

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 21 November 2021

Welcome and Notices
Keith Ferres

Hymn 207
Christ is made the sure foundation

Prayer of Invocation

Young @ Heart
A happy reunion
Christine Bradbeer

Offering

Bible Reading: Acts 20:17-38
Sonya Rutherford

Psalms 23
The Lord's my Shepherd

Sermon
The Church of God.
Acts 20:28

Prayer of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 464
Make me a captive, Lord

Benediction



NOTICES

21 November 2021

www.blackburnpc.org.au

- Wednesday 24 November 1.30 pm Prayer Meeting.
- Sunday 28 November 11 am Divine Service, conducted by Rev Dr Greg Goswell. **Gathered** Also streamed on Facebook Live. Later with on YouTube with captions.
- Sunday 5 December 11 am Service of Holy Communion

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Congregational members:
Bernard and Hilary HAWKINS

and



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Matt and Kate VINICOMBE and family are with CMS in Australia, learning the Anindilyakwa language and serving in the Groote Eylandt community.



GARDENIA ST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
53 Gardenia Street,
Blackburn 3130

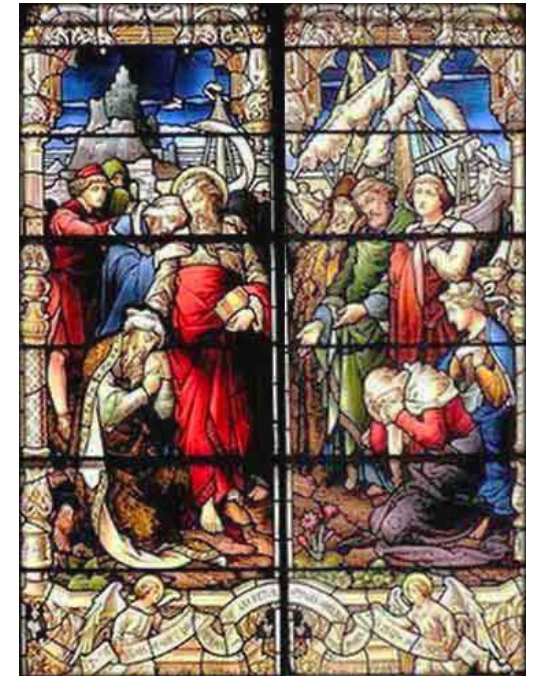


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GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

21 November 2021



Paul's farewell to the Ephesian Elders
St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral, Buffalo,
New York

WELCOME



Armed groups committed human rights abuses, including killings and abductions, in the context of the armed conflict. Security forces also perpetrated extrajudicial executions and torture. Impunity remained pervasive. The right to education was hindered. Freedoms of expression and assembly were restricted.

Amnesty International 2020

Violence and atrocities committed by armed Islamist groups, state security forces engaged in counterterrorism operations, and pro-government militias have exacerbated the humanitarian and security situation in Burkina Faso. Of particular concern are the gravity and number of attacks against teachers, students, and schools by armed Islamist groups. Few efforts have been made to hold those responsible for these abuses to account.

Human Rights Watch 2021

Open Doors' partners in Burkina Faso report that some parts of the country have no open churches. For Christians, attacks from Islamic extremists are common and converts from Islam are pressured to deny their faith and are even rejected from their families. The northern and eastern parts of Burkina Faso are particularly dangerous for believers, especially areas outside of the city. Many believers do not publicly declare their faith in Jesus.

Open Doors 2021

Burkina Faso has around 60% Muslims, 30% Christians and 10% followers of traditional African religions. Until a few years ago, the various religions lived in peace together, despite political instability and military coups. The rise of extremist Islam, from 2015, has caused devastation, destroyed agriculture and displaced more than one million people. This, together with recurring drought and famine and the Covid pandemic in 2020, has plunged the already-poor landlocked country into a humanitarian crisis.

Barnabas Fund 2021

Sermon
Outline

The church of God.

Here is something we have not seen. For the first and only time in the entire book of the Acts we have the essence of Paul's words to Christians. His Farewell to the Ephesian Elders will repay reflection and meditation. Today we pick up its main themes.

1. The SHEPHERD

I recall a conversation years ago with a senior teacher at school. The theme was the pastoral care of students. He was visibly surprised when I suggested the whole concept of pastoral care was inherently Christian. However, when I referred to the twenty-third psalm the shepherd/pastoral connection suddenly dawned on him. Of course, he said, as if a revelation had taken place.

The three descriptive words are instructive. Elder (*presbuteros*), bishop (*episkopos*) and shepherd (*poimenes*) describe the same church leaders from a different perspective. They are to watch over and take care, of themselves, and of the church. Paul they have a pastoral model.

2. The WOLVES

In the ancient near east the wolf was the kind of problem for sheep that wild dogs are to Australian graziers. They hunt both individually and in packs and wreak havoc in a flock of sheep.

Wolves may come from outside, but even from within the flock, wolves may arise, spreading false teachings and corrupting behaviour. The obligation is to feed the flock (teach the truth) and to guide (warn of error). This emphasis is illustrated in Paul's letters.

Jesus himself warned of 'wolves in sheep's clothing' (Matthew 7:15).

3. The SHEEP

How are we to think of church, the flock of God? The Church may be disregarded by the world, but by some she is oppressed and persecuted. Paul explains the Church, as the people of God, is precious. Precious because she has been redeemed at great cost. What cost? Redeemed at the cost of 'his own blood' (v.28). This is an extraordinary and challenging expression. One does not usually think of God having blood. (Compare Zechariah 12:10). The flock which belongs to God is purchased by the blood of Christ and supervised by overseers appointed by the the Holy Spirit. The love of the triune God has brought into being the church; she is God's special possession.

"It should humble us to remember that the church is not ours, but God's. And it should inspire us to faithfulness... If the three persons of the Trinity are thus committed to the welfare of the people, should we not be also?" (John Stott)

[Still] Praying for South Africa

In 1990 the US magazine Christianity Today invited Michael Cassidy, founder of African Enterprise, to write a guest editorial about the dramatic events taking place in South Africa. He wrote:

"History has again landed in our laps with the quantum leaps of courage taken by President F. W. De Klerk and the momentous advent to centre stage of the Nelson Mandela mystique. Our nation has done an overnight course change, the rules of the political book have been rewritten, and the shape of the future has been irrevocably changed. A curious amalgam of heady hope, high-wire political adventure, and mega-uncertainty has settled upon the very soul of South Africa.

Never in the history of our land has such weighty responsibility devolved upon the shoulders of two such different men of destiny: the white President of Today and the black Prisoner of Yesterday. It is the stuff of which epics are born. Indeed, it is the Mandela Moment, and in many ways a matchless moment.

Yet it is also one fraught with political peril. If the church—especially the church of South Africa—does not live out Christian principles and pray them in to protect the process, then danger looms. Christians must pray with intense and earnest intercession that Jesus will have his way with us. Without such prayer, great and positive forward movements such as the one we are caught up in now can be derailed by the demonic powers."

In September this year AE released a documentary outlining the power of prayer and the grace of God in the lives of key players of that era. The film is all the more timely with the death of FW de Klerk last week, and his posthumously released apology reiterating his deeply held regrets about Apartheid. *The Threatened Miracle of South Africa's Democracy* is an educational and inspirational film based on Michael Cassidy's detailed notes and his subsequent book *A Witness For Ever* written. Click the YouTube link below!

