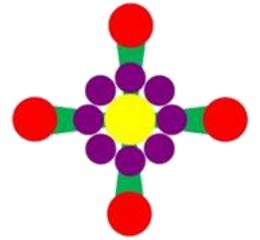


**The Benefice of
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme**
Liturgy for Written Service 1st March 2026
2nd Sunday in Lent



Today's service prepared by Alison

Introductory prayer

In this season of Lent we are on a journey.
The journey began in the wilderness.
We follow the way of Jesus,
who faced trials, trouble, temptation, and testing.
Like Jesus, we are not alone.
The Holy Spirit is with us. God's Word is on our lips.
Our call is to trust in God alone,
to do God's will in all things.
For God leads us not only into the wilderness,
but also through the wilderness.

Call to Confession

God is faithful, leading us into freedom,
but we are conditioned to the slavery of sin.
Comfortable with the way things are,
we lose sight of the way God intends them to be.
We bring our confession before the One
who is more powerful than Pharaoh in Egypt,
mightier than the devil in the wilderness.

Prayer of Confession

**O God, our refuge and fortress,
forgive us when we fail to trust in you.
We fall to temptation;
we are swayed by false words;
we speak false words of our own.
We choose our ease and comfort over your demanding claims upon us and
upon the world.**

**In turning from you,
we settle for less than the abundant generosity you intend. Forgive us, we
pray.**

Do not let us be put to shame, O God.

Hear us as we call to you and show us your salvation.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Scripture declares,

The Lord is generous to all who call on God's name.

Friends, believe the good news:

God does not turn away from us,

but desires to bring us into the glorious freedom
offered in Jesus Christ.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Thanks be to God! **Amen.**

Collect

Almighty God,

By the prayer and discipline of Lent

May we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,

And by following in his Way

Come to share in his glory;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The First Reading, Genesis 12:1-4a

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His word.

Gospel Reading: John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.’ Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, “You must be born from above.” The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can these things be?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?’

‘Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Thanks be to God for the gift of His Holy Word.

Reflection with Robert

I help with the toddler group, Little Stars, at Denholme Shared Church, every Friday morning in school term time, and I love it. These little people are so refreshing and uplifting. They are so direct and honest and straightforward. They say things such as “what’s that?”, pointing to a spot that had appeared on your chin that morning or in particular to me, “where has your hair gone?”. These things are not said to tease, or to hurt or to cause embarrassment. Small children in those early years are simply curious. They want to know. They want to learn. What a shame many of us lose that curiosity as we grow older. Why?’ is often the most frustrating word for parents with young children. Consider when the last time was that you were genuinely curious about why or how something came to be. Often children have this innately, but it is something important for us all because the way to find out more is to ask questions, and lots of them!

In our reading from John’s Gospel, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, goes to see Jesus, acknowledging him as a man of God. Jesus says that to see the kingdom of God, you must be ‘born from above’. Nicodemus doesn’t understand, although Jesus says that being a teacher, he should. Nicodemus persists in asking questions to try to understand what Jesus means and each answer Jesus offers him leads him to ask more questions. Can you think of examples from your own life when you have kept asking questions about something? What happened?

Many of the people who met Jesus asked him questions, so we should also feel free to ask questions about our faith, either asking Jesus in prayer, or other Christians, or both. As Jesus says in John 3.17 'God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him'. Jesus does not condemn us or judge us when we ask questions; in fact, he probably delights, just as we do when a toddler asks us a question, that we want to know more. That means that, as Christian communities, we might ask ourselves whether our communities are safe and accepting spaces for people to ask questions. Questions play such an important part in our faith.

Would people feel comfortable asking questions about faith, without fear of being judged or ostracised? And can we create communities that are comfortable with unanswered questions? Perhaps we don't always feel that we need to have the 'right' answer, or even any answer.

In this week's passage, Nicodemus is not the only one who asks questions. Jesus also asks questions of Nicodemus – quite challenging questions. He asks him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?' and 'If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?'. We might be feeling rather glad that we weren't Nicodemus at this point. But it might be helpful to ask ourselves what questions Jesus might ask of us today, both as individuals and as communities?

So especially in this time of Lent, are there things God might be encouraging us to think about more or less? Are there things we might prioritise and reprioritise? Are there people God might be asking us to reach out to? Spend some time asking Jesus, 'What questions might you ask of me and of us today?'

Our Affirmation of Faith

**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.

Prayers of Intercession with Astrid

Dear Lord, the words of scripture we have read in in our service today remind us that your servants may be challenged in ways that are not always easy to understand. We ask you to strengthen our faith, our trust and our understanding as we come to you with prayers of intercession, bringing our anxieties to you and trusting in your mercy as we pray for needs throughout the world and for our communities and those close to us.

Lord we come before you, joining in worship wherever we are, as part of the great family of the Church throughout the world. As we remember our Christian brothers and sisters in Sudan and wherever your people struggle Lord, through danger or disaster, or simply surrounded by different or unheeding values, bring us we pray, strength, comfort and hope.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

As we pray for the needs of the world let us hold before God the places where repressive regimes, war or poverty continue to bring so much misery – for Ukraine, Russia, Sudan, Israel, Palestine, and other conflicts we know even less about. We pray for wisdom and cool heads to stop conflicts spreading, and Lord look with mercy on those who flee from danger, homeless, sad and hungry. Bless those who work to bring them help, and inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Let us pray for our own country where we have so many blessings but still so many problems, where people struggle with high costs, inequalities and lack of opportunity. We pray for people struggling with physical or mental health facing long waits for care, for children with special needs, for young people trying to find employment. We pray for our leaders and elected representatives, for wisdom in the face of so many problems in national and international affairs.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for your work in this place, for our church wardens, administrators and all who lead our worship and guide us to deepen our faith and draw strength from this season of Lent. Lord we pray for the person you will inspire to work with us as our new Team Rector. Prepare the heart of the one you are calling and prepare our hearts to receive that person with love and support.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The 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.**

Conclusion

These Lenten days will take us to the cross of Christ.

Go forward, knowing that you do not go this way alone.

Nor do we have to be afraid,

for the Word of God strengthens us and the Holy Spirit sustains us.

Blessing

May the God of the Exodus lead us into freedom.

May the Holy Spirit bind us to God's will.

May Christ, God's only Son, show us the way of true justice and peace.

Amen.

