

**The Revd Martine Crabtree**  
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**December/ January 2020**

Dear

How are you? Please remember that I am always happy to help and pray with you. Do get in touch if you want to talk about anything.

We are near the end of 2020. We have been praying for a vaccine to help us fight Covid 19. It is good to know that the Vaccines are on the way and things are looking hopeful for 2021. I long for the day that we are all back together. Church will be open this Sunday with a Covid risk assessment in place. I will also try to keep sending Sunday sheets for those of you who are worshipping at home.

We have returned to the normal pattern of services at 10:45am every Sunday. We are limited on space, please let me know if you would like to attend. The service will start at 10:45am with music from 10:35am. We are asking everyone to take one Sunday off church each month to keep the numbers low so that we can fit everyone in church and observe the 2m distancing.

**Church open for public worship on the following dates:**

6th December Sunday 10:45am

13th December Sunday 10:45am

20th December Sunday 10:45am

27th December Sunday 10:45am

**20th December 6:00pm Carol Service outside on the grass**

**25<sup>th</sup> December Christmas Day morning 9:30am**

Wednesday 16th December. Social distanced Santa's Grotto on the grass outside giving free gifts to children

**Christmas Cheer:**

The Covid restrictions meant that we had to cancel many events this year. We are hoping to make some positive contributions to share joy with people this Christmas. The PCC made some generous donations to Wakefield Hospice, The Children's Society, The Cross Project, St George's Centre Youth work, The Messy Church, The junior Church and work with the Centre to buy Christmas gifts for those in need.

**Collection for charity.** We are collecting gifts to give to children from the community who are in need. We are also collecting hats and gloves for adults. If you would like to contribute, please send gifts or money in an envelope marked Christmas gifts into church or the Centre by Sunday 13th December at the latest. Gifts will be distributed through the school, the Centre, and the foodbank. We will also have a free event with a socially distanced Santa's Grotto outside. We are also hoping to send some Christmas cheer to some of the people who would have attended the Christmas day lunch.

We have made a display of Christmas wreaths, an outside nativity set and Christmas lights. The display can be seen on the Vicarage fence. Please come and have a look and feel free to add a wreath to our display. We will also enjoy an outside Carol service on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December at 6:00pm.

I will be sending Christmas cards out soon with a copy of The Church of England "Comfort and Joy" booklet.

Love and blessings, *Martine*

Revd Martine Crabtree

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## Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent)

Almighty God,  
purify our hearts and minds, that when your Son  
Jesus Christ comes again as judge and saviour  
we may be ready to receive him,  
who is our Lord and our God. Amen.

### **Bible reading: Mark 1:1-8 (NRSV)**

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the  
Son of God. <sup>2</sup> As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,  
“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
<sup>3</sup> the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.’”

<sup>4</sup> John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the  
forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> And people from the whole  
Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem  
were going out to him, and were baptized by him in  
the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup> Now John was  
clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around  
his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> He  
proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is  
coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and  
untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup> I have baptized you  
with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy  
Spirit.”

### **A short reflection by The Revd Joan Viles:**

Advent is a period of time for preparation. In our reading from Mark’s gospel John appears with his message to the people “prepare the way of the Lord”. John knew that “one who is more powerful than I is coming after me”. We are familiar with the story which comes around every year at this time. But this year has been a very strange year. Perhaps the worst year of our lives for a lot of people. It has been a time of great loss: loss of loved ones, loss of livelihoods, loss of income, loss of home, loss of freedom, loss of certainty. For some people it may be difficult to think about preparation for the future, especially when we do not know what that future holds. We hope it that it will be a future when the Coronavirus is brought under control and we can return to “normal”, whatever normal is. We will be ending the year with a great deal of uncertainty about our future, and entering the next year with that same uncertainty. But our faith is still with us. That faith which has sustained us so far this year, and which will continue to sustain us. The faith in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the end of this month we will celebrate his birth, his bringing of light into a world of darkness. The situation was far from perfect when he was born. It is far from perfect now. Nevertheless, we know that Jesus came into the world to save the world; we know that He is with us, loving us and caring about us now and will always be. So let us use this time to prepare ourselves for Jesus.

### **Hymn:**

Hills of the north, rejoice;  
echoing songs arise,  
hail with united voice;  
him who made earth and skies;  
he comes in righteousness and love;  
he brings salvation from above.

Isles of the southern seas,  
sing to the listening earth,  
carry on every breeze,  
hope of a world’s new birth:  
In Christ shall all be made anew  
his word is sure, his promise true.

Lands of the East, arise,  
he is your brightest morn,  
greet him with joyous eyes,  
praise shall his path adorn:  
the God whom you have longed to know  
in Christ draws near, and calls you now.

Shores of the utmost West,  
lands of the setting sun,  
Welcome the heavenly guest  
In whom the dawn has come:  
He brings a never ending light  
Who triumphed o’er our darkest night.

Shout, as you journey on;  
songs be in every mouth;  
lo, from the North they come,  
from East, and West, and South.  
in Jesus all shall find their rest.  
in him the longing earth be blest.

### **Final Prayer:**

Father in heaven,  
who sent your Son to redeem the world  
and will send him again to be our judge:  
give us grace so to imitate him in the humility and  
purity of his first coming that, when he comes  
again,  
we may be ready to greet him with joyful love and  
firm faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **The Blessing:**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and  
love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

## Sunday 13th December – (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent)

God for whom we watch and wait,  
you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way of  
your Son:  
give us courage to speak the truth,  
to hunger for justice,  
and to suffer for the cause of right,  
with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### Bible reading: John 1:6-8,19-28

<sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light

<sup>19</sup> This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him,

“Who are you?” <sup>20</sup> He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” <sup>21</sup> And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” <sup>22</sup> Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” <sup>23</sup> He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said. <sup>24</sup> Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup> They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” <sup>26</sup> John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup> the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” <sup>28</sup> This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

### A short reflection by Liz Suffield:

John the Baptist gave his life to prepare the way for the Messiah. He was a signpost pointing to Jesus. What does this mean for us? Can we follow John’s example, pointing beyond ourselves to Jesus? How would we achieve this? We can point to Jesus through the things we say and do. We can show people Jesus by living in the way he taught us. By being beacons of love and compassion. By shining with his truth. By displaying the gratitude and sheer joyfulness of having him in our lives. Let people see Jesus in our kindness, our thoughtfulness and our care for them. Let’s guide them into his presence.

### Hymn:

On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry  
Announces that the Lord is nigh:  
Awake, and hearken, for he brings  
Glad tidings of the King of kings

Then cleansed by every breast from sin;  
Make straight the way for God within;  
Prepare we in our hearts a home,  
Where such a mighty guest may come.

For thou art our salvation, Lord  
Our refuge and our great reward;  
Without thy grace we waste away,  
Like flowers that wither and decay.

To heal the sick stretch out thine hand,  
And bid the fallen sinner stand;  
Shine forth and let thy light restore  
Earth’s own true loveliness once more.

All praise, eternal Son, to thee  
Whose advent doth thy people free,  
Whom with the Father we adore  
And Holy Ghost for evermore.

### Final prayer

We give you thanks, O Lord, for these  
heavenly gifts;  
kindle in us the fire of your Spirit  
that when your Christ comes again  
we may shine as lights before his face;  
who is alive and reigns now and for ever.  
Amen.

### The blessing

Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you,  
scatter the darkness from before your path,  
and make you ready to meet him when he comes  
in glory; and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
Amen

## Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020 (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent)

Eternal God,  
as Mary waited for the birth of your Son,  
so we wait for his coming in glory;  
bring us through the birth pangs  
of this present age to see,  
with her, our great salvation  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### Luke 1:26-38 (NRSV)

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have

found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born<sup>l</sup> will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

### **A short reflection by The Revd Martine Crabtree:**

Mary was chosen because she was full of grace and truth. God knew that she would be faithful to her calling. We are all created and chosen by God. God sent his Son into the world to redeem everyone of us. Like Mary, we each have a choice whether to receive all that God offers us. We are about to celebrate Christmas and give thanks for all that God has done for us. On this last Sunday of Advent, we are called to contemplate and pray. Are we ready, are we waiting? When God calls you, will you be ready to say: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Love and prayers,

*Martine*

### **Hymn:**

The angel Gabriel from heaven came  
His wings as drifted snow his eyes as flame  
"All hail" said he "thou lowly maiden Mary,  
Most highly favoured lady," Gloria!

"For known a blessed mother thou shalt be,  
All generations laud and honour thee,  
Thy Son shall be Emanuel, by seers foretold  
Most highly favoured lady," Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head  
"To me be as it pleaseth God," she said,  
"My soul shall laud and magnify his holy name."  
Most highly favoured lady. Gloria!

Of her, Emanuel, the Christ was born  
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn  
And Christian folk throughout  
the world will ever say:  
"Most highly favoured lady," Gloria!

### **Final Prayer:**

Heavenly Father,  
who chose the Blessed Virgin Mary  
to be the mother of the promised saviour:  
fill us your servants with your grace,  
that in all things we may embrace your holy will  
and with her rejoice in your salvation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **The Blessing:**

May God the Holy Spirit,  
by whose working the Virgin Mary conceived the Christ,  
help you bear the fruits of holiness.  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you  
and remain with you always. Amen.

## Christmas day 25<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Lord Jesus Christ,  
your birth at Bethlehem draws us to kneel in  
wonder at heaven touching earth:  
accept our heartfelt praise  
as we worship you,  
our Saviour and our eternal God. Amen

### Bible reading: Luke 2:1-14 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth,

and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

### The Shepherds and the Angels

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

### A short reflection by The Revd Martine Crabtree:

The number one Christmas present for most of us is to see an end to the Coronavirus and to be able to see family and friends. Gifts of shiny wrapping paper do not matter this year. At Christmas we celebrate the greatest gift of all: The gift of God's son. God came to give you love. When you open your heart to God you receive the gift of love. The love of God is everything. You are loved by God. You matter and are so significant to God that the Divine entered our world. Every single person in this world, yes, you are loved and held by God. You are a gift of God's love. You are created and born into this world to live and grow in the love of God. Christmas might be difficult this year. Spend some time in contemplation, imagine yourself opening the gift of love that God has for you. Be filled with love and joy as you receive it. Love and peace this Christmas, *Martine*

### Hymn:

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!"  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With th'angelic host proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest Heav'n adored;  
Christ the everlasting Lord;  
Late in time, behold Him come,  
Offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;  
Hail th'incarnate Deity,  
Pleased as man with man to dwell,  
Jesus our Emmanuel.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace!  
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!  
Light and life to all He brings,  
Ris'n with healing in His wings.  
Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that man no more may die.  
Born to raise us from the earth,  
Born to give us second birth.  
Hark! the herald angels sing,  
"Glory to the newborn King!"

### Final Prayer:

God our Father,  
whose Word has come among us  
in the Holy Child of Bethlehem:  
may the light of faith illumine our  
hearts and shine in our words and  
deeds;  
through him who is Christ the  
Lord.  
**Amen.**

### The Blessing:

May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and  
Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ-child  
be yours this Christmas;

and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy  
Spirit, be among you and remain  
with you always.

**Amen**

## Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December 2020 (Christmas 1)

Almighty God,  
who wonderfully created us in your own image  
and yet more wonderfully restored us  
through your Son Jesus Christ:  
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity,  
so we may share the life of his divinity;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. Amen

### **Bible reading: Luke 2:15-21 (NRSV)**

<sup>15</sup> When the angels had left them and gone into heaven,  
the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to

Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place,  
which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup> So they  
went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the  
child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they  
made known what had been told them about this child;  
<sup>18</sup> and all who heard it were amazed at what the  
shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup> But Mary treasured all these  
words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup> The  
shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all  
they had heard and seen, as it had been told  
them. <sup>21</sup> After eight days had passed, it was time to  
circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name  
given by the angel before he was conceived in the  
womb.

### **A short reflection by Freda Jackson:**

He was called Jesus. The name Jesus, not unusual in those days, was the name that Mary knew she had to give to her child. Many people give their children names because of their meaning. Think about the meaning of your name....do you reflect it? In Hebrew the name given to Mary's child ...Jesus... means 'God is generous' and 'God saves'. I wonder if as Mary and Joseph looked at that tiny baby they realised just what this would mean. Had Mary and Joseph any idea of the life ahead? Had they any idea of how the life of Jesus would show the abundant generosity of God and that humanity is met and 'saved' by the love of God. Jesus came to and for everyone and is with us now in His continued generosity and grace.

### **Hymn**

Once in royal David's city,  
Stood a lowly cattle shed,  
Where a mother laid her baby  
In a manger for His bed.  
Mary was that mother mild,  
Jesus Christ, her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven,  
Who is God and Lord of all,  
And His shelter was a stable,  
And His cradle was a stall:  
With the poor and meek and lowly  
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

For he is our childhood's pattern  
day by day like us he grew;  
He was little, weak and helpless,  
Tears and smiles like us he knew;  
And he feeleth for our sadness,  
And he shareth in our gladness.

And our eyes at last shall see Him  
Through His own redeeming love;  
For that child, so dear and gentle,  
Is our Lord in heaven above;  
And He leads His children on  
To the place where He is gone.

### **Final Prayer:**

Heavenly Father,  
whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of  
an earthly home:  
help your Church to live as one family,  
united in love and obedience, and bring us all at  
last to our home in heaven; through Jesus Christ  
our Lord. **Amen.**

### **The Blessing:**

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one  
things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace  
and goodwill and make you partakers of the  
divine nature; and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be  
among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

## Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 (Epiphany Sunday)

Creator of the heavens,  
who led the Magi by a star  
to worship the Christ-child:  
guide and sustain us,  
that we may find our journey's end  
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### **Bible reading: Matthew 2:1-12 (NRSV)**

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." <sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for

from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." <sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

### **A short reflection by The Revd Martine Crabtree:**

I have always enjoyed stargazing. I love the blessing of looking at the night sky in winter. The Cosmos invites us to think of God and creation. It prompts us to reflect on the big questions of our great and wonderful Universe. The Magi stargazed on their journey. They were also looking for the answers in the quest for faith. Like them we can gaze in awe and wonder at the Universe and our opportunity to live in it. Religious faith is not the gap we cannot fill with other explanations, it is the sense we make of it, the way we live in response to it, and the hope we move forward in. The visit of the Magi is our journey in faith, in hope and in love. Stargazing brings us to ask very deep questions. May we take the opportunity to journey for truth and find ourselves at the end kneeling and worshipping our Creator. Love and prayers, *Martine*

### Hymn

We Three Kings of Orient are,  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
Following yonder star.

*O Star of Wonder, Star of Night,  
Star with Royal Beauty bright,  
Westward leading, still proceeding,  
Guide us to Thy perfect Light.*

Born a King on Bethlehem plain,  
Gold I bring to crown Him again,  
King for ever, ceasing never  
Over us all to reign.

Frankincense to offer have I,  
Incense owns a d night:  
Prayer and praising, gladly raising,  
Worship Him God on High.

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume  
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;—  
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,  
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Glorious now behold Him arise,  
King, and God, and Sacrifice;  
alleluja, alleluja,  
earth to heaven replies.

### **Final Prayer:**

Lord God,  
the bright splendour whom the nations seek:  
may we who with the wise men have been drawn  
by your light  
discern the glory of your presence in your Son,  
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **The Blessing:**

Christ our Lord, to whom kings bowed down in  
worship and offered gifts, reveal to you his glory  
and pour upon you the riches of his grace;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
**Amen**

## Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (The Baptism of Christ)

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

### **Bible reading: Mark 1:4-11(NRSV)**

<sup>4</sup> John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the

river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup> Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup> I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." <sup>9</sup> In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

### **A short reflection: Pauline Shaw**

John burst in upon a surprised Jewish world. They had been looking for a sign from God but not one such as him! They were expecting a King not a seer dressed in camel hair, who ate locusts and was a bit of a weirdo! John in fact was a very important person; he was the one who baptised Jesus! He did surprise them by telling them that they had been looking the wrong way; they should turn right round, repent and wake up to what God was requiring them to do. In other words they should change their lives. When Jesus was baptised the Holy Spirit came down causing the heavens to open but it wasn't a rain storm, it was as if a curtain was pulled back, but instead of seeing perhaps rivers trees and flowers etc. those people who were there were standing in the presence of God; how amazing was that? Sometimes it takes a while for us to realise that the Holy Spirit has caused the curtain to be drawn back for us personally, then we begin to accept that we are standing in the presence of God and we are made to see clearly what God wants of us; then we begin to walk by faith and not by sight. And so; let God mould us and let him change us as we discover his world. And then; let him say to us, "You are my wonderful child, you make me very glad." **Amen**

### **Hymn**

In Christ alone my hope is found  
He is my light, my strength, my song  
This cornerstone, this solid ground  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm  
What heights of love, what depths of peace  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease  
My comforter, my all in all  
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh  
Fullness of God in helpless babe  
This gift of love and righteousness  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
Till on that cross as Jesus died  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay  
Light of the world by darkness slain  
Then bursting forth in glorious day  
Up from the grave He rose again  
And as He stands in victory  
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me  
For I am His and He is mine

Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death  
This is the power of Christ in me  
From life's first cry to final breath  
Jesus commands my destiny  
No power of hell, no scheme of man  
Can ever pluck me from His hand  
Till He returns or calls me home  
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

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### **Final Prayer:**

Lord of all time and eternity, you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father  
in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son:  
by the power of your Spirit  
complete the heavenly work of our rebirth  
through the waters of the new creation;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **The Blessing:**

May God the Holy Spirit, who came upon the beloved Son at his baptism in the river Jordan, pour out his gifts on you who have come to the waters of new birth. and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.