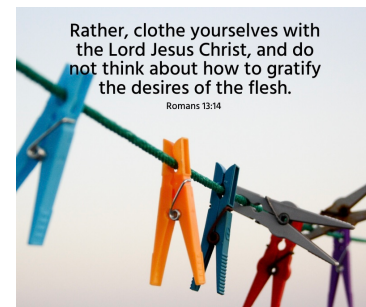


**Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service.**  
**Sunday September 6th 2026. 'Let's get dressed'**  
**Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.**



**Call to Worship.** Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, Psalm 149.

### STF 55

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might —  
thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;  
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;

we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
and wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,  
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;  
all praise we would render: O help us to see  
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

### Prayer of adoration and thanksgiving.

You are the One, the Holy One, who looks on all you have made, with love. You gaze at me, and your faithful kindness overwhelms me. I fall silent before you, my words stalling, as my heart breaks open and pours out my thanks, my delight in you. The more I gaze back at you, the more I see through your eyes; I am born again in your devotion to your creation. Let my words fall before you, but grant me the words and the acts of love you long for me to have for your world. **Amen.**

Kerry Tankard, District Chair, Yorkshire West District

### Bible reading. Romans 13:8-14

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not covet,' and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

And do this, understanding the present time: the hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

### Reflection

Clothes are important not just to keep us covered and warm. They say something about how we feel, how we value and view ourselves and the world around us. The Bible begins in Genesis with clothes and ends still mentioning them in Revelation. It's difficult to say exactly how many references to garments and clothing there are in the Bible but it's a subject that is certainly very important in the scriptures. So let's get dressed, spiritually and according to our Bible passage today. Let us 'put on the armour of light'.

What does that mean and do you have such a garment?

**First** we are reminded to love one another. Not everyone has favourable memories of being loved and loving one another can be difficult if you feel like you have been through a very difficult relationship or situation. I recently came across a book by Regina Brett, 'God never blinks, fifty lessons from life's detours.' It was shortlisted for the Pulitzer Prize. I love some of the quotes from her life lessons. 'Life isn't fair, but it's still

good.’ ‘When in doubt, just take the next small step’. ‘Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.’ ‘Don’t take yourself so seriously. No one else does.’

Regina is no stranger to life’s challenges, difficult experiences and temptations. She came through a dark place in her life by reading the bible and attending spiritual retreats. Which inspired her writing. When we read St Paul’s inspirational words, it’s too easy to forget that he was living in a very difficult time, imprisoned for his faith, witnessing the untold horror’s facing those who proclaimed themselves as Christ’s followers. Yet despite all, his words are still, to love one another. I find Regina’s words really unpack what that means to really love one another.

Paul’s instructions to love are not some abstract ideal, but rather a call to action. He begins our passage with words about debt and fulfilling the law. He argues that we have a continuing debt of love for one another. For some people we have or are privileged to share our lives with, that’s so understandable. How can we ever love them enough for what we have received from them? We owe them a debt of love that can never be fully repaid. However what about the people we find it difficult to get along with? The ones who have wronged us, or just aren’t the kind of people that we warm too? Those words, ‘one another,’ are difficult especially when St Paul reminds us that love is the unconditional fulfilment of the law. Remember how Jesus summarised the Ten Commandments. You shall love the Lord your God and love your neighbour as yourself. So in our first step to putting on the right spiritual clothes are we reaching for the spirit of love that loves all, forgives all and respects all. The love that we know is the kind of love that we are loved with, by Jesus Christ? The debt of love we can never repay.

**Secondly**, It’s a wake up call, when we think about whether we really seek to make our lives full of love. Think for example of someone you find it difficult to feel loving towards. Not just the person who has imbedded themselves in your memory because of what they did to you, that still irks. What about the myriad of people we come into contact with daily but never register their faces? It’s a wake up call to love your neighbour, **as yourself**.

Do you despise yourself? Speak harshly to yourself? Think the worst about yourself? Hopefully none of those apply and on the whole we are happy with ourselves and who we are. That’s what we are commanded to do, to love ourselves and wake up to ourselves and consider how much we respect and show that same love and respect to others.

When I was in the RAF we had one person on our team who always seemed to be disrespecting the team by living by his own rules. Never turning up on time and letting the rest of the team carry his workload. A very difficult person to love. Though he was a loveable rogue. Do we need to wake up and see how much others are doing for us? We all too readily criticise but when was the last time we acknowledged the good things that someone did for us? We moan about a missed bin collection for example. Do we ever take a moment to give thanks for the people who at unearthly hours and in all weathers take away our rubbish? Next time the ‘*waste management professionals*’, wake you up roll over and say a little prayer for them.

Have you read the book Pilgrims Progress? There are lots of instances where the main character, Christian falls asleep. One of those is when there are three characters near the cross with Christian. They are named Simple, Sloth, and Presumption. Simple is not really into studying the Bible and knowing doctrine; he’s just simple minded. Sloth doesn’t want to work hard, he doesn’t want to follow hard after God; there’s no zeal there. He’s slothful. And Presumption thinks that if he’s near the cross, he’s safe, and he’s presuming on God’s grace and mercy, but he’s not really earnestly embracing Christ. They fall asleep near the cross. It’s a warning to us. Those are pictures of the dangers of sleep, and Paul is warning us about that, and he is rousing us from sleep and says it’s time to wake up. Are you awake? Are you paying attention? Or are you more like Simple or Slothful or Presumption, just kind of presuming on God’s grace, just kind of coasting along, thinking you’re going to make it? You’re near the cross you’re keeping connected with the church after all and therefore you’re okay? But there’s no engagement! Paul says, “No, wake up!” Wake up and realise the time that you’re in. The night is almost over; morning is near, the day has dawned, and it’s time to rise from your slumber and to follow Christ daily.

**Thirdly**, we are to cast off the works of darkness. Clothes are mainly kept in wardrobes and we often talk about the things that are like ‘skeletons in the closet’. The things that we are ashamed about or embarrassed over and we hide them from others view. What have you got in the back of your wardrobe? St Paul says, ‘Let us behave

decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.' He doesn't mince his words. We are to wake up and cast off the things that make us the opposite to what we are called to be. The opposite to love.

**So lastly** We are to clothe ourselves in Christ. St Augustine who was one of the greatest medieval theologians. He was not always a Christian and indeed lived a very immoral life until he came across this very passage of scripture.

It's reported that after his conversion to Christianity he passed one of his former lovers. She called out to him, "Augustine it's me". He responded with, "yes, but it is not I". He had been so changed that he had cast off his immoral life. He was different from what he used to be. Can we look back to how we might have said something similar. "I used to be, but..." Or are there skeletons in the wardrobe that need casting aside? So we can put on the armour of light. "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." In verse twelve St Paul mentions "the armour of light."

Armour of course shields and protects. Clothing shields our bodies and keeps us warm and protected from the elements. When we put on Christ, he protects and shields us from the elements that are the enemy of love.

What we choose to wear defines what we are. Uniform of course identifies what you belong to. How you wear the uniform defines what you feel about what you represent. My loveable rogue RAF pal never removed his jacket because only the part of the shirt that showed would have met with the iron. When we put on Christ, how are we wearing the clothes of light? Is only a little piece on view so that onlookers don't see the hidden shameful parts?

Clothes are protective and when we fully put on Christ's armour of light, we are protected from temptation and attacks. I have never warmed to the fashion of ripped Jeans. How can artificially made rips around the knees of Jeans protect your knee caps from injury or the elements? Likewise if we don't fully keep ourselves clothed in Christ and his way of loving then how can we be fully protected?

Clothing adorns. I wonder what a full set of 'the armour of light', looks like? Shiny definitely and sparkly. Bling at it's best. Who can hold back the smile as the bride walks down the aisle in wafts of white satin and lace? She is adorning herself for the love of her life. When we put on Christ and our armour of the light of his love, we are adorning ourselves for our Lord of love and life. We are still left with the question, how do we put on these clothes? One theologian Isaac Ambrose, gives us a list of how to put on Christ. He says, You put on Christ by knowing him better. You put on Christ by desiring to be more like him, you put on Christ by enjoying his fellowship and wanting to conform to his ways.

The wearing of armour suggests that we are in a battle and indeed we are. We battle against the wickedness of our world, we battle against our own sinful desires. In Ephesians 6, St Paul lists the various pieces of our armour. We put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, our feet are shod with the gospel of peace. We hold onto the shield of faith and we put on the helmet of salvation to protect our minds. This is the armour of light that we need to put on each day to defend ourselves from all the evil and sins that Paul lists at the end of our bible passage. So let's wake up, cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light, so we might glorify our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

**STF 372** Come down, O Love divine,  
seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;  
and let thy glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity  
mine outward vesture be,  
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;  
true lowliness of heart,  
which takes the humbler part,  
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,  
with which the soul will long,  
shall far outpass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace,  
till he become the place  
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

## Prayers of Intercession

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your endless love toward me. Because You first loved me, I owe it to others to love them just as you love me. Help me to lay down my selfishness and choose to love my neighbours, my family, and even strangers. Fill my heart with Your Holy Spirit so that my love is genuine, patient, and kind. In Jesus' name, **Amen**.

We pray for those who we owe a debt of gratitude and love to. Especially we give thanks for the myriad of people who help to make our lives more comfortable. Help us to notice those who serve us daily and to be grateful.

We pray for those who feel their lives have lost all meaning. We think of those who struggle with the basic provisions for living. Home, food and water are things we take for granted but for too many at home and overseas it's a daily struggle to find the basic necessities of life.

We give thanks for the work of our churches. We pray for those taking up new appointments. May they know the strength that you alone can provide.

We pray for those who are on our minds because they have shared their needs with us. We think of the people and places in the news who need our prayers

and we commit our prayers and concerns to you in the words of **the Lord's Prayer**.

## STF 637

Soldiers of Christ, arise,  
and put your armour on,  
strong in the strength which God  
supplies  
through his eternal Son;  
strong in the Lord of hosts,  
and in his mighty power,  
who in the strength of Jesus  
trusts  
is more than conqueror.

Stand then in his great might,  
with all his strength endued;  
but take, to arm you for the fight,

the panoply of God;  
that, having all things done,  
and all your conflicts passed,  
you may o'ercome through Christ  
alone,  
and stand complete at last.

Leave no unguarded place,  
no weakness of the soul;  
take every virtue, every grace,  
and fortify the whole:  
indissolubly joined,  
to battle all proceed;

but arm yourselves with all the  
mind  
that was in Christ, your Head.

From strength to strength go on,  
wrestle, and fight, and pray,  
tread all the powers of darkness  
down,  
and win the well-fought day;  
still let the Spirit cry  
in all his soldiers: come!  
Till Christ the Lord descend from  
high,  
and take the conquerors home.

## The Blessing

May we be blessed as we put on the 'armour of light.' And may the grace of our lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Heavenly Father and the power of the Holy Spirit guide and keep us.

**Amen.**

