

Welcome and Call to Worship

The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame.

HYMN STF 394 Spirit of God, unseen as the wind <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qywGaKEM2IA>

*Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,
gentle as is the dove,
teach us the truth and help us believe,
show us the Saviour's love.*

2 Without your help we fail our Lord,
we cannot live his way ;
we need your power, we need your strength,
following Christ each day.

1 You spoke to us long, long ago,
gave us the written word ;
we read it still, needing its truth,
through it God's voice is heard.

Margaret V. Old

Prayer

Lord, we are gathered together in this Church for the first morning service for many months. We are glad to be back, thankful to be in your house, and although we have missed it, missed the sound of our organ and the close presence of our brothers and sisters in faith, we know that you are always with us and have been with us even when this building was closed.

Renew our life together, renew us in faith and make this a house a healing house of prayer where the doors are open to accept those who want peace and restoration of spirit, and also those who want to be invigorated by your presence. We make this prayer particularly because we have amongst us this morning a child who is being presented for baptism. **Amen**

Lord's Prayer

***Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.***

***Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.***

Amen.

Baptism

1 INSTITUTION

Minister On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter said: Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah; then your sins will be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is to you and to your children and to all who are far away, to everyone whom the Lord our God may call.

Acts 2: 38 - 39

Jesus called for the children, and said, 'Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you: whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.'

St Luke 18: 16 - 17

Christ Church, Woodley September 6 2020 Baptism

2 STATEMENT

Minister When Jesus was baptized in the waters of the Jordan, the Spirit of God came upon him. Our baptism is the sign of dying to sin and rising to new life in Christ

No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born from water and spirit. Flesh can give birth only to flesh; it is spirit that gives birth to spirit. You ought not to be astonished when I say 'You must all be born again.' St John 3: 5 - 7

By water and the Holy Spirit, God claims us as his own, washes us from sin, and sets us free from the power of death. In this sacrament, the love of God is offered to each one of us. Though we cannot understand or explain it, we are called to accept that love with the openness and trust of a child. In baptism, James is assured of the love that God has for him, and the sign and seal of the Holy Spirit is placed upon him.

3 CONFESSION

Minister, *to parents and godparents*

In presenting this child for baptism, desiring that he may be grafted into Christ as a member of his body, the Church, do you receive the teaching of the Christian faith which we confess in the Apostles' Creed?

I do.

Minister Will the congregation please stand. Let us affirm the faith.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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.

4 PRAYER

Minister Let us pray.

We thank you, gracious God, for your gifts of water and the Holy Spirit.

Minister pours water into the font.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this water, that James, being buried with Christ in baptism, may rise with him to newness of life; and being born anew of water and the Holy Spirit may remain for ever in the number of your faithful children; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

5 DECLARATION

Minister James, for you Jesus Christ came into the world: for you he lived and showed God's love; for you he suffered the darkness of Calvary and cried at the last, 'It is accomplished'; for you he triumphed over death and rose in newness of life; for you he ascended to reign at God's right hand. All this he did for you, James, though you do not know it yet. And so the word of Scripture is fulfilled: 'We love because God loved us first.'

Christ Church, Woodley September 6 2020 Baptism

6 BAPTISM

Minister James, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

7 BLESSING

Minister The blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, descend upon you, and dwell in your heart for ever. Amen. *This blessing may be said or sung: **The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.***

James is now baptized into Jesus Christ. We receive and welcome him as a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

8 PROMISE

Minister *to the parents/godparents/sponsors:*

This child belongs to God in Christ. From this day he will be at home in the Christian community, and there will always be a place for him. Tell him of his baptism, and unfold to him the treasure he has been given today, so that he may know he is baptized, and, as he grows, make his own response in faith and love, and come in due time to share in the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Do you promise, depending on the grace of God, to teach this child the truths and duties of the Christian faith; and by prayer and example to bring him up in the life and worship of the Church?

I do.

9 COMMITMENT OF CONGREGATION

Minister *to the congregation:*

You who are gathered here represent the whole Church. Word and Sacrament bring you the joy of Christ's presence in your midst. They also bring you responsibilities as Christ's people in this place. Do you welcome James and do you renew your commitment, with God's help, to live before all God's children in a kindly and Christian way, and to share with them the knowledge and love of Christ?

Congregation

We do.

Minister and congregation together

We will nurture one another in faith, uphold one another in prayer, encourage one another in service.

10 PRAYERS

Minister Let us pray. Guide and guard James all his days. May your love hold him, your truth guide him, your joy delight him. Bless his parents, that he may grow up in a secure and happy home. Give to his family, wisdom and courage, laughter and peace, and the love that endures all things. *Amen*

Junior Church

Video: Dog biscuits <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6b9-KqnK-2E>

Junior Church Prayer

HYMN StF 167 Colours of day <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwxAi12UiJ0>

1
Colours of day dawn into the mind,
the sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
and let's give the message to the people we meet.

2
Go through the park, on into the town;
the sun still shines on; it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;
the people of darkness are needing a friend.

Chorus
*So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.*

3
Open your eyes, look into the sky,
the darkness has come, the sun came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
but Jesus is living, his Spirit is near.

Sue McClellan, John Paculabo, Keith Ryecroft

Junior Church blessing:

Gracious God, touch us all again this day with the grace of baptism. Give us new lives for old, new spirits, new faith, new commitment, in place of all that has grown tired and stale and dead in our lives. So may we rise and go from here, to whatever awaits us, in joy and trust. *Amen.*

Readings

Romans 13:8-10 Love Fulfils the Law

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ 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." ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

Romans 13:11-14 The Day Is Near

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

Matthew 5:1-16 The Beatitudes

¹ Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

He said:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Christ Church, Woodley September 6 2020 Baptism

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

HYMN StF 538 Now through the grace of God <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC2JsR4Ru5g>

1 Now through the grace of God we claim
this life to be Christ's own,
baptized with water in the name
of Father, Spirit, Son.

3 So let us act upon his word,
rejoicing in our faith,
until we rise with Christ our Lord
and triumph over death !

2 For Jesus Christ the crucified,
who broke the power of sin,
now lives to plead for those baptized
in unity with him.

Michael Perry (1942–1996)

SERMON

What have we just done? We have welcomed a new member into our family. James now belongs in this church and every church. It is a time of celebration; if we had a peal of bells, we should ring them, because we are glad not just for James and his family, but for the whole church family.

But, apart from celebration, there is a serious side which I want to unpack a little this morning. Baptism is not just a rite of passage, or an initiation ceremony into what we might call the church club, though these things are part of it.

We baptise because Jesus told us to. This is what he said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age.”¹

But why is baptism so important? The answer to this has to come in several parts:

1. It was traditional in Israel and other countries of the region to immerse a new convert as a sign of spiritual washing or cleansing.
2. This goes way back. Namaan the Syrian was instructed by Elisha to immerse himself in the Jordan to rid himself of a stubborn skin disease. He protested, but did it, and was both cured and converted to the religion of Israel.²
3. Jesus was baptised in this way by John the Baptist in the Jordan. So far, the process is a traditional one.

¹ St Matthew 28:18-20.

² 2 Kings 5

Christ Church, Woodley September 6 2020 Baptism

4. But when Jesus was baptised, there was a revelation. The spirit of God came down like a dove (the bird of peace), and God's voice was heard: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I take delight".³ It is at this point that the idea of Christian baptism begins to emerge. Baptism is the point where God recognizes a person, and that person begins to converge with God.

So, that's the theory of it. But I want to say a word to any who feel that there are some lofty ideas here that do not seem to be part of our everyday life. We are just ordinary people who meet, humbly, in the hope and expectation of God's presence amongst us, and we take away with us the feeling that God is working within us. So, on this day we have the hope and expectation that within the soul of this infant, James, something has been awoken this morning that will be with him for the whole of his life and will draw him towards God.

The baptism of young children is a gentle thing. Baptism of adults can accompany a ferocious revolution in their lives, in which they reject the way they have lived and conducted themselves up to that point. Think of St Paul, who suffered a collapse and temporary blindness when he was traumatically brought to faith on the road to Damascus. Leaving your old self behind tears you apart when there is a lot to leave behind. Some say that the agony involved in rejecting the old self is what it means to be born again, and it is something that Jesus spoke about specifically, when talking to Nicodemus⁴ - he said that to come to God, you have to be born again of the Spirit, and he links this to his own crucifixion, "lifted up...so that everyone who has faith in him may possess eternal life." God gave his Son so that everyone who has faith in him should not die, but possess eternal life.

So, these days, we baptise tiny children to give them a good start in God's care. Then, later on, we have Confirmation, in which the person 'able to answer' responds to these words: "God has constantly been at work in your life and, at your baptism into Christ, offered you the gifts of his grace. In this moment God offers to strengthen you by his Spirit and invites you to respond".⁵

So, this morning, James has been offered the gifts of God's grace. And the parents, godparents and all of you are agents in that gift. God works through people, and you are specifically asked to help do God's work in relation to James. God's work is delegated to people of faith, to make sure that this boy is kept safe, nurtured in love, and grows up well. Such a responsibility, you may be thinking. Indeed it is. But in the promises, we said we would promise depending on the grace of God. This is the counterpart to the responsibility that we shoulder today; that God will help us, that he will be with us through his grace and never desert us.

I said earlier that we come to church not expecting a miraculous scene or the out-playing of biblical revelation, and no holy dove. But that's not an adequate summary. There is a mystery. Those who know God's grace also know that when we ask him, he helps us deal with situations. When we do not know how to handle things, and we fear making a difficult situation worse, he guides us. When we feel inadequate, he bolsters us and gives us the will and the courage to go on.

So the gift of God's grace this morning, to which we are all joined is a big deal. It can make the difference between a good life and a bad one. We end, as we began, with these words from Isaiah:

The LORD will guide you always;
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.⁶

³Matthew 3:17

⁴John 2:23- 3:21

⁵Methodist Service Book p.71

⁶Isaiah 58:11

Hymn StF 272 - The Servant King (From heaven you came)

1 From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.
*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

2 There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear ;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMOBgCTXRA0>

3 Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

4 So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

Graham Kendrick (b.1950)

Prayers of Intercession & Thanksgiving

We pause a while now, as summer hinges into autumn; the harvest is in; the daylight hours draw in; there are dews in the morning, a little mist in the air sometimes in the twilight. We think ahead with apprehension to darker and colder times, to the depths of the year and the long winter months.

If only we were awake, awake in our hearts, O God, to see how fantastic and beautiful and full of artistry is all the cycle of being; how the spring of new life comes out of the decline of age; how new birth depends on the dying of the old light. Teach us, who like things to remain the same, who resent our own aging, to understand how we are part of this world, and its cycle of growth and decline, until we come into your kingdom. The facts we know, but it is hard for us to accept the process. Let us be happy in our lease of life on earth, content with its limits, confident that as you know us, we will know you, and that in knowing you we will find eternal life. For we are drawn to you, the magnetism is there; sometimes, we feel your presence within us like the sun in the morning, but for the moment we cannot see you. Give us the strength and the grace to be inspired by your creation, thankful for what we have, and the faith to accept that one day, we shall know you better.

And now we turn our thoughts and our prayers to the peace of the world, and we think of its many areas of trouble (...*topical list*).

And we pray for all those who look for direction, and cannot find it. For those who rely on their own strength, rejecting all help, and who despair; for those who need a leader and long for leadership, who would gladly help themselves and others on the way if they knew where they were going. We bring you this prayer O God, knowing that we are sometimes in this position ourselves, and know the fear in it, the frustration, and the waste involved in floundering.

And we pray also for those who are too confident, too convinced of their own certainties, who reject all disagreement, who set themselves up to defend their own position at all costs; we pray for all involved in warring factions, political in-fighting, and border disputes, raids and guerrilla action; for bitter vendettas both outward and inward.

Bring your peace, we pray, on all who suffer.

And now, in the silence, we bring you our prayers for those whom we know personally, and for those we do not know, but who stand in need.

SILENCE [...*people name those for whom they are concerned*].

Dear God, help all those who suffer. Show them that in your will, is their peace, and show them your love, that they may reflect it on others.

Christ Church, Woodley September 6 2020 Baptism

And finally, we pray also for all who have reflected your love on us, and particularly for those who are no longer with us. O God, who holds us all in the palm of your hand, keep them in your peace, who are beyond all torment, whose sufferings are at an end, who rest in your presence.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord

Amen

HYMN StF 81 Now thank we all our God

- 1 Now thank we all our God,
with hearts and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices ;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.
- 2 O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us ;
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.
- 3 All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son, and him who reigns
with them in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore,
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart (1586–1649)

translated by Catherine Winkworth (1827–1878)

Blessing

May the warmth of the sun shine on you each day;

May the light of the moon caress you each night;

May the arms of God enfold you always,

To keep you from fear, to guard you from harm,

To bless you with love, to hold you in peace.

Amen