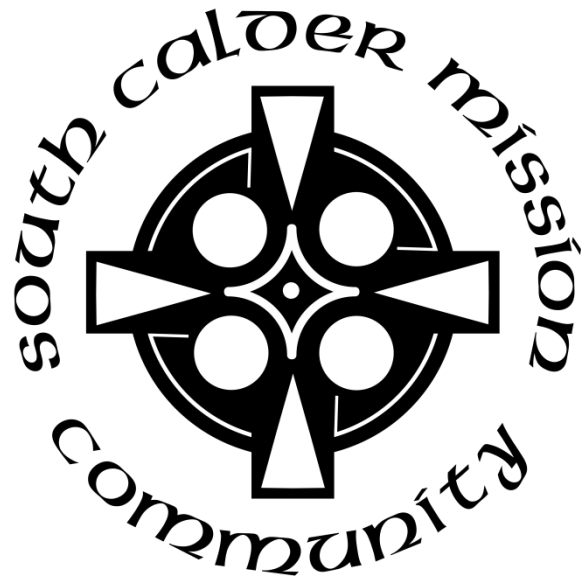


*into his courts
with praise...*



A Service of the Word

Sunday 11 January 2026
First Sunday in Epiphany – the Baptism of Christ.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

*“All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes
in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*

Acts 10:43.



THE CONFESSION

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.
Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our
sins in penitence and faith.

**Almighty God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word and deed;
I have not loved you with all my heart;
I have not loved my neighbours as myself.
Have mercy upon me,
cleanse me from my sins,
and help me to overcome my faults,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Receive God's forgiveness

May the Father forgive us
By the death of His Son
And strengthen us
To live in the power of the Spirit
All our days. **Amen.**

PRAISE

O Lord, open my lips...
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Give me the joy of your saving help...
and sustain me with your life-giving Spirit.

THE COLLECT

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.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **This is the day the Lord has made.***

THE WORD OF GOD.

Psalms 29

- 1 Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ♦
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- 2 Ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name; ♦
worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters;
the God of glory thunders; ♦
the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
- 4 The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation; ♦
the voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.
- 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; ♦
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
- 6 He makes Lebanon skip like a calf ♦
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

- 7 The voice of the Lord splits the flash of lightning;
the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; ♦
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 8 The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe
and strips the forests bare; ♦
in his temple all cry, 'Glory!'
- 9 The Lord sits enthroned above the water flood; ♦
the Lord sits enthroned as king for evermore.
- 10 The Lord shall give strength to his people; ♦
the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Isaiah 42:1–9

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Thus says God, the Lord,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
I am the Lord, that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.

See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

Acts 10:34–43

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **Lord of all hopefulness.***

GOSPEL

John 1:29-42

The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.'

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

REFLECTION – Come, see, follow.

At this time of the year we meet John the Baptist quite often. Today I've taken a diversion from the Lectionary provision and from Matthew, which is the "gospel of the year". John's Gospel gives us a refreshing break from the synoptic gospels.

The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) bear striking similarities, hence their name which is from the Greek, *syn* meaning *together* and *optic* meaning *seen*. They include many of the same stories and their language, structure and sequence are also very similar. John, however marches to an altogether different drum.

The differences and similarities between the three synoptic gospels and between them and the gospel of John have been debated for centuries and careers have been made out of their study. However, today I want to look at the way in which John deals with John the Baptist.

This is very different from the way that the other gospels tell the story.

The most significant difference is that John's gospel, unlike the other three, does not describe the baptism of Christ, merely making an oblique reference;

"I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and it remained on him."

John the Baptist then goes on to tell his audience that although he, John, had baptised with water, this is the one who has come to baptise with the Holy Spirit, and that Jesus is the Son of God.

After the dramatic events of the Magi and the flight to Egypt described by Matthew in the last two weeks' gospel readings this might seem to be a rather low key passage. It is very significant however because it deals with some important introductions. It also puts us as observers, witnesses to the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

At the start of the passage, as he sees Jesus walking towards him, John proclaims;

"Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Let's look at the context of John's statement. If we read the passage which comes before today's reading we learn that the Pharisees had sent priests and Levites to question John and ask him what he was up to, baptising people, if he was not the Messiah. He tells them that he isn't the Messiah but says;

"Among you stands one whom you do not know."

Then Jesus appears and he is introduced as the one who is to come. The day after this introduction, there is another one. We read of Jesus' meeting with two of his disciples. In fact, they are disciples of John the Baptist.

Again John introduces Jesus, saying;

"Look! Here is the Lamb of God!"

The two disciples of John the Baptist followed Jesus. From this passage it's obvious that they stayed with him. The next events are taking place in the late afternoon. Andrew finds his brother Simon and brings him to Jesus telling him that they have found the Messiah. Jesus takes one look at him and names him as Simon Peter, the first of the Apostles.

We hear Jesus introduced as the Lamb of God twice. This terminology is well known. Even non-Christians have probably heard of the phrase. We use it in the liturgy of the Eucharist when we say the Agnus Dei;

"O Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world."

What does it mean, what is its significance?

Actually it tells us three things;

Jesus is the lamb who destroys evil.

He is the lamb who gives his life for our redemption.

He is the paschal lamb who frees us by taking away our sins.

The image of the Paschal Lamb would have been very familiar to the Jews as a sacrifice at Passover, to celebrate the salvation of the escape from Egypt. This is a precursor to Jesus' crucifixion and his offer of an even greater salvation.

The introduction of Jesus;
"This is the Lamb of God!"

It was a motivation to the first two disciples to follow him. They had found something that they had been looking for. They told their friends. Andrew went to find his brother.

The word began to spread;
"This is the Lamb of God!"

Still today, we are following Jesus, the Lamb of God, telling our friends, spreading the word;

"This is the Lamb of God!"
Jesus is the one who opens the prospect of our future;

"This is the Lamb of God!"

All we have to do is follow.

Brian Pateman.

Suggested hymn to sing or read Will you come and follow me?



THE CREED

All I believe in God the Father,
 whose loving care is the pattern for family life.
 I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,
 who lives in my heart through faith,
 and fills me with his love.
 I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
 who strengthens me with power from on high.
 I believe in one God;
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

A time of quiet prayer for

- *The universal Church - Bishops, synods and all leaders church*
- *The leaders of the nations*
- *The natural world and the resources of the earth*

Loving God I see the news and I am afraid. Violence is spiralling out of control. I don't know what to think or feel. The temptation to fall into hatred, or despair feels very close at hand.

Help me to remember that nothing in all creation can separate me from your love that I know in Jesus. May your perfect love for me cast out my fear and free me to discern what is mine to do amidst the chaos of this suffering world.

Amen.

Finishing with the South Calder Mission Community prayer...

Heavenly Father we thank you for the life of your Church in this place, and in all the villages of the South Calder Mission Community;

for all who have served and worshipped you in years gone by, for all who make up your family in our churches today, for the faith we have in common, and for the people and traditions which make each church unique.

By your Spirit, guide and equip us, that together we might find new ways to reach out to our local community, to show your love to our neighbours, and to encourage them to follow the Lord Jesus in their lives. Father, we offer ourselves to your service. In the unity of the Holy Spirit, And in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

and the Lord's prayer...

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.

THE CONCLUSION

Suggested hymn to sing or read **Let us build a house.**

The following prayer is said

**Be with me, Lord, as I finish my prayer today.
May my lips always speak the truth;
may my eyes which have read your word
see only what is good;
and may my life as well as my worship
be always pleasing in your sight,
for the glory of your name. Amen.**

And now may the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for the Christian life.
May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.
May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care,
send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.
So now may I go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Links for the hymns

This is the day the Lord has made.

<https://youtu.be/zNWkKui1Hq4>

Lord of all hopefulness.

<https://youtu.be/i6ztll8Hlbo>

Will you come and follow me?

<https://youtu.be/S-Bq1YtpQL8>

Let us build a house.

<https://youtu.be/N9bOiAxwi4U>