

# ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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1 November 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs  
viola

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart  
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Acts 20:17-38  
Elise Rutherford

Great Texts of the Bible #13  
"This is goodbye"

Prayers of Intercession  
and  
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



# NOTICES

1 November 2020

Wednesday 4 November 1.30 pm Sweet Hour of Prayer  
Sunday 8 November 11 am Great Texts of the Bible #14.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: Morag ZWARTZ



and  
B & P who minister in South Asia with the  
Children's Uplift Program.



Members who wish to continue their freewill offerings during the COVID 19 restrictions may post to our Treasurer. Vic Ansell, 59 Queen St Kangaroo Flat, Vic 3555 or use the electronic banking details below.

Electronic Banking Details: ANZ Forest Hill,  
Account name: Blackburn Presbyterian Church  
BSB: 013-328. Account number: 2970 40694

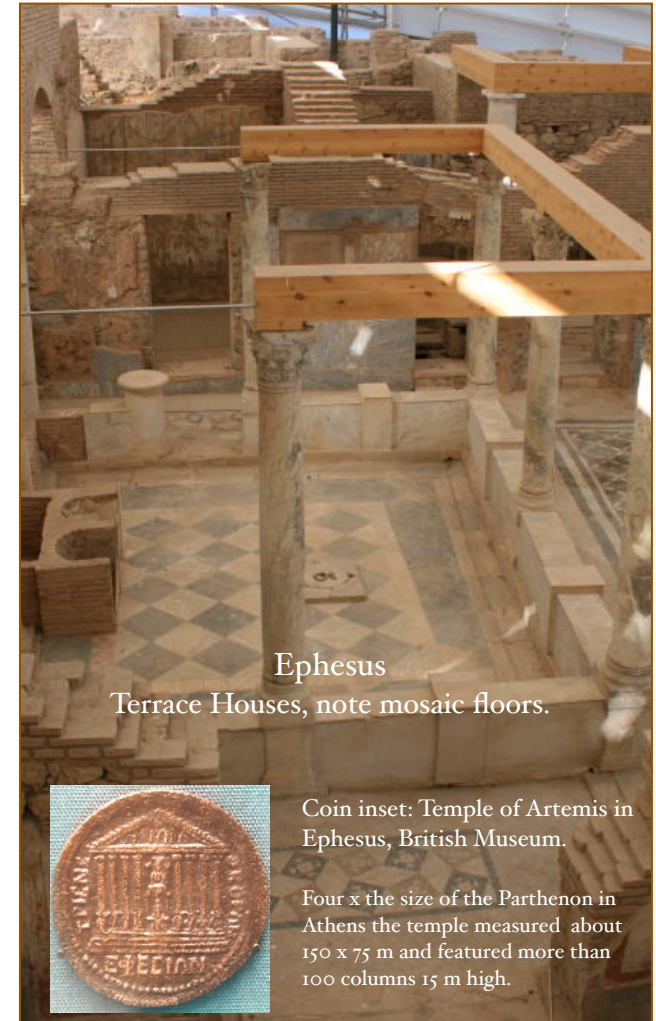
BLACKBURN  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
53 Gardenia Street,  
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Minister: Rev Graham Bradbeer  
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Session Clerk: Mr Keith Ferres 98305466  
Treasurer: Mr Vic Ansell 5447 7118

# GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

1 November 2020



Ephesus  
Terrace Houses, note mosaic floors.



Coin inset: Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, British Museum.

Four x the size of the Parthenon in Athens the temple measured about 150 x 75 m and featured more than 100 columns 15 m high.

# WELCOME



The space for people to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly without fear and discrimination shrank ever further. The authorities continued to invoke national security and public order concerns to persecute and silence political opposition activists, independent lawyers, journalists, human rights defenders, LGBTI people and their families. Impunity for torture and other ill-treatment remained pervasive and those who reported abuses faced reprisals. Dozens of prisoners, including political opposition activists, were killed and hundreds injured in prison riots, and at least 14 died during prisoner transportation..

Amnesty International 2019

Government officials are responsible for most of the persecution in Tajikistan. Authorities raid church meetings, detain Christians and confiscate religious materials. No religious activities are permitted outside of state-controlled institutions; children and teenagers are forbidden from taking part in any religious activities.

It is not illegal to convert to Christianity. However, Christians who share their faith, especially converts from Islam, face constant scrutiny. The small number of believers from a Muslim background often hide their faith for fear of reprisal.

Those whose faith is discovered are often pressured, harassed or beaten by their families to renounce their faith. Islamic topics are part of the school curriculum, and all children are required to attend. All Christian activity is monitored. Registered groups have some freedom, but gaining registration is extremely difficult. The increasing power and established control of President Rahmon mean surveillance and pressure are likely to continue.

Open Doors, Australia

## Great Texts of the Bible #13 Acts 20:17-38

Sermon  
Notes

Ephesus was a very wealthy city. We visited it in 2014 and the scale of the ruins so far uncovered is awesome. The terraced "houses of the rich" featured mosaic floors, hot and cold water and were centrally heated.

Around 52 AD Paul came to Ephesus overland to the tiny Christian congregation Apollos had established (Acts 18:24-26) with the help of Priscilla and Aquila. Now, in Acts 20, Paul is travelling by ship down the coast on his way to Jerusalem. He uses the opportunity to bring together the church leaders from Ephesus and speak to them one last time. It is the only address in Acts to a group of Christians.

We will explore a number of elements that make Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders one of the Bible's Great texts. We notice:

**1 "This is goodbye" (25-27)** Disciples of John the Baptist, received the message of Jesus and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

In the synagogue Paul held discussions and taught the Kingdom of God (Acts 19:1-10). As in other synagogues there was some resentment and antipathy. After three months Paul left the synagogue and rented the lecture hall of Tyrannus where he taught for two years. He also visited and taught in the homes of those who chose to follow "the Way of the Lord", as Christianity was described at this stage.

For Paul it meant a demanding and difficult commitment to the Ephesians. He called for a response "urging Jews and Greeks alike to a radical life-change before God and an equally radical trust in our Master Jesus." MSG.

**2 "Be on your toes" (28-31)** The leaders are the 'elders'. Their status in the Christian community originates in their maturity. The Greek for 'elder' is *presbuteros* from which comes presbyter; so Presbyterian is church government by elders. To the oldsters comes the job of shepherding the flock of God.

The shepherds oversee; the Greek word is *episcopoi* meaning to watch over or oversee. Sometimes this word is translated as "bishop".

The Holy Spirit has given the elders the watching brief, the role of shepherd. They are to guard and protect the flock of God. How important is the Way, how precious the flock? "God Himself thought they were worth dying for." (28, *The Message*)

With its reference to "the blood of God" or "his own blood" the text resonates with the extraordinary words of Zechariah (12:10), where Yahweh says "they will look on me whom they have pierced". Both passages have proved a challenge to readers and translators alike.

The watchers have to be concerned on two fronts: dangers within the community, and and fierce wolves around the flock.

**3 "I'm turning you over to God" (32)** Without the apostle to lead and guide them the church needed to be very clear about its purpose. But, what is that purpose? What misconceptions have you heard?

In committing them to God the apostle trusts them to the "word of his grace which is able to build you up". Had he not already spent time teaching about the Kingdom of God and the whole counsel of God? (25, 27, 32). For Paul it was the Old Testament, with the apostolic testimony to Jesus.

The Scriptures are the key. That's why the Bible has a central place in our service.

**4 "on behalf of the weak" (33-35)** The Kingdom of God was Jesus' great theme. His Beatitudes and parables make this clear. So, why must we work for the weak?

The Lord has said so, and the call to be like our Master who gave himself for us when we had no other help, should be enough. It is the way of blessing. It is more blessed to give.

This focus on the other will build us up as followers of the Way of Jesus. This was what Paul was already engaged in doing despite the great risk to his safety. He was taking a collection to Jerusalem for the needy disciples there

**5 "a river of tears" (36-38)** Paul had given himself to them unstintingly. From his loving commitment they learned of the Master who loved them from eternity.

Their learning, their living and their loving made sense as never before. They wept, prayed, kissed him and escorted him to the ship. They never met again, but Paul wrote.

Tychicus brought the letter to the Ephesians (6:21).