Sunday 22nd November, 2026
Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. [2] My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? [3] My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" [4] These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. [5] Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God." (Psalm 42:1-5, NIV)

Let us pray…. Dear Lord, our soul pants for you this morning. We long to be in your presence. We long to worship you with others in person but today we can't, despite all our good intentions and so we come to you by ourselves this morning or with our family around us. We need you. We need you like we need our food and drink. We need your presence, your forgiveness, your love, your grace, your help and power. So give us more of you today. Let us see more of your glory as we sing our songs. Let us hear more your character as we listen to your word. Let us experience more of your goodness as we pray. And draw us closer to your people as we sing the same song, pray the same prayers, listen to the same sermon, even if we are in different locations today. Help us this day to truly worship you in spirit and in truth. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Song – Behold our God [Behold Our God - [Official Lyric Video] - YouTube]

1. Who has held the oceans in his hands?
   Who has numbered every grain of sand?
   Kings and nations tremble at his voice
   All creation rises to rejoice

Chorus: Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him

2. Who has given counsel to the Lord?
   Who can question any of his words?
   Who can teach, the one who knows all things?
   Who can fathom all his wondrous deeds?

Chorus
Behold our God, seated on his throne
Come, let us adore him
Behold our king, nothing can compare
Come, let us adore him

3. Who has felt the nails upon his hands?
Bearing all the guilt of sinful man
God eternal, humbled to the grave
Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign

Chorus

Bridge You will reign forever
(let Your glory fill the Earth) x8

Chorus

Bible Reading – Romans 14:1-12 (NIV)

"Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling over disputable matters. 2 One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. 3 The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to judge someone else's

servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand. 5 One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. 6 Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone. 8 If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. 10 You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God."

Announcements

God's Word for God's world (GWGW). TODAY we have just released our 500th show on Rhema! We are celebrating with an afternoon tea at the Charlestown Church this afternoon 3-4pm. All welcome.

National Church Life Survey (NCLS) – Sunday 8th November. If you took a survey home last week please return it today or complete it on line. Many thanks to all those who helped out by completing a survey either by paper or on line.

Focus for the month: Service. Have you been able to fill out your SERVE2027 form? It is a practical way of using your gifts and talents int eh service of others. Ideally everyone would be able to find ONE way they could serve the Church. If you did do that you would find it would be of benefit to yourself and your faith as well as for others. Please return the Serve2027 tear off by the end of the month.

Vanuatu Mission. Stephen hopes to book tickets for this mission early December. So, if you are a first timer, or if you have been before and would love to go again you have just a week or so to sign up. If you are interested please speak to either Stephen or Cheryl.

Upcoming Events

- Swansea Christmas Morning Tea – Sunday 29th November, 9am Swansea Hall.
- Lords Supper – all three services – Sunday 29th November
- National Training Event – 5-9th December. Canberra
- Kids Church Presentation – Sunday 6th December, Charlestown 9:45am
- Christmas Carols – Sunday 13th December, Charlestown 6pm
- Christmas Services
    - Christmas Eve – 24th December, Charlestown 6pm
    - Christmas Day – 25th December , Swansea 8am
    - Christmas Day – 25th December, Charlestown 9:30am

Gospel Intensive. A one year, one day a week, gospel training partnership for those interested in growing in their faith, knowledge and ministry skills. Interested? Please speak to Jannah or Audric of contact Gavin Hays 0432 543 354

A Chance to Reflect. The events at Charlestown morning Church on Sunday 1st November were disturbing and may have affected each of us in different ways. Some of us may have questions, concerns or feelings that we are still trying to process. We would like to provide an opportunity for us to come together, talk about what happened, share how we have been feeling and listen to and support one another. Jo Barlow and Heather Collyer will lead this time together in a safe and caring environment. There is no pressure to share anything you don't feel comfortable sharing. You are welcome simply to come along and listen. Our hope is that, as we talk and support one another, we can begin to process what happened and, in time, find some peace and healing. If you think this would be helpful for you, please join us next Sunday at 11:45am at Charlestown Church.

Big Topics. A series of roundtable discussions where we can talk together about how current issues affects our lives and the live of our Church. Our next big topic will be Singleness. NEXT Sunday 29th November from

4:30-5:30. To prepare, you could read Dani Treweek, “Single Ever After” Or watch one of the numerous video podcasts she has been interviewed on.

New Staff. (If room) In the last month or so we have farewelled Sam Wilson from the admin assistant job and in the coming months we will farewell Jo Barlow from our pastoral care role as she moves permanently to Hamilton to worship there with her husband Malcolm. This is has left us with a dilemma, what is more important – the Church admin work or the pastoral work, particularly amongst out women? Bot the Session and the COM are thinking this through and will make a recommendation to the congregation sometime int eh new year. Please pray for them!

Next preaching programme – Swansea/Charlestown AM.

Romans 9-16 “In view of God’s mercy.”

29/11 Romans 15:7-33 The gospel at work

27/12 Romans 16:1-27 Paul’s Missionary Heart

Pastoral Prayer Points

Pray for Mozambique. (Population 36 million. Christians 19 million). Churches are burnt down, pastors are abducted, and many Christians are killed. Christians were heavily impacted by 2025 attacks in Mozambique. Pray for families of those killed and for those displaced. Pray that God protects Christians from violent attacks and to encourage them in their faith. Pray that stability will return throughout Mozambique.

Pray for the Hunter Presbytery Youth Camp @ Camp Elim over next weekend. Pray for those going that they would have a great time, build lasting friendship and be challenged by Graham Barnes (Paul’s brother) to have their own faith in the Lord. Pray for our youth group, many of whom are going.

Pray for Hamilton Presbyterian. Praise God for a number of young men attending Scots Kirk Hamilton, who are seeking the meaning of life. Pray that they will find Jesus. Sunday School has started this term at the 10am service. Pray that more young families will commit to attending. Wisdom for David Robertson and the elders as they seek God's will in calling Ramy Nakhil as the assistant minister in 2027. Refreshing break for David and Annabel as they enjoy a week's leave from 20th November.

Pray for those in prison. Pray that the Lord would bring them to a genuine recognition of their sin, repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, who alone can set them free from the guilt and power of sin. Please provide comfort, hope and encouragement in the difficulties of prison life, and place godly Christians around them who will faithfully share the good news of your grace. Pray also for prison chaplains and Christian ministries, that you would use them to bring many to salvation and transform lives for your glory.

Bible Reading – Romans 14:13- 5:7 (NIV)

13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. 14 I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. 19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall. 22 So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin. 15 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those

who insult you have fallen on me." 4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Song – Will your anchor hold?

Will Your Anchor Hold in the Storms of Life - piano instrumental hymn with lyrics - YouTube

1. Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift or firm remain?

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Stedfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.

2. It is safely moored, 'twill the storm withstand,
For 'tis well secured by the Savior's hand;
And the cables passed from His heart to mine,
Can defy the blast, through strength divine.

3. It will firmly hold in the straits of fear,
When the breakers have told the reef is near;
Though the tempest rave & the wild winds blow
Not an angry wave shall our bark o'erflow.

4. It will surely hold in the floods of death,
When the waters cold chill our latest breath;
On the rising tide it can never fail,
While our hopes abide within the veil.

Sermon: The weak and the strong (Stephen T)

Put yourself for a moment in the place of Angus McInnes. Angus is a bloke with no time at all for modern music. Especially not in church. In fact, Angus and some of his friends are **disgusted** by the way things are going. With all the modern instruments that are turning up in **trendy worldly kind of** churches. Angus doesn't want his church to go the same way. But the problem is, there are 52 other people in the congregation who disagree.

Angus is an elder. And because so many other people want modern music, he resigns. He **spits the dummy**. And **leaves the church**, never to return. The whole **McMillan family** leaves with him... for the same reason. They don't like modern music either. And they can't have fellowship with people who do.

It's a **sad story**. And a **true one**. And it happened in a Presbyterian Church in the Northern Rivers. In the year 1886. One hundred and forty years ago. The modern musical instrument they were so worried about was the **organ. For** Churches and organs just don't mix.

We Christians seem to be able to divide on anything. We Presbyterians especially so. Because we love the truth of God's word, we place God's teaching high on our priorities. But unfortunately, when others disagree with us, we sometimes love truth more than we love people. But not the apostle Paul, he has spent the first 11 chapters of Romans telling us the truth of the gospel and now he spending the next 5 chapters showing how that truth leads us to loving all the people that God has placed all around us.

Slide 2

For the Church was never meant to be a cozy club of like-minded people. We are not clones of one another, we come from different countries, backgrounds, denominations & different life experiences. That's the beauty of the Church. It's also its difficulty; for we are just not going to agree on a range of issues. What do we do when that happens? Here's Paul's key idea. "*Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarrelling*

over disputable matters."

I know this is quite a long passage we are looking at this morning but I want to spend some time unpacking Romans 14:1, its key idea. "*Accept."* Don't argue with them. Don't condemn them. Don't break fellowship with them. Accept them. Accept who though?

"*Accept the one whose faith is weak."* This seems to be a different situation to the one that Paul talks about in Galatians where some legalists were telling the Church that if they just followed the law, they would be right with God. No, in that circumstance, Paul is saying that's wrong, that doesn't lead to putting your trust fully in Jesus. But here in Romans 14, we are dealing with people of faith, faith in Jesus but some who have a weak faith.

They haven't understood fully the freedom of the gospel. Instead, they have kept some of their legalistic ways by developing a list of dos and don'ts that determine how they live out their faith. Ways of living that seem wise to them but that bring them into conflict with other Christians who seem to be breaking these dos and don'ts. And these dos and don'ts are not gospel issues, salvation issues, non-negotiable issues, they are disputable matters. Things that in the final wash, shouldn't lead to divisions with in the Church family.

Slide 3

What sorts of things are we talking about? *2 "One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables."* Can you have a bacon sandwich for example for breakfast? Or lobster for dinner? The Jewish food laws said no and in a Romans butcher shop they might have also been offered to idols, so better to be completely pure and say pass on the pig. And then there is the issue of holy days.

Slide 4

5 "One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. 6 Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord." Is Saturday still the Lord's Day? Or is it Sunday? Should we celebrate the OT festivals of Passover and Tabernacles or the key days in the life of Jesus, like Christmas and Easter? And what about drinking alcohol?

Slide 5

20 "All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall." Just look around at the abuse that alcohol has caused in both our families and our society. Surely, it is better to have nothing to do with it, at all.

Slide 6

I'm just so glad that 2000 years later we have learnt our lesson and we no longer argue over food, over alcohol or over the sabbath or special days. Yeah Nah! Instead, we have added a few more to the list? Child baptism or adult baptism? Modern music or old hymns? Good clothing to Church or whatever you were wearing beforehand? Christian schooling or public schooling? Liberal? Labour? Greens or One Nation? Predestination or Free Will? Evolution or Creation? The list goes on and on and on. And Paul says, "Stop it!"

Slide 7

Stop splitting the Church over these secondary issues. He will later say, make up your mind about the subject. Think it through, read the Scriptures, follow your conscience. But don't divide over it. Accept one another's differences. Find a way to live together. What did the old nursery rhyme say? "*Jack Sprat could eat no fat, his wife could eat no lean—And so between the two of them, they licked the platter clean!"* Paul tells us there is a way forward if we

Slide 8

1. **Don't pass judgement on each other (v.1-13)**

3 "The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. 4 Who are you to judge

someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand."

It's so easy for the ones who will eat anything to look down their noses at the one who will not eat pork and treat them with contempt. And it is so easy for the ones who wants to follow the OT laws to judge our fellow Christian for being soft on the Bible. And if both sides do this for long enough, the solution becomes obvious, one group leaves and starts a new Church and brings those who are like minded along with them for the ride.

But if the Lord is the master of both and if the Lord has accepted both as his own, then we need to accept those who have another view on these sorts of disputable matters. God has welcomed them, so we should welcome them. What's more Christ is still Lord of those who disagree with you on these disputable matters.

Slide 9

6 "Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; & whoever abstains does so to the Lord & gives thanks to God. 7 For none of us lives for ourselves alone & none of us dies for ourselves alone."

Slide 10

Both sides in this dispute are attempting to follow their Lord Jesus. Both are trying to live for him and him alone. Besides, Jesus gave his life for them as well. *8 "If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 "For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living."*

Slide 11

How lame do you think it will sound on the last day when you say to Jesus, I turned my back on your child of faith because he refused to have a glass of wine with me one evening meal. Lord, you know I'm right in that having one glass is a-ok with you but that person's refusal to drink alcohol was enough for me to break fellowship with them. It's so petty, isn't it?

God has accepted them, Christ is their Lord and they are your brother or sister in Christ. They are family. *10 "You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister?"* Five times in our passage today, Paul refers to the one that you are in dispute with as your **brother and sister**. We are family. What about the ties we have both being part of God's family? I know that some of our families have split over some small issues that over time become a yawning chasm but the Church wouldn't ever do that, would we?

Slide 12

"Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God." Besides who made you and I judge and jury? Every one of us will have to give an account to God, not to each other. So don't pass judgement on each other.

Slide 13

Imagine a family sitting around the dinner table. One person likes a pork roast, the other just vegetables. One loves football; another prefers Pilates. Would you question whether they really belong to the same family because they have different preferences? Of course not. The family is meant to have a unity in the midst of their diversity. Likewise, the Church.

Friends you and I shouldn't play a Christian version of the TV show the weakest link. Don't say bye, bye to them or judge them or look down on them just because he mows his lawn on a Sunday? Or turns up to Church with a tattoo? Or prefers a more formal service than a contemporary one? You're judging a servant of Christ. Someone only Christ should judge.

Slide 14

2. **Don't pass judgement and secondly don't put up stumbling blocks (verses 13-18)**

13 "Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister. 14 I am convinced, being fully persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for that person it is unclean. 15 If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love."

For it is not always about right and wrong. Yes, there might be a right answer about food and a right answer about alcohol and special days and baptism and tattoos. But you don't want to force someone to go against their conscience. They might have thought about the millennium or speaking in tongues or worship and come up with another view. And if that is so, then until they change their mind, doing something against their conscience, not only seems to be wrong but in some way is actually wrong. Because it is not done out of faith.

Slide 16

So, you & I can tell the recovering alcoholic that its Ok for them to have a glass of wine with their meal, because drinking is not wrong and that could cause them to backslide, massively.

God has given us all our conscience for a reason, to help regulate our behavior. To tell us right from wrong. And yes, it is true that our conscience can be taught the wrong thing, or worn down by us continually doing the wrong thing. Our conscience living in a fallen world is not our God, to be followed all the time. Only God's word is like that. So, you might have trained your conscience over the years with God's word but not everyone has done that. So, you and I need to be careful not to cause a stumbling block to others by leading them against their conscience. For *"You are no longer acting in love."*

Slide 17

"Do not by your eating destroy someone for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let what you know is good be spoken of as evil. 17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval."

Slide 18

For the kingdom of God is not about externals, food, drink and days, it is about eternals – righteousness, peace and joy. So, make sure you are majoring on the majors, not on the minors. The crux of the kingdom of God is not about what we eat or what we wear or about special days. That's how the Pharisees lived and Jesus strongly condemned them for that. It's about godliness. It's about peace, joy, love, self-control, patience.

Slide 19

Which means if we are putting stumbling blocks in the way of others, we are not helping but hurting our brothers and sisters in Christ. Which is why Martin Luther once said *"A Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.*" We Christians give up some of our liberty because of the greater value of love

Slide 20

That's why the Methodists were the first to replace the wine in the Lords Supper with grape juice. It's just drink. It's just a symbol. And they would prefer to love people and help their tender consciences, than, to continuing celebrating the Lords Supper the way that they always have. And probably is closer to the Scriptures. Sometimes you and I want to hold the line on doctrinal purity whereas here Paul draws on the line around love and acceptance.

Slide 21

3. **Thirdly, don't destroy God's work (verses 19-23)**

19 "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a person to eat anything

that causes someone else to stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall."

Friends, it's just food. You are free to eat whatever you want. Go ahead have shellfish or a Macca's meal. Some of the things that you eat will be better for your health than others, but there is nothing godlier about vegetarianism. There is nothing wrong about having a glass of wine. Unless it is going to hurt your brother or sister. And if it is, then please don't do it.

Slide 22

When I was at theological college there was a lot of talk about teetotalling. That people would choose to give up alcohol because as ministers they didn't want to lead others into sin. Now I choose not to go down that road but I don't hear many people today talking about giving something up because it might lead another into sin. It has become all about ourselves. What we want to do. And often we forget what our actions are saying to those around us, including those who are weaker in faith or just starting off the walk of faith.

Wouldn't it be tragic if our actions lead to the downfall of someone else? When we go to Vanuatu, we often talk about the sort of joking we do as Australians is deeply offensive to others. Or when we don't finish off our meals. Or when we wear budgie smugglers or bikinis. But we in our region there are many cultures that find what we do offensive. And we have a wide variety of people in the Church that will be hurt by some of the thing we do or say also.

Slide 23

22 "So, whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who does not condemn himself by what he approves. 23 But whoever has doubts is condemned if they eat, because their eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin." So don't go against your conscience. At the same time think about other people's consciences as well. For that is the way of love and the way that Christ lived

Slide 24

4. **So lastly, do follow Christ (15:1-6)**

15 "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. 2 Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up. 3 For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

Isn't Christ the perfect example of someone doing this? He didn't stay in heaven but gave up that close fellowship with God, out of love for others. Didn't he pay the temple tax, even though he didn't need to; to set the right example? Didn't he go without food and drink and companionship, so that he might model a life of godliness and service of others? Didn't he go to the cross because that was the only way for you and I to be saved? And didn't he join in with the tax collectors and sinners, not being a Holy Joe and standing aloof because he wanted to show us that all food and alcohol are permissible with a prayer of thanks?

Slide 25

If we want to know what being strong faith looks like, then look at Jesus Christ. Strength is not getting your own way. Strength is not doing what you want to do. Strength, real strength is about making sacrifices for others. Maturity, godliness, holiness is God-centred and other person centred. You see the strong will not use their power to go further ahead, they will use their power to care for the weak, carry the weak, strengthen the weak.

Slide 26

Think of a family going on a bush walk. The Dad doesn't just go to the front and walk at the pace that he knows he can go, he has to think about the weakest member of the family and go at their pace. Hoping that over time, their pace will grow quicker. Likewise, you who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak.

Slide 27

My experience is that when we come to this passage we all think that we are the strong ones. We have the Bible right and what we are doing is definitely the right thing. Whereas this passage has led me to believe that ultimately the strong ones are the ones that are willing to give up their liberty in order to love others. Those who will care for others who think differently. Those who put their own agendas aside for the sake of others are the real strong ones.

You know sometimes that are the leaders of the church, who want to make some changes about how we do things but choose not to do this or that because some of the people would be hurt if we made those changes. But sometimes it is the other way around.

This year I have been so proud of many of our regulars who are willing to give up some of the things they value, for the sake of the whole group. Who feel strongly about an issue that does not represent the majority here and yet they make the decision to love us anyway. Often, they are the strongest here, often they are the most mature, often they are the ones closely following Jesus. They are not jumping up and down getting their way, they are quietly and faithfully serving the Lord through their sacrificial love to us.

Slide 28

How do they do that? How can we follow them as they follow Jesus? *4" For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance & encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* It only comes through prayer, and studying the scriptures and growing in endurance and encouragement and acceptance of one another.

Slide 29

But let's not think this is easy, it is hard. In 1556, Charles V stepped down as the Holy Roman Emperor. When he retired to his palace in Spain, he tried without success to get the six clocks in his palace to chime the hour together. But no matter how hard he tried, no matter what new methods he tried, nothing ever worked. He later wrote in his memoirs: "How is it possible for six different clocks to chime all at the same time? How is it even more possible for the six nations of the Holy Roman Empire to live in harmony? It can't be done, it's impossible, even if they call them (selves) Christians."

Slide 30

But it can be done - if we take the advice of Rupertus Medlenius, a German theologian. He wisely said, "*In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity*." There are some things that are essential to the faith that we must hold together. No matter what. With no compromise. They include how we are saved, what God is like, Jesus being both God and man, the reliability of the Bible. But then there are other things nonessentials that we can differ on. Styles of worship, what we eat, alcohol, baptism, second coming and so much more. But no matter what we believe on these things the call is to love each other, as Christ has loved us. Deeply, in a costly way, as we sacrificially bear one another's burdens.

Slide 31

Friends in the past the Presbyterian Church has been known for its love of truth but not necessarily its love of people. Wouldn't it be good if we could be known for both? In the essentials, we love the truth & in the non-essentials the truth is that we love. Then the weak would become strong, the strong would become stronger and the unity we achieve, would further serve the cause of the gospel and bring praise and glory to our wonderful God.

Song – Jesus thank you [Jesus, Thank You (feat. Brook Hills Music) - Official Lyric Video - YouTube]

i. The mystery of the cross I cannot comprehend
   The agonies of Calvary

You the perfect Holy One, crushed Your Son
Who drank the bitter cup reserved for me

Chorus *Your blood has washed away my sin. Jesus, thank You*
The Father's wrath completely satisfied. Jesus, thank You
Once Your enemy, now seated at Your table. Jesus, thank You

ii. By Your perfect sacrifice I've been brought near
Your enemy You've made Your friend
Pouring out the riches of Your glorious grace
Your mercy and Your kindness know no end

Chorus
Bridge Lover of my soul, I want to live for You (x4)
Chorus

Closing. *"5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:5-6)*