

20th July, 2025

The paper-version Service



St Andrew's
Church



The Good
Shepherd
Four Marks
Responding to God's Love



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn:

Go Forth And Tell! O Church Of God,
Awake!
God's Saving News To All The Nations
Take;
Proclaim Christ Jesus, Savior, Lord, And
King,
That All The World His Worthy Praise
May Sing.

Go Forth And Tell! God's Love
Embraces All;
He Will In Grace Respond To All Who
Call:
How Shall They Call If They Have Never
Heard
The Gracious Invitation Of His Word?

Go Forth And Tell! Men Still In
Darkness Lie;
In Wealth Or Want, In Sin They Live
And Die:

Give Us, O Lord, Concern Of Heart And
Mind,
A Love Like Yours Which Cares For All
Mankind.

Go Forth And Tell! The Doors Are Open
Wide:
Share God's Good Gifts Let No One Be
Denied;
Live Out Your Life As Christ Your Lord
Shall Choose,
Your Ransomed Powers For His Sole
Glory Use.

Go Forth And Tell! O Church Of God,
Arise!
Go In The Strength Which Christ Your
Lord Supplies;
Go Till All Nations His Great Name
Adore
And Serve Him, Lord And King For
Evermore.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Revelation 21:1-8; John 11:21-27 – Future Life.

Today we are baptism five people – one baby and four young people, from two families.

Baptism is a strange thing – where else do we have ‘initiation’ moments like this anymore? The only thing I could think of was graduation – wearing the funny clothes – and perhaps in the circumstances in which we have to swear some kind of oath in order to belong to a group or profession – judges for example, and in the past doctors.

Most religions have some form of joining ceremony and in the time of Jesus baptism was increasingly used for those who wanted to join the Jews, but were either women, or men unwilling to be circumcised, this group were known as God fearers – they’re mentioned 9 times in Acts.

So what did Jesus make baptism? He commanded that we were baptised and taught to obey everything that he had commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). Baptism is a start, the beginning. It’s a sign, a symbol – a sacrament, that is, an outward sign of an inward reality. A sign points to a reality, so let’s look at these realities:

Baptism involves water!

There is a sense in which we began with water – we still talk of today ‘a mother’s waters breaking’ in the process of child birth. Jesus spoke about being born of water, in the context of child birth, but he also spoke of being born of the Spirit.

Baptism is a sign of new beginning, new birth, and of a new belonging to God’s family – we have been born again by the Holy Spirit. This is a most extraordinary thing and should not be underestimated. Pause and think about the immense privilege of being invited into family with God!

To be a part of God’s family requires us to be born again and made clean. When we wash with water, we are made clean. Baptism is a sign of being clean. None of us are perfect or holy, we cannot ‘make the grade’ of the glory of God or be worthy to be called his children – *‘For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.’* But God in his mercy, through Jesus’ death makes it possible to clean – *‘Yet God, in his*

grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.’ (Romans 3:23-25).

We now live free from shame and guilt (see Romans 8:1 & 33-34) and without fear (1 John 4:16-18) because of Jesus. Pause again, and think about this extraordinary gift of grace and kindness.

Being part of God’s family, gives us access to life now and forever. We have been made to live, but in our natural birth, we were born to die. The consequence of sin, into which we were born is death, but the gift of God eternal life – See Romans 6:23. Baptism is sign of our death as we go down into the water, **and** of our resurrection life, as we are raised up from the water to breathe and to live.

The baptised, live now as people of the resurrection in hope, as we spoke last, of the glory which God has for us.

Baptism is a sign of our responsibility to learn and share. Read again Matthew 28:18-20.

We are to learn to obey all that Christ has taught. In living our new life we are a transformed people – taking on the family likeness of our new family. After baptism, we put on new clothes, after our new birth as Christians we also put on ‘new’ clothes. Read Colossians 3:12-14. Our behaviour needs to march our promises of turning away from sin and evil and turning toward Christ as Saviour and Lord. Pause and think about where God might be leading you to grow in Christlikeness.

At my own baptism 47 years ago, I was given the verse Galatians 2:20 ‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.’

And we are also to share the Good News of life, cleansing and belonging that God offers us with others – to make disciples. Today for these five, and for all of us who have been baptised is a public commitment – we will face a challenge fulfilling it, but God promises help. Live up to your baptism, grow to the full stature of Christ, as I prayed for the candidates and for us all! Pause and think about how you share this Good News this week.

5th Sunday after Trinity: *Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. 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 forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, St Andrews and The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

At the Church of the Good Shepherd

- Tea and Chat and Bowls: August 20th at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: July 23rd and August 27th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.

For Further information:

This paper and all parish details are on the website at
<https://www.parishofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>