v. 6 – 24; Ezra 4** collects stories from different times). But after encouragement from two prophets (**Ezra 5 v. 1, 2**), official questions and official correspondence eventually came to the ruler's attention. It must have been exceedingly difficult to keep up the motivation and hope so that the project that had been started could eventually be completed. What the Jews then and more importantly for us today learnt was:

THEY COULD TRUST IN GOD

In all this, God had his caring eye on them as we read in Ezra 5 v. 5, which says: 'But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not

stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received'. He has it on us, too, as we face difficulties.

THEY COULD TRUST IN THE TRUTH

King Darius wanted the truth and ordered an enquiry. The truth lay recorded in a storehouse and someone found it. God is truth; he will not let his people be defeated for ever by lies. But we must ourselves live and speak truthfully.

THEY COULD TRUST THAT GOD'S PURPOSE COULD NOT BE DEFEATED

Even the king recognised God's presence in this project, as recorded in **Ezra 6 v. 12**, which says: 'May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem. I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence'. If God calls us to do something, he will see it through - eventually.

THEY COULD TRUST IN THE KING'S JUSTICE

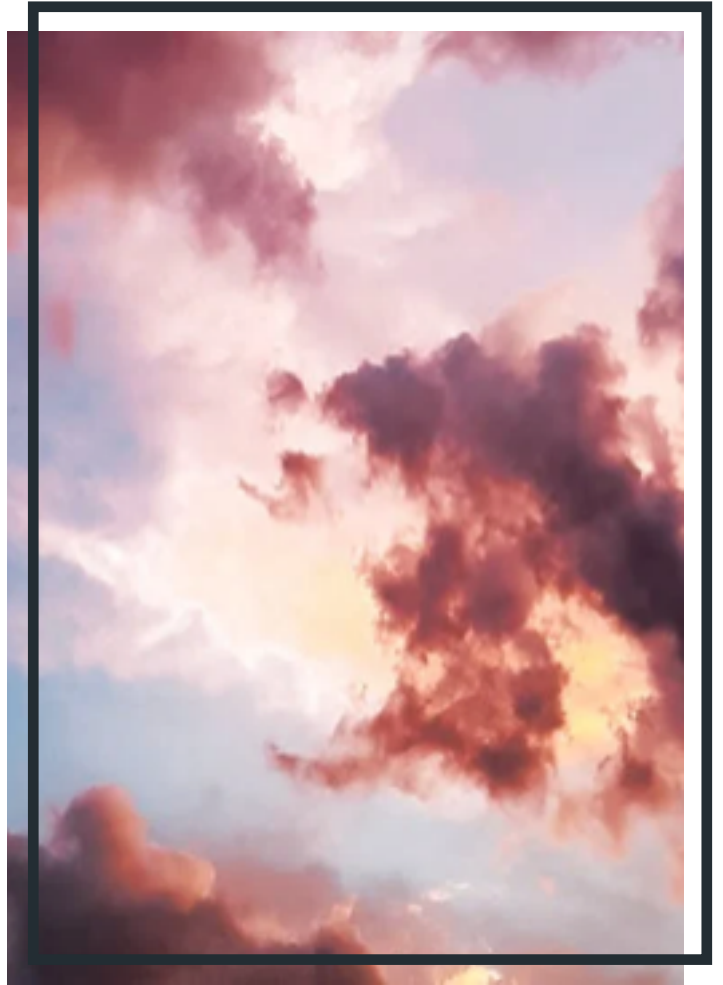
The law of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed. Once the truth was ascertained, the king's judgement was announced. The opposition had been opposing the decree of a previous ruler, Cyrus, and thus inadvertently undermining the rule of Darius. He was not pleased and passed the cost onto the taxation of complainants, as seen in **Ezra 6 v. 8**, which tells us: 'Moreover, I hereby decree what you are to do for these elders of the Jews in the construction of this house of God: Their expenses are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop'.

His warning to those who might continue to cause trouble is tough, and serious as we read in **Ezra 6 v. 11** which says:

'Furthermore, I decree that if anyone defies this edict, a beam is to be pulled from their house, and they are to be impaled on it. And for this crime their house is to be made a pile of rubble'. We live in a society where truth and justice are valued although not always practised.

Song Suggestion

Lord, The Light Of Your Love Is
Shining



Communion

As we gather today we come to share in this act of Communion together, remembering the love and sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the Cross. We remember the price that he paid for our sins and for our forgiveness. We gather together here in Church as the body of Christ in order to share the bread and the cup together. We come in faith, conscious of our weakness, seeking to renounce our sin, humbly putting our trust in Christ, and seeking his grace, as we look forward to the day when he will come again.

A prayer of Thanksgiving:

Heavenly Father, we offer you this day our praise and thanksgiving; we thank you for raising Jesus to life again and exalting him so that we might call him 'Lord', as we offer our faithfulness to him and seek to share in his ways. Loving Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, powerfully present in your people and your world, for the fellowship of your church, and for all the means of grace and the hope of glory. Living God, fill us with your Spirit, that as we share this bread and this cup we may feed on the body and blood of Christ, and be empowered for service in your world. Heavenly Father, accept our prayers and thanksgiving in the name of Jesus, the light of the world and the life of your people.

Our normal practice is to say these words:

For I received from the Lord what I also pass on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In

the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11 v. 22 - 26

After all have received the bread and the cup and after a period of silence, we end with these words in a Prayer of Thanksgiving for the blessings received at the Table:

Leader: Your death, O Lord, we commemorate. Your resurrection we celebrate. Your final coming we await. May the glory be to you, O Lord.

Response: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Loving Gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all who know you as Lord and Saviour. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your eternal kingdom, and that our love may be your love in the world where we find ourselves., through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray these things.

Amen

Prayers Of Intercession

Loving God give us strength of purpose and faith in you today we pray, in order to take decisions seriously, to understand the consequences of our actions for others, as well as ourselves, and, always, to seek your guidance through prayer.

We lift before you today, gracious God, The Church Of England. We pray for the recent events that have happened in the last week or so, and the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury. We pray for all those who have been affected by past hurts and abuse, that they would know the healing of body, mind and spirit that only you can give.

We are reminded of our responsibilities as your people that the world you gave us is your creation and that you have called us to be good stewards of this world. We pray for those world leaders that have gathered together between 11th – 22nd November in Baku, Azerbaijan for the COP29 climate change conference. We pray that we would all play our part in the future of our planet and that we would consider the longer term effects of our own part that we play in the world.

Loving Lord Jesus, when we hear and watch the news, we can see that times are often difficult for many and as we long for what we consider normal times, help us to protect others and ourselves so that life may be as normal as it can possibly be. Help us to remember that

the church is not the building, the Church is the people. Help us Lord to work together as your people to stay connected with each other and with you.

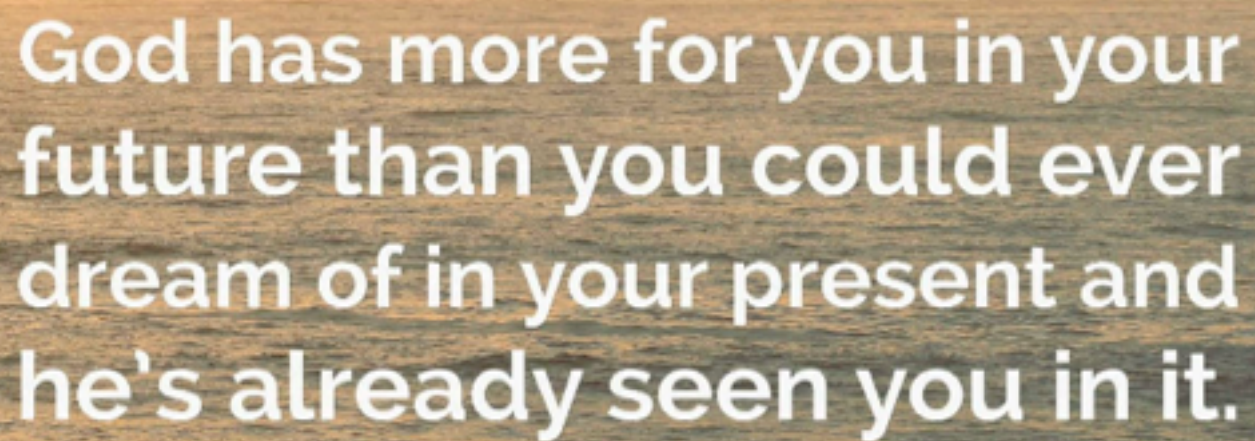
Lord Jesus be with those who find themselves lost and alone in society. Support all those who work and volunteer to bring hope to these people.

We pray for our families and friends. Lord, as we face the normal ups and downs of life in many different ways, we thank you that Jesus knows our every situation. Help us we pray to face these different situations with dignity and love, courage and faith.

We continue to pray for the sick, both at home and in hospital, or hospice. We think of the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes. We pray for all those who care for their needs. So again, as we share a moment of silence together, we bring before you those known only to ourselves and name them before you, Lord Jesus, in our hearts.

And finally, Lord we pray for ourselves. Help us Lord to follow your example in all that we do and say as we journey with you. We place ourselves, this Church and all your people into your loving care. Please accept these our prayers, in Jesus name.

Amen



God has more for you in your future than you could ever dream of in your present and he's already seen you in it.

Rod Parsley

Tithes, Gifts & Offerings

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

If you feel that your are able to, then please keep on giving with a cheerful and grateful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.



Because God is in control, you can trust him with everything—including the good, the bad, and the ugly of your life.

The Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
And the glory, forever and ever.

Amen

Song Suggestion

I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky



Blessing

We give you thanks at the end of our time together today for all the ways that you bless our lives: for the beauty and abundance of nature, the love of family and friends, the joy of knowing you as our Lord and Saviour and hearing your word.

Amen