

The Benefice of St Benedict

Ashmanhaugh, Barton Turf, Beeston St Lawrence, Horning, Irstead, & Neatishead

Morning Worship – 4th October 2020

Dedication Festival

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. **and also with you.**

Confession

We are a temple of God's indwelling Holy Spirit, yet we have grieved him. The temple of our bodies does not belong to us, but was bought at the price of Christ's precious blood. So we come, in sorrow yet with confidence, to ask forgiveness of our Father in heaven.

Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight.

We are sorry and repent.

Have mercy on us according to your love.

Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon and forgiveness of all our sins, time for amendment of life, and the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Hymn: O worship the King, all glorious above

The Collect

Almighty God, to whose glory we celebrate the dedication of our churches: we praise you for the many blessings you have given to those who worship you here: and we pray that all who seek you in these special places may find you, and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, may become a living temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. **Amen.**

For the blessing of our vows and the crowning of our years with your goodness, **Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.**

For the faith of those who have gone before us and for grace to persevere like them, **Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.**

For the benefactors of our churches who have died in the peace of Christ and are at rest, **Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.**

For a sense of our fellowship with Benedict, Peter, Michael, Swithun, and all your saints, **Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.**

O God, from living stones you prepare an everlasting dwelling—a place for your majesty. Grant that in the power of the Holy Spirit those who serve you here may always be kept within your presence. This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

We gather all our prayers in the words that Jesus 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: Thy hand, O God, has guided

The Blessing

May Christ, whose glory is in the heavens, fill our churches with love and illuminate our hearts, and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon us now and always. **Amen.**

First Reading: I Kings 8.22-30

Hymn: Brother, sister, let me serve you

Second Reading: Matthew 21.12-16

Reflection

Earlier this year, in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Government's lockdown measures quite rightly included restricting access to places of worship. However, only the Church of England ordered that it churches be closed completely – for the first time in centuries – even if latterly the closure order was said to be “advice, not instruction”. Many still feel that ‘advice’ – above and beyond the Government’s regulations – sent the wrong message as to the purpose and importance of our churches in their communities. Particularly painful in communities where we have striven to ensure that our buildings have remained open daily for prayer and worship.

For many of our ancient churches, the precise date on which they were first dedicated is not known, and so this Sunday in the church’s calendar is set aside to celebrate and give thanks for our church buildings, for these holy places, for those who built and have maintained them, and for their original dedication, even if the date is no longer known. Christ’s church – the universal church – is of course its people, past present and yet to come, but the places and buildings where the people who make up that church assemble in worship, praise and prayer, are important to us, as they were to Christ himself. As a boy, he is drawn to the Temple in Jerusalem and later, in Luke 4, his public ministry begins in the synagogue as he reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. As that ministry moves to its climax, he must return to Jerusalem, to the Temple, the focal point of his Jewish faith, to re-assert its proper role as a place of prayer, of worship, of healing, of restoration, of encounter with God. Even before the building of the Temple by Solomon, even when the Israelites were nomads in the wilderness, they would create these ‘encounter’ spaces, the “Tent of Meeting”, we read about in Exodus. Those of us who have served in our armed forces know the tradition of stacking the regimental drums to create a so-called drumhead altar where there is no church or chapel, even on the battlefield. And yes, we can be ‘church’ anywhere, and in many different forms, as we have been discovering this year with our use of this modern technology, but our churches, chapels, and cathedrals, our holy places, continue to provide a focal point in our communities as well as a visible link to the church both past and future.

The Creed

We say this simple Creed, the faith we share with Christians everywhere.

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.

We believe in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn: O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder.

Prayers

The risen Christ is here with us all.

We bring our prayers to him as Lord of the Church.

For the Church universal, of which our churches are a visible symbol,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For our congregations, as we remember your promise that when two or three are gathered in your name you are there in the midst of them,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For churches, that we may be still and know that you are God,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the fulfilling of our desires and petitions as you see best for us,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For your blessings in the past and for a vision for the future,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the gift of the Holy Spirit and new life in baptism,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For the pardon of our sins when we fall short of your glory,
Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.

For a foretaste of your eternal kingdom in the sacrament of the eucharist,

Lord, receive our thanks and prayer.