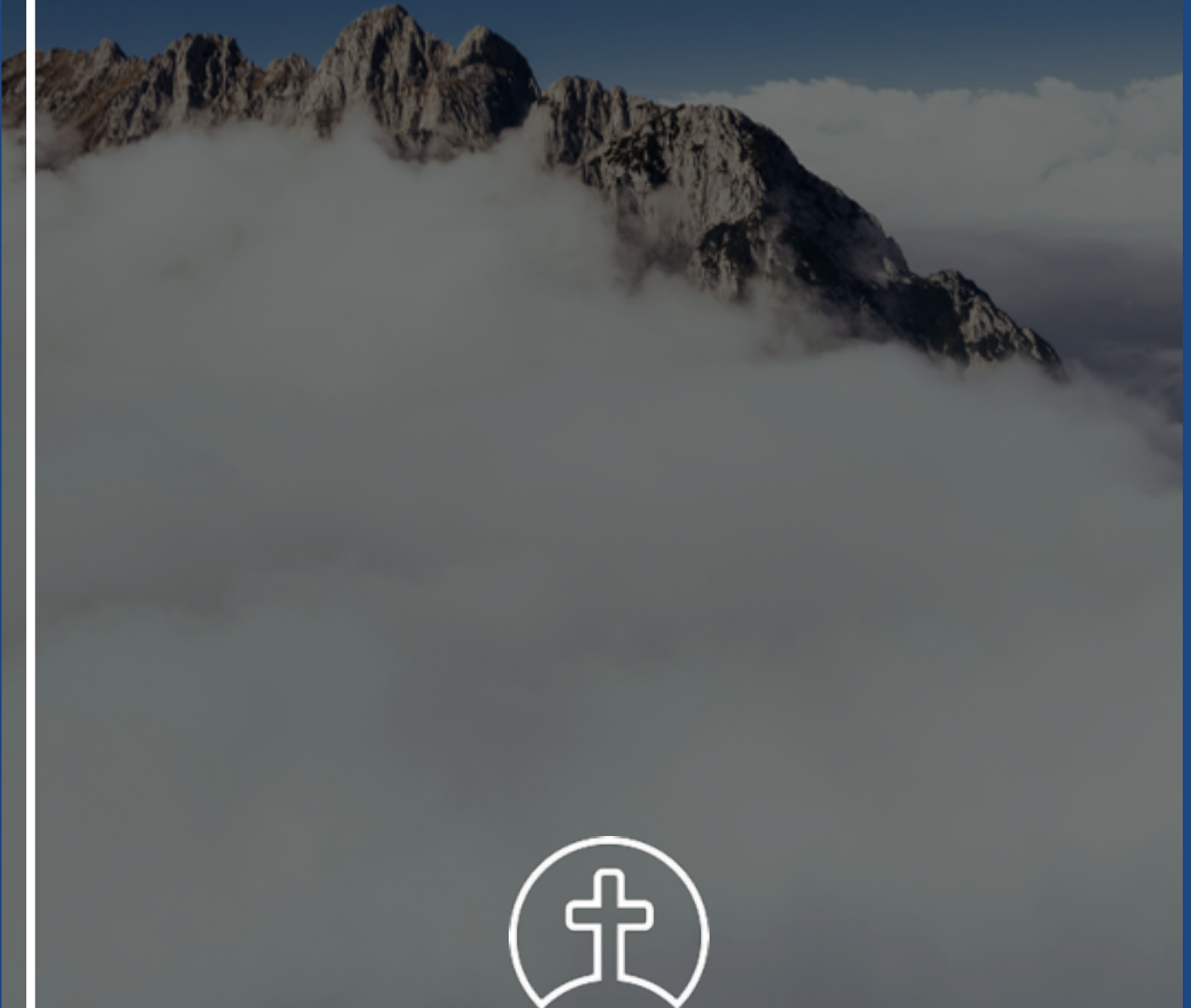


Church Together

Responding To God's Promises By Going Back

20th October 2024



Welcome

In today's Service we will be looking at: **Ezra 1 v. 1 - 11 & 2 v. 1, 64 - 70**

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

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 Just For You!**

Call To Worship

Psalm 113 v. 1 - 5 NLT

Praise the Lord!

Yes, give praise, O servants of the Lord.

Praise the name of the Lord!

Blessed be the name of the Lord

Forever and ever.

Everywhere—from east to west—

Praise the name of the Lord.

For the Lord is high above the nations;

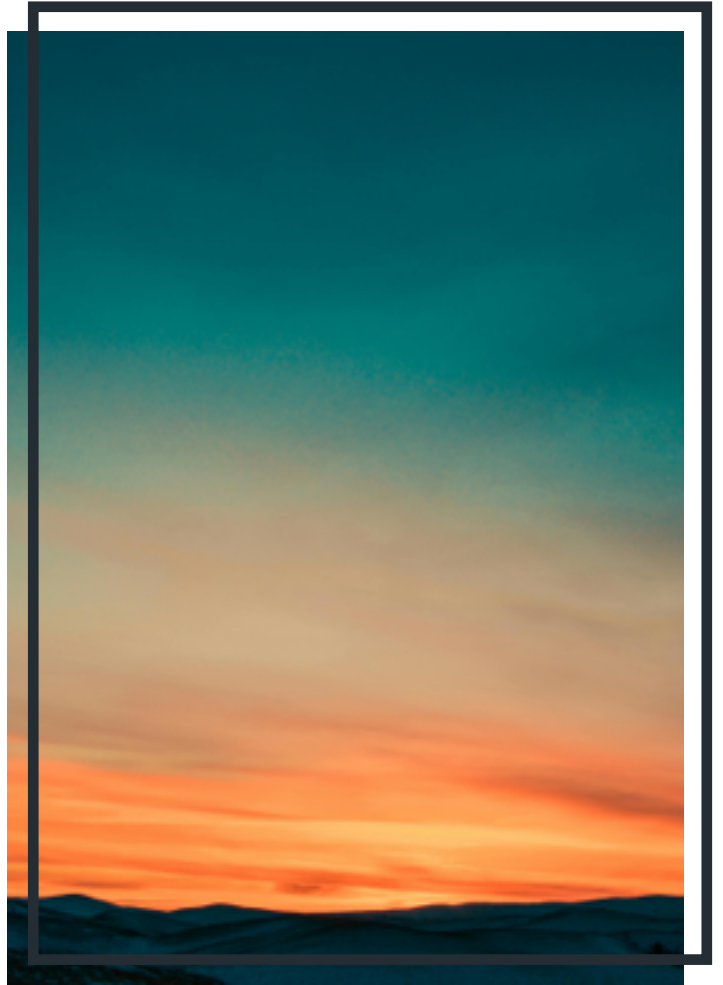
His glory is far greater than the heavens.

Who can be compared with the Lord our God,

Who is enthroned on high?

Song Suggestion

Morning Has Broken, Like The
First Morning



Opening Prayer

Father God, we want to praise and thank you today for all that you have done in our lives, in the past, now in the present and what you will do for us in the future. You are forever faithful even when we are more concerned with our own lives rather than with you. Your love always pursues us even when we are unlovable. Your forgiveness covers every aspect of our sins and frees us from the penalty of those sins. 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 precious and glorious name we pray these things.

Amen

**“It is the Lord who goes before
you. He will be with you; He will
not leave you or forsake you. Do
not fear or be dismayed.”**

Deuteronomy 31:8

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.



Bible Reading

Ezra 1 v. 1 – 11 NIV

Cyrus Helps the Exiles to Return

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

2 “This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

“The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. 3 Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. 4 And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”

5 Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. 6 All their neighbours assisted them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with valuable gifts, in addition to all the freewill offerings.

7 Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god. 8 Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithredath the treasurer, who counted them

out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

9 This was the inventory:

gold dishes 30

silver dishes 1,000

silver pans 29

10 gold bowls 30

matching silver bowls 410

other articles 1,000

11 In all, there were 5,400 articles of gold and of silver.

Sheshbazzar brought all these along with the exiles when they came up from Babylon to Jerusalem.

Song Suggestion

Jesus Is Lord, Creations Voice
Proclaims It



Bible Reading

Ezra 2 v. 1 & v. 64 – 70 NIV


The List of the Exiles Who Returned

2 Now these are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had taken captive to Babylon (they returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to their own town.

64 The whole company numbered 42,360, 65 besides their 7,337 male and female slaves; and they also had 200 male and female singers. 66 They had 736 horses, 245 mules, 67 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys.

68 When they arrived at the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site. 69 According to their ability they gave to the treasury for this work 61,000 darics of gold, 5,000 minas of silver and 100 priestly garments.

70 The priests, the Levites, the musicians, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns.

A woman with a braid, wearing a light-colored shirt and a dark skirt, stands in a vast field of golden wheat. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow across the sky and the field. A large black circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text. The text is framed by two thin white horizontal lines.

“Never be afraid
to trust
an unknown
future to a
known God.”

~Corrie ten Boom~

Church Together

Thought

There is a story told of two women who lived in the same house - a century apart. As the story jumped back and forth between their lives, there is a need to keep your wits about you to follow the plot.

The narrative of God's people described in Ezra can also feel a bit like that! As several Bible books overlap in describing it, we need to piece the story together like a jigsaw puzzle. Moreover, there are parallels with events later in the Bible, and even elements that allude to Jesus' mission in years to come.

So, let's piece the story together and set the scene.

In the eighth century before Christ, despite God's faithfulness and care, the people of Judah have stubbornly turned away from their faith. God speaks through Isaiah, warning of grave consequences for the people of God. Eventually, Judah is attacked by the powerful Assyrian army. Jerusalem is besieged and destroyed, and in 605 BC a remnant of its people is taken into a seventy-year exile in Babylon.

Ezra was a teacher and priest with a passion and a determination to lead the people back into a right relationship with God. Ezra was also a meticulous historian, responsible not only for recording and commenting on the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, which is our focus for the next several sermons, but also very probably for writing the Nehemiah

memoirs, the more familiar story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's city walls, and also the accounts of events leading up to the exile from the time of King David as recorded in the Old Testament books of **1 and 2**

Chronicles. Ezra's perspective on God at work through history can easily be missed by us in our 'right-here right-now' culture!

God's people had reduced him to one option among many different gods of the day, does that sound familiar to you in today's culture, but in these events, God reveals himself as so much more!

Firstly, he demonstrates his power in using Cyrus to provide both momentum and resources for the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple. Cyrus, a Persian king, 'did not acknowledge' the Lord as prophesied in **Isaiah 45 v. 1 - 7**, but God shows here that he is supremely able to carry out his purposes, and that anybody can be woven into them - whether they realise it or not!

Secondly, God shows his commitment to the people. He has been with them through the dark years of exile and could be relied upon as they began their return to Jerusalem. God was initially making these promises to a people who had rebelled against him, saying that, even though they had abandoned him, he would not abandon them.

Even as they suffered the consequences of their rebellion, God was planning to bring them back to all he had intended for them. This redemption, this coming home, from a captivity and exile caused by sin, happens for each one of us in a personal way through Jesus. God still wants us to know the scope of his power, and the depth

of his commitment to us, even when we have failed him and let him down.

The story of Ezra takes place at a dramatic time in history. In 587 BC, the 500 - year history of Israel ended abruptly. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed the temple in Jerusalem and deported all the leaders of the people. Compared with Israel, Babylon was a land of plenty. It had rich agricultural land, a wealthy civilisation and a city of splendid buildings. But many of the Jews longed for the temple and all it stood for. There seemed no possibility that they or their children could ever return.

But in 539 BC the Persians defeated the Babylonians, and King Cyrus came to power. That's where the story of Ezra begins.

Do you like big crowds? Imagine the scene:

42,360 people with 7,337 servants and a choir of 200. They rode or drove 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels and 6,720 donkeys. It would make an impressive procession. A film of it would be an epic - just getting the extras together for the crowd scene would take weeks.

In 2024 it's only like being part of a large football crowd, plus the animals of course!

But this event is important in Bible history. As we imagine the huge crocodile of people walking steadily in almost a semicircle for the best part of 900 miles, to have gone home straight across the desert would be suicide, we see how vulnerable and brave God's people were.

So, what can we learn as God's church in today's way of living from Ezra and his involvement with the people of God?

FIRSTLY, WE LEARN THAT GOD MOVED THE KING (Ezra 1 v. 2)

This unlikely chain of events happened because God was in control and fulfilled his promises. He began the process through one man: Cyrus.

God can still change the heart of significant individuals on the world stage and in local communities, and, through them, he can change the course of history. That alone is one reason why we should pray for leaders both locally and nationally.

SECONDLY, WE LEARN THAT GOD MOVED THE PEOPLE (Ezra 1 v. 5)

Here, God was moving hearts again, this time of Jews who heard the call, caught the vision and decided to respond fully to what God required of them. They prepared to pull up their roots to go and build.

God still calls individuals today to do new things, to uproot from the past to move forward into the future. For the people of God, as we have read, their hearts are moved, but on their own, they are not enough to fulfil the vision of what is being asked of them. They need the help of others, because we are called to work together for the building of God's kingdom.

THIRDLY, WE LEARN THAT NEIGHBOURS WERE MOVED TO GIVE (Ezra 1 v. 6)

Some people were not called to move back to Jerusalem, but they were moved by the sacrifice of others to help.

They gave generously of their money, goods, livestock and probably their time. A reflection of this can be seen in the New Testament in **Acts 2 v. 41 – 47**, where we see the building of the community of new Christians after the day of Pentecost.

One person may have an idea or vision, others are caught up in it and the help of many others is essential.

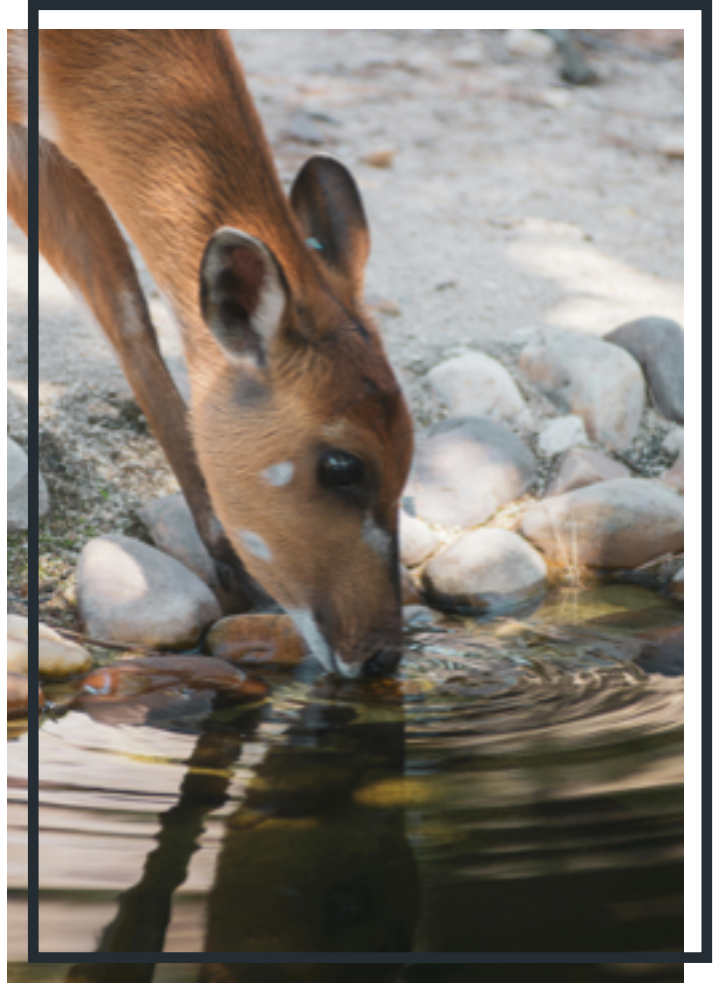
The image of the body of Christ reminds us that all our various gifts contribute to the whole plan of moving the people of God forward.

**FINALLY, WE LEARN THAT TRAVELLERS MOVED WITH PRIDE
(Ezra 2)**

Almost the whole of Ezra 2 is a role of honour. The people called by God said yes and the names of their families are recorded with the right kind of pride. We should rejoice and be glad in the work of God's people.

Song Suggestion

As The Deer Pants For The Water



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

As we Pause & Pray today, in our prayers let us remember the following:

Lord, we have been reminded today that no matter where your people find themselves, you are always with them. Help us to be aware of our responsibilities as your people to follow your instructions in order to be good disciples who love and support one another, and encourage one another to grow in you. Help us to come to you 'just as we are' in order that we too, may know your forgiveness and salvation, because of your son, our Saviour, Jesus.

Pause & Pray

Father God, when we hear and watch the news, we see and are reminded that times are difficult for many throughout the world. We especially today continue to remember in prayer the region of Israel and Gaza, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and other desperately needy places around the world. Help us today to pray for those who need you the most. Let us remember that you created all things and that you love all that you have created.

Pause & Pray

Loving Lord, today we think and pray for those who are homeless, the unemployed, the asylum seeker and those in greatest need. Lord Jesus be with those who find themselves lost and alone in society, those who are

marginalised and those who are victims of corrupt societies. Support all those who work and volunteer in areas to bring hope to these people. May they know that they are loved and accepted by you and by us.

Pause & Pray

We also pray today for our families and friends. Lord we all face many ups and downs of life in different ways. We thank you that you, Lord Jesus knows our every situation. Help us we pray to face those different situations with dignity, courage and love.

Pause & Pray

We pray today for the world - wide church and we especially pray for the local churches here in Huddersfield and for our own church family here at Salendine Nook. We pray for all who minister to the community in whatever way and in whatever role they might have. Lord, may you guide and support them in all that they do. Help us to remember that the church is not the building, the Church is the people. Encourage us Lord to work together as your people to stay connected with each other and with you through these ongoing difficult and challenging times.

Pause & Pray

We think and pray today, Lord, for the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes who may be known to us personally. As we share a moment of silence together, we name them before you, Lord Jesus, in our hearts.

Pause & Pray

And finally, Lord we pray for ourselves. We place ourselves, this Church and all your people into your loving care. Please accept these our prayers, in Jesus name.

Pause & Pray

Amen



“And now, LORD,
You are God
and have promised
this *goodness*
to Your servant.”

1 Chronicles 17:26

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

GOD OFTEN
WORKS IN THE
unseen. JUST
BECAUSE WE
CAN'T SEE IT
OR FEEL IT
DOESN'T MEAN
HE ISN'T *working.*

Song Suggestion

O Lord My God! When I In
Awesome Wonder



Blessing

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

Send Your Holy Spirit among us on this our Church Anniversary so that we might dream your dreams and see visions of what you intended your church to be. Guide our thoughts and actions. Bring us closer to you so that we might do your will and dwell in your house forever.

Amen