

# All Saints' Church Thornton Hough



## Morning Prayer

### The Baptism of Christ / Epiphany 1

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Online (from 10:30am)



## Introduction

Three wonders mark this holy day  
as the Church is joined to her heavenly Bridegroom.

This day a star leads the wise men to the Christ-child.

***Alleluia.***

This day water is made wine at the wedding feast.

***Alleluia.***

This day Jesus is revealed as the Christ in the waters of baptism.

***Alleluia. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.***

## Hymn: Be still for the presence of the Lord

- 1 Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here;  
come bow before him now  
with reverence and fear:  
in him no sin is found —  
we stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One is here.
- 2 Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around;  
he burns with holy fire,  
with splendour he is crowned:  
how awesome is the sight —  
our radiant King of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.
- 3 Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place:  
he comes to cleanse and heal,  
to minister his grace.  
No work too hard for him,  
in faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place.

David Evans (*b.* 1957)

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## The gathering

The peace of the Lord be with you.

***And also with you.***

We gather together but apart on this first Sunday after Epiphany. In these powerful symbols of light and water, we recall our love and trust in Jesus, the light of the world, and the water of baptism, which calls us into a new life. Out of the chaos of the world, our loving Creator God brings us in to the peace of his new creation.

I invite you now to settle and breathe in that deep peace.

Let us pray:

Grant us, Lord, who behold your glory,  
to drink from the waters of the new creation  
flowing from the river of life at your baptism.

Give us the wings of the Spirit,  
that we may hasten to meet you at your coming,  
and praise you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

***Amen.***

Christ came in humility to share our lives:  
forgive our pride.

Lord, have mercy.

***Lord, have mercy.***

Christ came with good news for all people:  
forgive our silence.

Christ, have mercy.

***Christ, have mercy.***

Christ came in love to a world of suffering:  
forgive our self-centredness.

Lord, have mercy.

***Lord, have mercy.***

May the God of all healing and forgiveness  
draw us to himself  
and cleanse us from all our sins,  
that we may behold the glory of his Son,  
the Word made flesh,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. ***Amen.***

## **Bible Readings**

### **Acts 19:1-7**

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'

They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.'

So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive?'

'John's baptism,' they replied.

Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' On hearing this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

### **Mark 1:4-11**

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the River Jordan. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: 'After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'

### **Reflection: New life!**

Water: a powerful symbol of life, that which sustains us all, from the most powerful humans on the planet to the very earth on which we stand. But it is also a symbol of death: sinking beneath the waves, being swallowed up in its depths. We wash ourselves in it, never perhaps more so than at the moment when we are so acutely conscious of the risk of viral infection, cleaning even where we cannot see any dirt.

Water is the symbol we use at baptism. In and of itself, it is just H<sub>2</sub>O, but it reminds us of a greater promise. John the Baptist told the crowds who came to

him at the banks of the River Jordan that 'I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

The baptism of John was a way of getting people ready: think of it as we might wash our hands in preparation for a meal. He reminded people that they needed to look carefully at their lives and get rid of all that was holding them back from following God: to turn to a right relationship with him and other people.

But something special happened at the Jordan when Jesus arrived. Fully embracing his humanity, Jesus came to be baptised by John, and at that point, heaven and earth were brought together, and a voice from heaven called out in joy: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.' Here God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, seen in the form of a dove descending upon Jesus come together.

As we remember the baptism of Christ, we also remember and give thanks for our baptism into God's family. Being part of that family isn't something which we have earned; it is not a badge for good behaviour or a mark of us being somehow 'better' than someone else. This is grace: that God loves his creation so much that he allows his only Son to come and share our humanity, to die for our sins and to be raised from death to life for our sake. He sees our infinite worth and, in baptism, brings us to the start of a new life. He gives us the gift of his Holy Spirit, to comfort and guide us as we go on.

In this time when you may be feeling overwhelmed with the cares of the world, be assured of God's presence with you. The new life of baptism, the promise of God's Holy Spirit is here for you. It is a baptism we share with all Christians through the ages, and it builds us together as a church now. Even when our worship together is paused, we are not alone.

## **The Creed**

We profess the faith of the Church:

Do you believe and trust in God the Father?

***I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.***

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ?

***I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;***

***he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.***

Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?

***I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.  
Amen.***

## **Prayers**

Almighty God,  
we thank you for our fellowship in the household of faith  
with all who have been baptized into your name.  
Keep us faithful to our baptism,  
and so make us ready for that day  
when the whole creation shall be made perfect in your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

***Amen.***

Let us pray to the Lord.

Today things above keep feast with things below  
and things below commune with things above.

Through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and power of the Holy Spirit, we give you thanks that we are part of your family. We thank you for those who have guided us in our faith over the years, for the encouragement we have received and the love which we have shared. Be with our church leaders as they guide us: we pray for our Archbishops, Justin and Stephen, and for Bishop Mark here in Chester. We remember our clergy and lay leaders, and ask that you would give them strength and peace in this time. As the work to appoint new Bishops of Stockport and Birkenhead begins, we ask that you would guide the process through, and that your will would be done.

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

We see the suffering caused by coronavirus, and we mourn with those who are anxious, afraid and grieving for loved ones, familiar ways and livelihoods. We pray for our health and care workers: keep them safe in these dangerous times, and enable them to see your love at work. Thank you for those who continue to distribute food to shops and homes, for workers on checkouts and those who provide our public transport.

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

We pray for our leaders of local and national government. Grant them your wisdom and compassion as they carry out their offices. And as we see the events unfold in the United States, we pray for a safe transition to a new presidency. May your message of healing and reconciliation be brought to all people, that they may learn to live and work together so that all can thrive.

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

You created a beautiful world for us to live in, yet it bears the scars of our abuse. The water necessary for healthy life is often polluted. We pray for wise stewardship of our natural resources, and a willingness for nations to work together to support the health of the most vulnerable people and places. May the creativity of scientists as they produce vaccines against coronavirus be used to protect all populations. As locusts threaten to eat the crops in parts of East Africa, we think of those whose lives are endangered not only by the coronavirus, but by famine and sudden natural disasters.

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

We pray for our children and those who help them to learn – teachers and now parents engaged in home schooling. We ask for your protection for them: that they would be able to delight in finding out about the world in which they live and be filled with curiosity, and not fall prey to boredom, depression or apathy. Protect them from abuse: from cruelty encountered online or from suffering at home.

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

We ask for your loving presence to be alongside all who are alone today. Comfort those who are suffering, in body, mind or soul. Give us the inspiration to keep in touch with people, to be generous with our time and to be part of that comfort.

Lord, in your mercy,  
***hear our prayer.***

We give you thanks for those whom we have loved but see no more. We also commend to your love those who have died and are known only to you. Be with those who are mourning the loss of a loved one today – whether that loss is raw and recent, or longer ago. We trust them to your unending love.

We gather our thoughts in the Collect for this first Sunday after Epiphany:

***Heavenly Father,  
at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son:  
may we recognise him as our Lord  
and know ourselves to be your beloved children;  
through Christ our Saviour.  
Amen.***

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

***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.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.***

## Hymn: When Jesus came to Jordan

- 1           When Jesus came to Jordan  
              to be baptized by John,  
he did not come for pardon,  
              but as his Father's Son.  
He came to share repentance  
              with all who mourn their sins,  
to speak the vital sentence  
              with which good news begins.
- 2           He came to share temptation,  
              our utmost woe and loss,  
for us and our salvation  
              to die upon the cross.  
So when the Dove descended  
              on him, the Son of Man,  
the hidden years had ended,  
              the age of grace began.
- 3           Come, Holy Spirit, aid us  
              to keep the vows we make,  
this very day invade us,  
              and every bondage break.  
Come, give our lives direction,  
              the gift we covet most:  
to share the resurrection  
              that leads to Pentecost.

Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

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## The Blessing

May God, who in Christ gives us a spring of water  
welling up to eternal life,  
perfect in you the image of his glory;  
and the blessing of God almighty  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
**Amen.**

Bible reading from New International Version - UK (NIVUK) Holy Bible, New International Version® Anglicized, NIV®

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