

Tonbridge Methodist Church January 10th 2021

The Whole World Changed

Service prepared by Jane Jordan

Call to Worship

This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us be glad and rejoice in it.

We are the family of God.

And are called by God's name.

We are heirs of Christ's kingdom.

And born of the Spirit.

Let us, therefore, come together in
thanksgiving. **Amen.**



StF 152 : This is the day that the Lord has made

This is the day,
this is the day
that the Lord has made,
that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice,
we will rejoice
and be glad in it,
and be glad in it.
This is the day
that the Lord has made;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day,
this is the day
that the Lord has made.

This is the day,
this is the day
when he rose again,
when he rose again.
We will rejoice,
we will rejoice
and be glad in it,

and be glad in it.
This is the day when he rose
again;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day,
this is the day
when he rose again.

This is the day,
this is the day
when the Spirit came,
when the Spirit came.
We will rejoice,
we will rejoice
and be glad in it,
and be glad in it.
This is the day when the Spirit
came;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day,
this is the day
when the Spirit came.

Opening prayer

This is the day that we come together, at home or online, to worship and adore you, our God. You are a great and wonderful God, all-powerful, all-loving, all-good, all-forgiving, and today we take time to really worship you.

We come to remind ourselves of all you have done. Today we think about how you created the earth, bringing light into the dark, how amazing that moment would have been and how day has followed night ever since.

You are a great and wonderful God.

We are reminded of how you prepared John the Baptist to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy, making way for Jesus to come and begin his ministry of baptism and new beginnings, and still transforming lives today.

You are a great and wonderful God.

We come to rejoice in all you are still doing - your faithful love reaching out to all people everywhere, your mercy, offering new beginnings where before there was only despair.

You are a great and wonderful God.

Almighty and ever loving God, forgive us for losing the sense of awe we once had. Forgive us for forgetting how great you are. Forgive us for bringing you down to our level, rather than rising up to yours. Forgive us when we lose sight of your wonderful creation and spoil this beautiful world you created. Forgive us the smallness of our vision, the feebleness of our worship and the weakness of our faith.

Enlarge our vision, deepen our faith, renew our trust, we pray. Restore our sense of wonder. Teach us that you are a great God, Lord of the nations, sovereign over space and time.

So may we offer you our worship, with glad and grateful hearts, in Jesus name. Amen.

Old Testament Reading : Genesis 1: 1 - 5

Reflection

Today let us think of new beginnings, and what better place to start than in the very beginning. In the beginning God. 'In the beginning' cannot mean the absolute beginning, because God is eternal and had no beginning. God has always been. This can be very reassuring as well as something to ponder on. It also means that 'in the beginning' refers to the beginning of creation.



When God created the heavens and the earth, he created it from, as The Message translation puts it, "a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness." You can almost imagine what that was like. When we have been to a Good Friday service and the lights are dimmed and we leave in darkness talking to nobody, there is almost a sense of isolation and inky blackness and yet we know events that will change that. The contrast of Easter Day with the bright light, flowers and a joyousness deep within, is remarkable.

For me there was an experience, many years ago, where I experienced a darkness in my life, which was frightening and difficult to cope with. A minister prayed with me and I can only say that the darkness lifted very suddenly and the world became a place more beautiful than I had ever seen it. I was filled with praise and thanksgiving.

From darkness to light, how amazing that was on that first day, when the light erupts from the inky blackness and the life of creation takes off. It must have been awesome!!

StF 175 : Light of the world

Tim Hughes

Light of the world,
you stepped down into
darkness,
opened my eyes, let me see

beauty that made this heart
adore you,
hope of a life spent with you.

*So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down!
here I am to say that
you're my God,
and you're altogether lovely,
altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.*

King of all days
oh so highly exalted,
glorious in heaven above.

Humbly you came
to the earth you created,
all for love's sake became poor.

And I'll never know how much it
cost
to see my sin upon that cross.
And I'll never know how much
it cost
to see my sin upon that cross.

Gospel Reading : Mark 1: 1 - 14

Reflection - *New beginnings*

When I was at school, we had a stationery cupboard where you went at a particular time to get new stationery when your old books were full and signed by the teacher. Our rough books were quite big and thick and it took ages to get to the end. When the time came, I loved getting the new one and every time I vowed I would keep it neater than the last! Sad or what? When we look back over time, there have been many new beginnings of one sort or another. We think of new jobs, falling in love, getting married, moving house, arrival of babies, and so the list can go on.



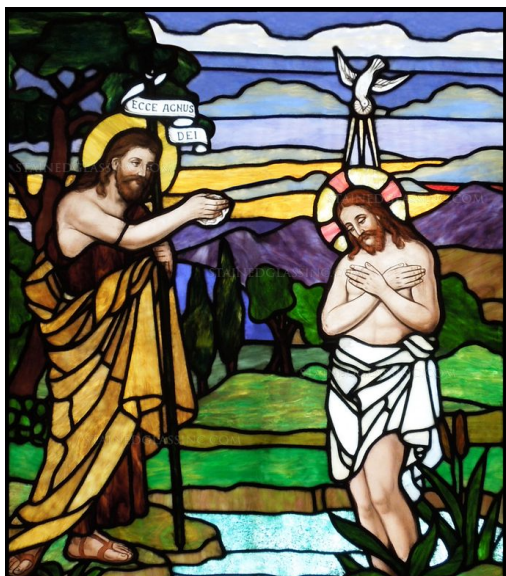
In The Message, Mark begins his gospel with these words: “The good news of Jesus Christ - the Message! - begins here, following to the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. 'Watch closely: I'm sending my preacher ahead of you; He'll make the road smooth for you. Thunder in the desert! Prepare for God's arrival! Make the road smooth and straight!'”

Enter John the Baptist, who heralds the best beginning imaginable. John is in the desert and crowds of people come looking for him as word spreads. They come looking for his baptism. They want to

confess their sins and be baptised and receive this new life. A new beginning. John then begins to tell them that the baptism that they received from him in the Jordan turns their old life into a kingdom life. John goes on to tell them that the one who will come after will baptise with the Holy Spirit and it will be a holy baptism. In the words from The Message we read, "a holy baptism, by the Holy spirit, will change you from the inside out."

If Victoria were here now, I would get her to lead the song with the words, "shine from the inside out, that the world will know you live in me." I guess this would be, what John the Baptist was getting at. This really was an amazing new beginning. So enters Jesus.

This year because of all the disappointments and the worry of the virus, I decided for my Advent reading, to go back to a book I used many years ago by Joyce Hugget, entitled *Joy to the World*. It is a book some of you may be familiar with. It is beautifully written, laid out with Bible readings, pen and ink drawings, music, meditation and prayer. It has certainly meant a lot to me this Christmas time especially with all the restrictions in place: Jesus entering our world, bringing new life for all, helping us to see again new beginnings for each one of us.



Today, in our reading, as we see Jesus baptised by John and then the spirit descending, this was another new beginning; indeed, the most amazing new beginning. Up until then, people imagined that there was a rigid barrier dividing heaven and earth. Here we see the sky split open and the power of God as spirit descending through, as a dove, and God is so pleased and proud. This then is really a new beginning, not just for the ministry of Jesus, but for each one of us and our relationship with God.

Every time we mess up, and I do it often, we are given yet another clean sheet, another new beginning as we confess our wrong doings or inactivity and confess our real need of Jesus in our life.

Let us now, in prayer, confess our wrong doings and express our need to be filled again with the Holy Spirit.

Prayers

Lord, when you came into the world, things changed. When we came into a relationship with you, things changed. Life became filled with a new sense of purpose. But, Lord, sometimes we let you down by doing wrong things or failing to do the right things.

We are sorry, Lord.

Sometimes, Lord, through pride, stubbornness or fear we build barriers and keep others at arm's length - even you, Lord.

We are sorry, Lord.

At times we give into our weaknesses and temptations, failing to draw strength from you. At times we are troubled by difficult situations and find it hard to trust you.

We are sorry, Lord.

Help us, we pray, to turn such things around and turn to you. Help us to learn from the past and, drawing on your strength and peace, make a better future. O God, when Jesus was baptised, you spoke of your love for him. You showed your love for us through Jesus' death and resurrection. By the power of the cross, the darkness of our wrongdoing is banished by the light of you loving forgiveness.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

The Rhythm of Life by David Adam

Into our world of darkness,
into our places of strife,
Into our troubles and weakness
Come, Lord.
Come down, come in, come
among us.

Into our joys and celebrations,
Into our homes and to our loved
ones,
Into our work and our
achievements,
Come, Lord.
Come down, come in, come
among us.

StF 371 Breathe on me, Spirit of Jesus

Breathe on me, Spirit of Jesus.
Breathe on me, Holy Spirit of
God.

Change my heart, Spirit of
Jesus.
Change my heart, Holy Spirit of
God.

Fill me again, Spirit of Jesus.
Fill me again, Holy Spirit of
God.

Bring peace to the world, Spirit
of Jesus.
Bring peace to the world, Holy
Spirit of God.

Prayers of intercession

God our Father, grant us the help of your Spirit in our prayers
today.

We pray for the church throughout the world, remembering
especially the links we have with Uganda, and on this 10th day of
the month we remember the churches in Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador,
Peru and Uruguay mentioned in our prayer handbook. We pray,
too, for our church here in Tonbridge and all its members, and
especially the work done by the Feast Fresh team. May we all be
constantly renewed by your Holy Spirit for mission and service.
Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the peoples of the world, for the leaders of the nations,
thinking today of America as they get ready for the new president
Joe Biden to take office. We pray that all leaders will seek justice,
freedom and peace for all. Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our country, for those who have authority and
influence, for the government, for the health service, for all front
line workers, for all who volunteer to help in these difficult days.
Give them strength, wisdom, honesty and compassion.
Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those among whom we live and work, for our
neighbours, friends and family. We pray, too, for those in need, for
those who are lonely, isolated, anxious or ill, especially in these

uncertain times. We pray that in their weakness they may know something of your strength and in despair find hope.
Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

In you, Father, we are one family on earth and in heaven. We remember in your presence those who have died, giving thanks for the life of Irene Groves and remembering all she meant to us and her family, remembering Tony at this time. Help us to follow the example of your saints in light and bring us, with them, to the fullness of your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord who gave us the family prayer:

The Lord's Prayer

StF 503 : Love divine

Charles Wesley

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come
down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always
blessing,

serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without
ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before
thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Dismissal

To God who is always forgiving, always loving,
Always offering a new beginning,
Be honour and glory, praise and thanksgiving,
This day and forever.

Amen.