

# ORDER OF SERVICE

3 April 2022

Doxology 710  
Now to the King

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn 304 (R)  
I joyed when to the house of God

Young at Heart  
Christine Bradbeer

Welcome and Notices

Offering and Dedication

Hymn 561 (R)  
God's my light and my salvation

Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11  
Christine Bradbeer

Comfort in the strife  
Sermon series: Blueprint #8  
Isaiah 40:1

Prayer of Intercession  
and  
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 596 (R)  
O love that will not let me go

Benediction



## NOTICES

3 April 2022

[www.blackburnpc.org.au](http://www.blackburnpc.org.au)

Wednesday 6 April

1.30 pm Prayer Meeting

Sunday 10 April

11 am Divine Worship. Palm Sunday.  
and streamed on Facebook.

**MEETING IN PERSON**

Friday April 15

9.30 am Good Friday Service

### FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Congregational member:  
**Loris BALDERSON.**

and



**Yousif and Vivian**

**Kunda** work with Gospel Recording Network and need additional funding to return to East and North Africa to set up the next three years with GRN.



## GARDENIA ST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

53 Gardenia Street,  
Blackburn 3130



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BSB: 013-328. Account number: 2970 40694

**GARDENIA ST.**

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**BLACKBURN**

3 April 2022

**WELCOME**



Ezekiel's Vision of the New Temple

Donald Jackson, © 2005 *The St John's Bible*,  
Saint John's University, Minnesota USA

For your prayers



Armed conflict continued and armed groups carried out at least 70 attacks, killing tens of civilians. The humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate. Amnesty International 20/21

Once a country known for cross-religious harmony, Niger has re-entered the top 50 of the World Watch List, reflecting how pressure is increasing on Christians in this Muslim-majority nation. Only a tiny percentage of the 25 million people in Niger are Christians – just 64,700.

A lot has changed – and it's highly disturbing. Persecution is getting much worse in Niger. This is down to a dramatic rise in violence against Christians. In the past five years, the Sahel region has seen a huge increase in violent Islamist attacks and the government of Niger has lost a lot of territory to the jihadists. The unpredictability of the situation makes Christians vulnerable, reflecting a trend of increasing violence facing Christians across sub-Saharan Africa.

Most of the population regard Islam as part of their ethnicity: if you are a Nigerien, you are a Muslim. Believers from Muslim backgrounds are therefore the most vulnerable to persecution, and often come under intense pressure from their families and communities to renounce their faith.

Historical Christian communities are generally allowed to practise their faith in private, but in regions under Islamist control, Christians must gather with caution because of an increased threat of violence from militant groups like Boko Haram. In regions near the border with Nigeria, churches have been burned and pastors forced to flee their homes. Meanwhile, the local authorities have occasionally stopped believers from meeting, and the registration process for churches is long and difficult. Open Doors 2022

Sermon Notes

## Comfort in the strife

Prophets are can be uncomfortable people to have around. Think Nathan and David, or Elijah and Ahab!

Prophets cleanse the imagination! The 'writing prophets' in the Bible underline, with great clarity, the difference between this world and the ways of the gospel. They keep us awed, aware of the presence of God, and separate from those cultures that confuse and overwhelm us.

In 587 BC war devastated Israel; Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed and its population deported. God's temple was erased. The prophets make clear us to what the Exile means.

### 1. Jeremiah's temple sermon (Jeremiah 7, 31:31)

Jeremiah lived through the war and its chaos. His personal story matches the searing insights of his poetry. [a poet = 'do\_er', in Greek]. After his opening poem he comes to his sermon at the temple gate (7:1-15). He calls for the doors to be shut! God is looking for changed lives, not repetition of a mantra: 'the temple of the Lord' (x3). Go down to Shiloh and 'see what I did there'. Be warned! It will happen here!

Later the prophet speaks to the deep change God is seeking in the lives of his people. There will be a brand *new covenant*, written on the heart (31:31). It will be universal, intimate and rock solid

How are we to respond to the devastation war?

### 2. Isaiah provides comfort. (Isaiah 40).

Isaiah too is a do\_er, a poet, whose words create change. His name means 'God saves' and, working and reworking the themes of judgment, comfort and hope he provides a 'Salvation symphony'.

'Comfort ye my people'. These are the opening words of Handel's Messiah. The warfare is ended and God speaks to them as still his people, people whose sin is forgiven, and among whom God, in all his glory, will come to reign as King. (Isaiah 40 and 52).

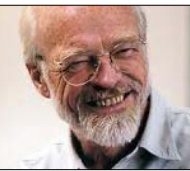
In this symphony of salvation there is a *servant of YHWH* who does for Israel what the nation could not do. He bears their iniquity (53)

### 3. Ezekiel's temple vision. (Ezekiel 40)

The restoration is unimaginable. Like a valley of dry bones! Can they live! (Ezekiel 37). Unlikely, but YHWH knows, his Spirit raises the dead.

Ezekiel sees God's temple immaculate, and decorated like a garden of Eden (40). The blueprint is clear. It is a vision of *creation restored* and God in the midst of his people again. Who will bring this to pass?

Eugene Peterson...  
On reading your Bible



I noticed that the most striking biblical metaphor for reading was Saint John eating a book:

I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, "Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth." And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. (Rev. 10:9-10)

Jeremiah and Ezekiel before him had also eaten books – a good diet, it would seem, for anyone who cares about reading words rightly.

For attention-getting, this is as good as Kafka any day, but as metaphor it is far better. St. John, this endlessly fascinating early-church apostle and pastor and writer, walks up to the angel and says, "Give me the book." The angel hands it over, "Here it is; eat it, eat the book." And John does. He eats the book – not just reads it – he got it into his nerve endings, his reflexes, his imagination.

The book he ate was Holy Scripture. Assimilated into his worship and prayer, his imagining and writing, the book he ate was metabolised into the book he wrote, the first great poem in the Christian tradition and the concluding book of the Bible, the Revelation.

The Oxford don Austin Farrer, in his Bampton Lectures, referred to "the forbidding discipline of spiritual reading" that ordinary people have characteristically brought to this text that forms their souls...

Our ancestors set this "forbidding discipline" (their phrase for it was *lectiodivina*) as the core curriculum in this most demanding of all schools, the School of the Holy Spirit, established by Jesus when he told his disciples, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth ... he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-15; also 14:16; 5:26; 6:7-8).

All writing that comes out of this School anticipates this kind of reading: participatory reading, receiving the words in such a way that they become interior to our lives, the rhythms and images becoming practices of prayer, acts of obedience, ways of love.

from Christianity Today, May 2007