



Readings for this week:

Monday	Reading 1 Tim 6:3–21 Pray for Jean & David Hall
Tuesday	2 Tim 1:1–2:13 Pray for Lucy Frost
Wednesday	Reading 2 Tim 2:14–3:17 Pray for Suzanne Gallier
Thursday	Reading 2 Tim 4 Pray for Margaret Gallagher
Friday	Reading Titus 1 Pray for Bill, Lorraine Graham & Family
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Will Graham
Sunday	Titus 2–3 Pray for Brenda & Keith Hambleton & family

Prayer requests:

- ▶ We continue to pray for Christine H & Bill E in hospital,
- ▶ We also remember those who are ill, those who have been bereaved recently and those seeking for employment
- ▶ We pray for Lucy who is our speaker today and for Huw who will be preaching his first message at our church on Sunday 15th November.
- ▶ We pray for all the children in our church, and for their safety at school
- ▶ We pray for the whole world, and those struggling with Covid-19 in areas of high deprivation and unemployment
- ▶ We especially offer our thanks to the Lord for his goodness to us, which comes in endless expressions of providence.

Welcome to our gathering today! Our greetings prayers and for everyone able to join us for our service today. We received a lovely 'Thank You' card from Barnabus Manchester addressed, "***To all at The Church of the Nazarene for your generous gift of £717.50***". This was our Harvest offering of thanks to the Lord, and it is helping to clothe and feed the homeless on the streets of Manchester.

We continue to hold our midweek time of prayer as a church at our **Zoom Prayer Meeting** on Wednesdays from 10.30am (for 20-30 minutes). If you have a computer or smartphone, you can join the link to our Zoom calls on the email sent out each week. We appreciate your continued prayer for our ministry week by week and for the needs of people we try to assist with, not least a time of corporate worship each Sunday.

The results when the ballot papers in the Manchester Brooklands Church of the Nazarene postal ballot were counted on Saturday 24 October 2020 were as follows: Total votes cast 58; Yes votes, 56; No votes 2; Incorrectly completed ballots 4. The result of the ballot was declared as a YES vote in favour of sending a pastoral call to the Revd Michael Kane because the necessary "two-thirds favourable vote by ballot of the church members of voting age present and voting..." had been achieved in the postal ballot. We have informed the Revd. Michael Kane of the outcome of the ballot and has 15 days following the ballot to inform the Church of his response to the call. We will inform everyone of Mick's decision in due course.

Next Sunday we will, as usual, mark **Remembrance Sunday** by observing a two-minute silence at the eleventh hour. We hope you can stand with us for this solemn moment, as has been our custom. One can also use this opportunity to remember personal times of loss and sadness, giving thanks for how others have lived sacrificially for us.

We are very much aware that the length of time that Coronavirus has been with us, and its recent intensity, is a cause for concern of many. Its cumulative impact is taking its toll. People would do anything just to be back to 'normal'! We can appreciate right now how 'normal' can be a wonderful thing that we have often taken for granted. Lord of all, hear our prayers and deliver us from evil, as we long for the simple blessings of life that mean so much.

Blessings to one and all... **Grace & Peace!**



Message: The Effective Church **Readings:** Acts 13:1-3

Recent unrest round the world has led to many of us taking time to educate ourselves about world events, culture, and history. Time is something most of us have had more of the past few months. Every October we celebrate Black History Month. It is an opportunity to learn about some remarkable people- people who have often been marginalized, overlooked, or abused. People who overcame adversity and people who have fought for justice and change. Many of us are well known to us- people like Martin Luther King, a key figure in the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. William Wilberforce, John Wesley and others who recognized the privileges and cruelties of their own race and fought for change. Other characters are less well known or have fallen into obscurity. Mary Seacole was a black nurse who travelled around the world, In Panama she pioneered treatments for cholera. During the Crimean war, she offered her services to the British Army hospitals there and was refused. So, she bravely made her own way there, setting up a pharmacy and tending to soldiers on the battlefield. Largely forgotten until recently, she is now getting the recognition she deserves, alongside her much more celebrated contemporary Florence Nightingale. Harriet Tubman was bought up in a life of slavery. She was able to escape her life as a slave and she embarked on a dangerous mission to free hundreds of others across a network of safe houses known as the “underground railroad.” She was convinced that along these journeys God sent her premonitions and dreams that protected her and those she rescued.

The Bible gives us clear instructions on how to perceive God, ourselves, and others and how to act and interact as people. What comes across strongly is that God is a God of love and equality. A key verse is Galatians 3:28 where Paul states “there is no longer Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” God works through his purposes on earth through human beings. What we don’t always register is the diverse range of people He chooses- different races, people who are outsiders, marginalized, overlooked, physically or mentally afflicted, people from varying economic and social backgrounds, male and female, young and old.

In Acts 13 we meet a diverse little group of leaders in one of the first churches. Simeon, a black gentleman, probably from North Africa, Lucius of Syrene (modern day Libya), Barnabus from Cyprus and Paul from Turkey. Then we have Manean- foster brother of the oppressive and cruel ruler Herod.

Diversity. Our first characteristic of this fledgling church was the diversity on display and how God used this diversity to fulfil his purposes. The diversity of this small group of men is quite remarkable at a time when travel was much more difficult. Their different experiences and perspectives enriched their church. Between them they spoke several different languages and had different religious backgrounds. They were able to outreach to everyone from the aristocracy, politicians, immigrants, the poorest and vulnerable.

Everyone in this leadership team had reason to feel prejudiced and suspicious of the others. I also think they probably all had insecurities about themselves that might have limited their capacity to serve if they allowed them to. They learnt to see themselves and each other through God’s eyes. I love that Lucius, Simeon and Manean are mentioned as being in positions of authority and respect to lay hands on Paul and Barnabus to send them off in mission. Through a series of steps the Holy Spirit led Barnabus and Paul to the church and Antioch and we see clearly that another key to the effectiveness of the church there was that they allowed themselves to be led by the Spirit.

Spirit Led. In the first verse of this passage we see that these five men were gifted by the Holy Spirit with the spiritual gifts of prophecy and teaching. Barnabas was a gifted teacher and renowned for his encouraging personality. When we talk of prophecy it is important to note it is a gift that is not just about predicting future but for hearing authoritatively from God. The church did not make decisions in their own strength. After just a year with them it would be natural for them to want to keep Paul and Barnabus with them. But they kept focusing on God, praying, and fasting and when God told them through prophecy that Paul and Barnabus were to be sent out on mission, they listened and were obedient. Their individual spiritual gifts complemented each other’s. Paul was highly intellectual but suffered from physical health problems. Barnabus was a warm, encouraging person. The Holy Spirit paired them together. Later the Holy Spirit would pair Paul with Luke a doctor to help him, and Mark and Timothy with their youthful energy. A word that springs to mind here is synergy- together they were greater than the sum of their parts.

The next few months for our church are going to be of critical importance. With contact limited and a change of pastor on the horizon we need to be guided by God more than ever before. We must be a Holy Spirit led church like the one at Antioch- utilising our own practical and spiritual gifts but most importantly, praying intensely and being led by God.



Outward Focused. The third characteristic of this church at Antioch was it was evangelism focused and mission focused. They wanted to bring people into their church, but they also recognized the necessity of spreading the Gospel far and wide. From the church at Antioch, Paul went on to travel around ten thousand miles on mission.

It seems strange to talk about mission and evangelism at a time when we feel so constricted and limited in what we can do. It is incredibly easy to feel disheartened.

I believe what the enemy intended for bad, God is using for good. I pray this will be a time of spiritual awakening for our city and our nation. We know more people are watching our services online in our local community and around the world.

Research shows more people are reading and praying and accessing religious content online and on television. I am reminded that for all travelling, Paul was often in “lock down” himself. When in prison or under house arrest his evangelism didn’t stop. When there were only prison guards to talk to, he evangelised to them. He wrote letters to explain and encourage and he prayed without ceasing. What can we do during this time? We are blessed with more means of communication than Paul. I pray that during this time God will put people in our hearts and grant us opportunities in new and exciting ways to spread the Gospel.

I hope you’ve enjoyed learning about some key figures in Black history and how they led to me learning about the diverse, spirit-led, outward facing church at Antioch. This past week has opened my eyes to the many injustices and inequalities going on in our world. As Christians we must educate ourselves and fight for change. We must be powerful witnesses of God’s love, fairness, empowerment, and justice. Here at Brooklands we are proud of our diverse congregation. Our different backgrounds, personalities and gifts all make our church dynamic and powerful. I hope everyone feels loved and included, with opportunities to flourish. This is something we must continually strive for, seeing ourselves and others through God’s eyes and not the sinful limitations of the world.

For our last hymn I have chosen ‘Amazing Grace.’ In the late 1700’s John Newton was working as a slave trader, transporting slaves by ship. He experienced a conversion experience and entered the ministry. Influenced by his friends John and Charles Wesley he began writing poetry and hymns. In his career he had subjected thousands of slaves to intense pain and suffering. His personal experiences and truthful confessions made him a powerful advocate for change. This hymn is an acknowledgement of past wrongs and thankfulness to God for His ‘Amazing Grace’.