



Church Together

Never Enough Time – Time For People

8th May 2022



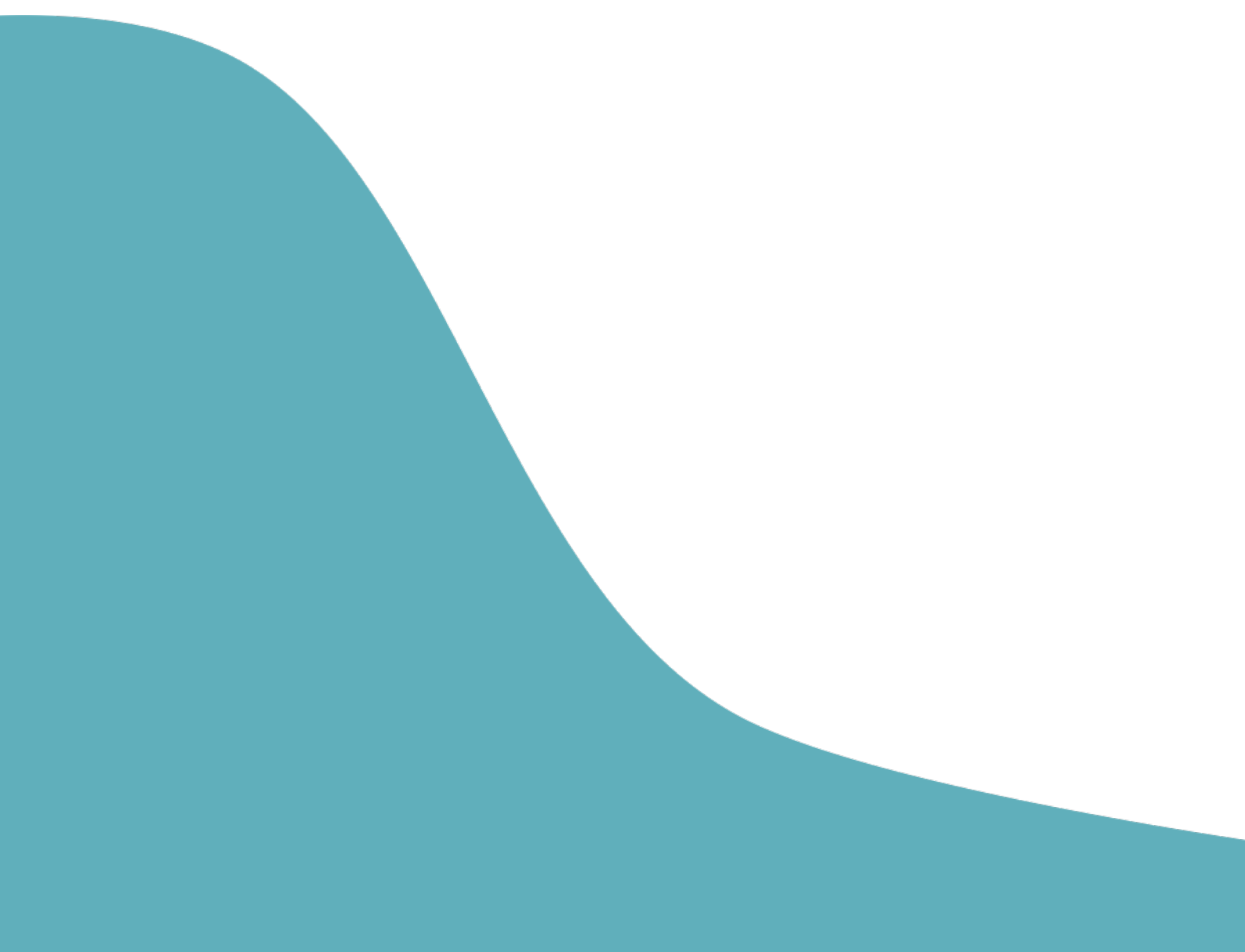
Welcome


Welcome to **Church Together**.

No matter where you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together.

Today's Service for this Second Sunday in May 2022 will be looking at: **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 1 – 16**

The theme for today's service is: **Never Enough Time – Time For People!**





We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for this service and that you would be able to **Spend Quality Time With God And With Other People!**

Call To Worship

Psalm 145 v. 8 – 11 NLT

The Lord is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The Lord is good to all,
And his compassion is over all that he has made.
All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
And all your faithful shall bless you. They shall speak of
the glory of your kingdom,
And tell of your power.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people.

We bless you for your creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days.

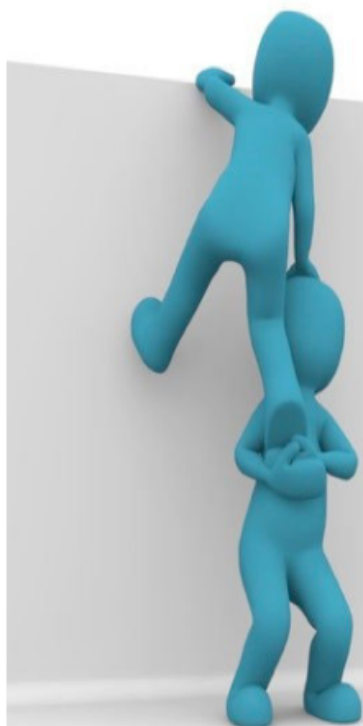
We pray this our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory for ever and ever.

Amen

Song Suggestion

What A Friend We Have In Jesus





Two are
better
than
one

Ecclesiastes 4:9

Bible

Reading

Ecclesiastes 4 v. 1 – 16 NIV

Oppression, Toil, Friendlessness

4 Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun:

I saw the tears of the oppressed—

and they have no comforter;

power was on the side of their oppressors—

and they have no comforter.

2 And I declared that the dead,

who had already died,

are happier than the living,

who are still alive.

3 But better than both

is the one who has never been born,

who has not seen the evil

that is done under the sun.

4 And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from

one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a

chasing after the wind.

5 Fools fold their hands

and ruin themselves.

6 Better one handful with tranquillity

than two handfuls with toil

and chasing after the wind.

7 Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:

8 There was a man all alone;
he had neither son nor brother.
There was no end to his toil,
yet his eyes were not content with his wealth.
“For whom am I toiling,” he asked,
“and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?”
This too is meaningless— a miserable business!

9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labour:
10 If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.
11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
12 Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Advancement Is Meaningless

13 Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to heed a warning. 14 The youth may have come from prison to the kingship, or he may have been born in poverty within his kingdom. 15 I saw that all who lived and walked under the sun followed the youth, the king’s successor. 16 There was no end to all the people who were before them. But those who came later were not pleased with the successor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Church Together Thought

Someone once recalled an incident that they had between themselves and their parent, and then their own child. The conversation went a little like: 'When I was a child, my mother, tired of my calls for **'Mummy'**, used to say, **'I wish you'd call me Auntie for a change!'** When I had young children, I understood how she had felt. Would they ever give me a moment's peace? Children, both our own and other people's, can be demanding'.

Small children want, even quite possibly need, our immediate attention. Are we always welcoming and understanding towards them, or do we sometimes wish that they would go away and leave us in peace? There is an account in the Gospels of people bringing children to Jesus. The intention of those who brought the children to Jesus seems to be that he would perhaps give them some sort of blessing, and the impatience of the disciples is perhaps

understandable given the apparently ceaseless demands made on Jesus and his disciples by people.

Jesus, however, always had time for everyone. During the time of Jesus, children were definitely to be '**seen and not heard**' and had no social or legal claim to any particular treatment. Jesus was not really referring to the innocence or humility, but that we are completely dependent on his grace. We too, need to reflect that unconditional love. This is not about having a doormat with **WELCOME** on it, rather it is a matter of attitude. Jesus is never too busy to be bothered with any one of us.

Maybe we need to ask the question: How welcoming am I? Is my heart and door open to those who want my time, my company, or my prayers?

The writer of Ecclesiastes is also confronting difficult questions. He sees a life of hard work ending in risk: all that he has worked for will be left to someone else, who may be wise or a fool; as we read in **Ecclesiastes 2 v. 19**, which says: 'And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless'. Surely this is not fair? He works hard and others will benefit from his labours. We, too, may look at others and think that their lot in

life is better than ours, and this may affect our relationship with them. Pleasing God is what matters and pleasing him involves loving each other.

MAKING TIME FOR PEOPLE

Do I need to make more time for people, or to be more welcoming to them? It may only need a five - minute phone call, but it may make all the difference to the recipient. Almost everyone appreciates a listening ear. Jesus listened: he still does. As he listens and responds to us, let us do the same for others. Solomon, in **Ecclesiastes 4**, returns to his role of cynic. He is a great observer of life, but mostly from his position '**under the sun**'; that is, he writes from a human perspective. For Solomon everything requires hard work and 100 per cent effort. It is the backdrop to his philosophy. Relationships with others require no less. Here, Solomon considers four categories of people.

FIRSTLY, SOLOMON CONSIDERS: THE OPPRESSED

In **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 1 – 3** we read: 'Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed - and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors - and they have no comforter. 2 And I declared that the dead, who had

already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. 3 But better than both is the one who has never been born, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun'.

Issues of injustice are ever around us. This is a familiar biblical theme too (**see Amos 5 v. 21**) and is echoed in the liberation theology of some third - world churches. In such extreme circum- stances of oppression, we can understand Solomon's verdict, when he says: 'The dead ... are happier than the living' (**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 2**). Contrast Jesus' approach, though, when he says: 'I have come to preach good news to the poor.'

Caring for people abroad can seem to be a little easier than caring for those on our doorstep. That church member outside our social circle; that colleague who is a stranger to deodorants; that youth who is obviously a rebel: they are the kind of people who might feel oppressed or, hard done by at times.

NEXT, SOLOMON CONSIDERS: THE LAZY

We go on to read in **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 4 – 6**: 'And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. 5 Fools fold their hands and ruin themselves. 6 Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind'.

Solomon outlines that this individual decides he is not going to get into debt, but neither is he going to have a coronary at a young age. He will lead a tranquil life. So, he decides to do just enough to get by. Such an attitude can be ruinous to character: we don't grow emotionally or spiritually.

We need to contrast the Christian approach. We are to work hard, give our best to God, provide for our families and use our money wisely. Above all, whatever we do is for God's honour, not ourselves as we see in passages such as: **Colossians 3 v. 22, 23; 1 Timothy 5 v. 8; 2 Corinthians 9 v. 6, 7.**

SOLOMON THEN CONSIDERS: THE LONELY

In **Ecclesiastes 4 v. 7, 8** we read: 'Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: 8 There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving my- self of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless - a miserable business'!

These verses make it clear that if we allow work to dominate our lives, we are headed for trouble. This imbalanced commitment to work will cut us off from the significant relationships necessary to enjoy life.

Here, Solomon says, is someone so engrossed in his work that he never stops to think what he is doing. He has no family yet

is obsessed with getting more. But to whom will he leave his fortune? No one.

Our fragmented society is producing a new social pattern – lots of single people. They naturally often feel left out of the happy couple society, which church often is. And they may feel pressured by social expectations to pair off in unwise and short – lived partnerships.

Jesus called some single men to be his closest followers. We need to find effective ways of integrating single people fully into the church family. Solomon reflects on the pointlessness of all this. But many of us have similar attitudes; it is time to give – of ourselves as well as our money. There is no better cure for loneliness.

FINALLY, SOLOMON CONSIDERS: THE FRIENDS

Ecclesiastes 4 v. 9 – 12 says: ‘Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour: 10 If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. 11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken’.

Solomon provides one of the best commentaries on the benefits of companionship that there is within these

verses. Supportive friendships are absolutely necessary for our spiritual growth. When we fall down, we need help getting up again. We must learn to trust others, to reach out to others, and to admit our need for support. This will give us added strength, wisdom, and protection in our spiritual journey.

Solomon outlines that friendship provides support both financially and emotionally (**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 9, 10**), it offers warmth and comfort (**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 11**) and provides security when under threat (**Ecclesiastes 4 v. 12**). These effects of companionship are applicable to marriage and to fellowship in the church; we need to develop them as is appropriate for our own situation.

Climbing the ladder of success will not bring ultimate fulfilment in life either. Success is always temporary. Someone will inherit our work, and ultimately, we will be forgotten. Our relationships with God and other people are of far greater importance, for they will lead to true success and a joyful life.

Song Suggestion

All Over The World The Spirit Is
Moving



Prayer

Father of all humankind,
Whose eyes are ever attentive to this changing world,
Whose hands are always eager to rescue the weak,
Whose heart is forever welcoming those who seek you,
Respond to us today, that our faith in you might grow and
our knowledge of you increase. Forbid the despondency
of the world to encroach upon our Christian lives.

Forbid the selfishness of the world and the presence of
materialism to defeat us. Forbid the narrow view of
personal achievement to blind us to the needs of others.
Forbid the disappointment of today's failure to deprive us
of future success. Forbid past experiences to quench our
faith in your ability.

Release us from the strain of life which demands only
success.

Release us of the constraints in society which prevent us
from being different. Release us from the restriction of
small mindedness which stifles the generous spirit. Today,
we break free, rise up, grasp life and trust in your
indomitable will.

Amen

Song Suggestion

Be Still For The Presence Of The
Lord



Tithes, Gifts & Offerings



No matter where you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

Now that we find ourselves once again holding services in Church, we are able to give of our finances to the work of the Lord when we are in church.

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.

Prayers Of Intercession

Our minds are so often full of words, and what is worse our hearts are often clogged up with thoughts and ideas as well, which leaves little room for meeting God in simplicity and stillness. So this morning we are going to have space to pray ourselves, guided with leads and prompts.

So first, let us take a little time to notice how many good things surround us, how much there is that we take for granted, and how much our lives have been blessed this last week with good people and enjoyable experiences.

Silence

We pray now for some of those people and places in the news, things we will read in the Sunday papers when we get home, or maybe have seen on our TV screens during this past week. We hold them now within God's love.

Silence

We turn now to pray for the Church, for any of the big issues facing it at present and we pray for our own church, particularly with many opportunities and any problems that lie before us. We ask for guidance and grace for the Church.

Silence

Between us all, we know many people who are struggling today with illness, crises, big decisions and major changes in life. God's care for them is even greater than

ours, but let us show our own love and concern for them as we pray, naming our own people in quiet trust before God.

Silence

Each of us has things on our mind, perhaps things we hesitate to mention to anyone else. But our heavenly Father understands us totally, and wants only the very best outcome for us. Let us pray to him in the honesty of our own hearts.

Silence

These, Lord, are the prayers of your people this morning. We ask you to take each one of these prayers and answer them in your own time and in your own way. And in the meantime give us expectant and trustful hearts. For Jesus' sake.

Amen

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

Song Suggestion

Great Is Their Faithfulness



Blessing

Go forth into the world in peace;
Be of good courage;
Hold fast to that which is good; Render to
no one evil for evil;
Strengthen the faint - hearted; Support
the weak;
Help the afflicted;
Honour all people;
Love and serve the Lord Rejoicing in the
power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen