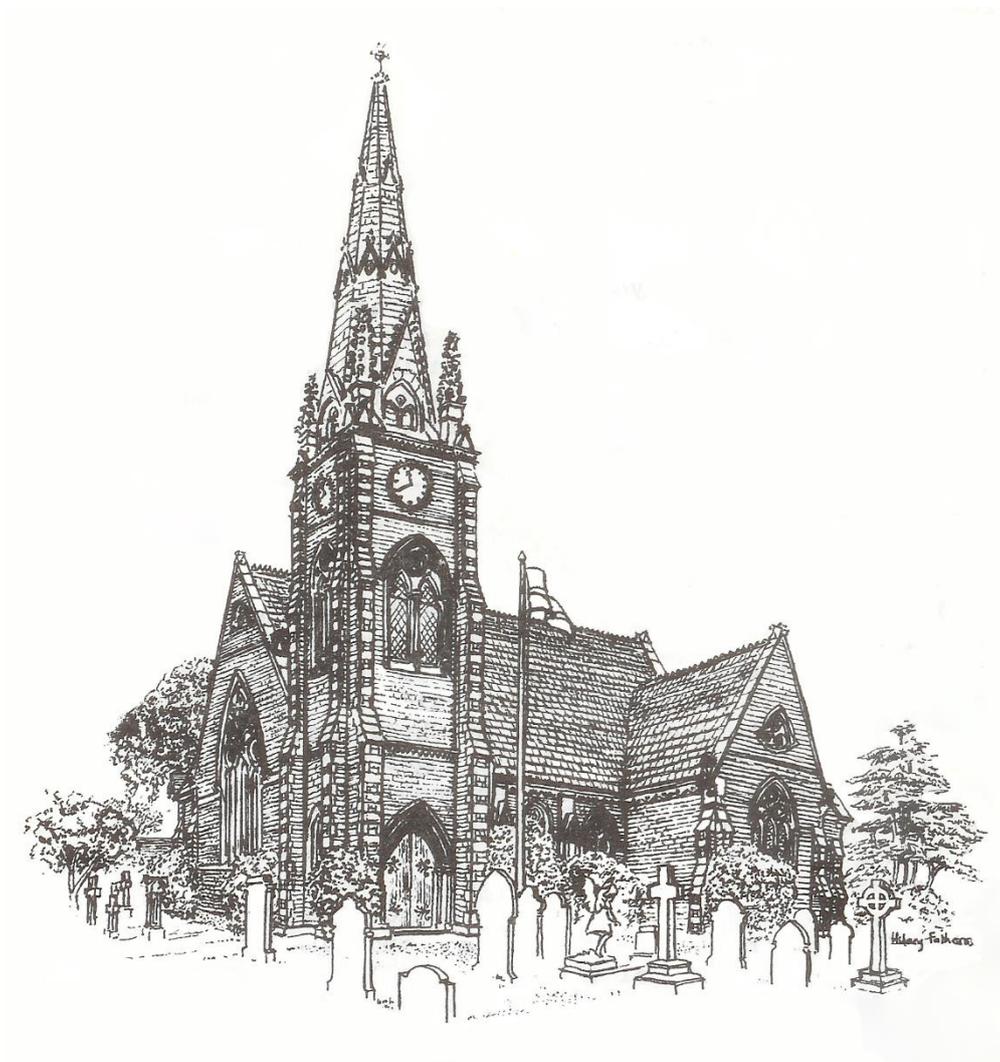


## All Saints' Church Thornton Hough



**Morning Prayer**  
**Third Sunday of Lent**  
**(Godly Foolishness)**  
Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
Online (from 10:30am)

## The Greeting

Let us worship God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

***Amen.***

The Lord be with you

***and also with you.***

Lord, direct our thoughts and teach us to pray

Lift up our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## 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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## Prayers of Penitence

Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the cross  
so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness;  
by his wounds we have been healed.  
Let us confess our sins.

***Almighty God,  
long-suffering and of great goodness:  
I confess to you,  
I confess with my whole heart  
my neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments,  
my wrong doing, thinking, and speaking;  
the hurts I have done to others,  
and the good I have left undone.  
O God, forgive me, for I have sinned against you;  
and raise me to newness of life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.***

## Absolution

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent,  
have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
***Amen.***

## 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

*Christ crucified is God's power and wisdom*

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;

the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not

know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

## **John 2:13-22**

### *Jesus clears the temple courts*

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!' His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

## **Reflection**

Have you ever thought that for many people, the Christian faith, and indeed Jesus himself, are very strange?

The death of Jesus on the cross is, according to Old Testament scripture, an absolute scandal. Deuteronomy 21:23 says that "anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse." So how can something which is so awful in God's eyes be a good thing? How can someone who dies in such an appalling way be gloriously raised from the dead and then taken into heaven? How is that good news for the world through the ages? It is paradoxical that someone put to death in a way which means that they are under God's curse can be the very same person who opens the way for us to be right with God forever. The redeeming power of Jesus' death makes no sense!

Jesus' life also presents us with some very strange and disturbing moments, such as this one in the Temple at Jerusalem, where Jesus enters and turns on the money-exchangers and those selling animals for sacrifice. Only a few weeks ago, we were looking at the Presentation of Christ in the Temple; it is more than likely that Jesus' parents would have been amongst those who used the traders to exchange their "street money" for Temple coinage, who looked at the animals ready to purchase for the sacrifice they had to make to redeem their

firstborn son, and perhaps winced at the cost of a couple of pigeons, the most that they could afford.

This scene would have been the stuff of life. The Temple was the place which mingled God's very presence with the history and customs of the Jewish people, a palace for God which had been rebuilt nearly fifty years ago and which, with its beautiful outer courts and inner sanctum, would have looked like it was set to last for ever. And yes, maybe some of those traders were charging extortionate rates, but that was the way of things. Such dealings must have gone through "on the nod" from the Temple authorities.

With that in mind, picture the impact of Jesus coming into the Temple courts and being consumed with jealous fury at what he sees. He makes a whip out of cords: imagine the sound as it cracks in the air, cracks on the knuckles of the traders, cracks on the bird cages, on the flanks of the cattle and sheep. Imagine the outraged shouts from those who he drives out, fumbling for their scattered coins and best livestock, the bellowing and bleating, feathers everywhere, the crash of tables as they hit the floor. Utter chaos. It might look quite comical if it wasn't so outrageous.

Imagine the Temple guards asking, "What are you doing? Are you mad? What gives you the right to come and disturb the peace?" That strange, disturbing man, overturning everything that was familiar; on whose authority? He does so not with a polite "Traders, would you mind moving along?" or by sitting down to engage in debate or to share a parable, but by hurling everything in the air and out.

Jesus didn't want to allow the customs which had developed to remain. Many people might have thought, "But we're OK the way we are!" They were performing the "form" of worship correctly. Where was the harm?

The whole point of his outrage was that the forms of worship had become just that; empty shells of show which exploited and dragged down the poor and those who were coming in faith to worship God.

Jesus' response to his questioners is also strange: 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' That little word "this" would make them think that he was referring to the building in which they were standing. It's only after Jesus' death that the real significance of what he meant is clear.

Jesus was full of jealous, zealous love for his Father God. He was uncompromising in his behaviour. That love upset and offended others and

would not simply “rub along” with the traders’ sharp practices and the lack of love for God he encountered in the Temple.

Yet that love and his own sacrificial death and resurrection does not sit easily with everyone, even to this very day. It is unsettling in its very passion, its intensity, its willingness to embrace the disgrace of death on the cross. What’s even more strange, is that he chose to follow this path – for the very people who questioned, mocked and reviled him.

What about us? Do we seek to be faithful and passionate in our love for God, in the integrity of our behaviour towards others and our world, even when that looks utterly strange to others? Do we rejoice in the apparent foolishness of the cross? Our Lenten journey gives us the space to reflect on how we too can be distinctive. Let us ask for courage to embrace this challenge.

### **The Apostles’ Creed**

We affirm our faith in God in the words of the Creed.

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

***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.***

***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.***

## Intercessions

We pray for the world, the church, and people in need.

The heavens are telling the glory of God  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

We thank you for your creation. Thank you that the spring flowers  
and night skies remind us of your glory and show that you are  
greater than all we can ever imagine. Help us to tell of your glory in  
our world through our lives and actions.

We pray for our world; for your wonderful creation of land, sea and  
air. May we be good stewards of your gifts. We pray for our leaders  
in government, that they would work for justice and not out of self-  
interest or favour, and our Queen and the Royal Family. Thank you  
for the wonder of the Covid vaccine; may it be safely shared with all  
nations and people.

We pray for those who are being exploited, both at home and  
abroad. For those working for low pay in dangerous jobs, for children  
forced into labour, whose voices go unheard. For those who are  
being trafficked, and for those who traffic them, we ask for your  
mercy; break this chain of suffering.

We pray for children and school and college staff as they return to  
full-time education. Keep them safe; help them to have a deeper  
love of learning and may they enjoy being at school again. We pray  
for families who have struggled through the lockdown; for those  
where study has been difficult, where pressures have built up.

We pray for our Church. At this time of Lent, may we all be able to  
draw aside and deepen our faith. We pray for those who are finding  
prayer difficult, who have questions; may they find their answers in  
your love. We pray for church leaders; for congregations who are  
returning to church over the coming week. Fill us with your Holy  
Spirit, and guide us to be passionate for you.

We pray for those who are suffering; for those whom we know, and  
those known to you alone. Be their comfort and peace, their light  
and salvation.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones. You know the pain of  
grief and loss, and we ask that they would know your presence  
alongside them.

We offer to you all that is to come in the week ahead, knowing that you delight in us when we come to you in prayer.

### **The Collect for the Third Sunday of Lent**

Eternal God  
give us insight to discern your will for us,  
to give up what harms us,  
and to seek the perfection we are promised  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

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 I survey the wondrous cross**

- 1       When I survey the wondrous cross  
          on which the Prince of glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
          and pour contempt on all my pride.
- 2       Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
          save in the cross of Christ my God;  
all the vain things that charm me most,  
          I sacrifice them to his blood.
- 3       See from his head, his hands, his feet,  
          sorrow and love flow mingled down;

did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown!

4 His dying crimson, like a robe,  
spreads o'er his body on the tree:  
then am I dead to all the globe,  
and all the globe is dead to me.

5 Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small;  
love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Isaac Watts (1674–1748)

### The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life.

***Amen.***

Let us bless the Lord.

***Thanks be to God.***

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## Contact information

<b>Vicar</b>	Revd. Vicky Barrett	336 2766 vicar@allsaintsth.org.uk <i>The Vicar's normal day off is Friday.</i>
<b>Churchwardens</b>	Alice Jones Pam Machin	alice@allsaintsth.org.uk 625 5820 pam@allsaintsth.org.uk
<b>Parish Office</b>		336 1654 office@allsaintsth.org.uk
<b>Verger</b>	Margaret Gamble	336 7540
<b>PCC Secretary</b>	Sue Stinson	342 4800 sue@allsaintsth.org.uk
<b>PCC Treasurer</b>	Iain Stinson	342 4800 iain@stinson.org.uk
<b>Planned Giving Secretary</b>	Sydney Deakin	334 6111
<b>Prayer Link Coordinator</b>	Rhona Mayhew	334 5637 rhona@allsaintsth.org.uk
<b>Events Coordinator</b>	Rachel Brothwell	07903 275375
<b>Safeguarding Officer</b>	Linda Arch	safeguarding@allsaintsth.org.uk
<b>Health &amp; Safety Officer</b>	Graham Seagrave	health&safety@allsaintsth.org.uk
<b>Parish Hall Caretaker and Bookings</b>	Margaret Gamble	336 7540
<b>Director of Music</b>	Iain Stinson	342 4800 iain@stinson.org.uk
<b>Magazine Contributions</b>		editor@allsaintsth.org.uk
<b>Fabric, Health &amp; Safety</b>		buildings@allsaintsth.org.uk

**[www.allsaintsth.org.uk](http://www.allsaintsth.org.uk)**