



BENEFICE BULLETIN

Church News for

Bedale, Burrill, Leeming and Thornton Watlass

12th January 2025

Epiphany 1 - The Baptism of Christ

Service Times and Venues

Daily Morning and Evening Prayer conference calls at 8:30am and 4:30pm

Thursdays 10:30am BCP communion at St Gregory's

	<i>Morning Services - St Gregory's, Bedale</i>	<i>Morning Services - St Mary's, St John's and Burrill</i>	<i>16:00—Evensong conference call</i>
12th Jan	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	Burrill Church
19th Jan	9:15am St Gregory's #F	10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	St Mary's Thornton Watlass
		11am St John's, Leeming #	
26th Jan	9:15am St Gregory's #F	9 am Burrill Church #	St John's, Leeming
		10:45 St Mary's Thornton Watlass #	

Communion F Facebook

Conference Call Tel 03330110945 and enter when prompted Room No.66307496# PIN 9498

NOTICES

Happy New Year from everyone at St John's.

Our next coffee morning will be

Thursday 16th January - 10:00 - 12:00



Service for Christian Unity

Sunday 19th January

Bedale and District Methodist Church at 6.30 pm,

led by Rev Ian Prudom, Methodist District Ecumenical Officer.

Everyone is welcome.

PRAYERS AND READINGS

OUR PRAYERS ARE ASKED FOR

Bel Newman, Mark Newman, Lesley Hall, Delma Bode, John Hall, David, Chris, Donna Bradley, George, Olive Robinson, Justin, Amanda, Tracey, Sue, Alison, Tim, Dan, Jeff Betts, John Pickard, George Carling, John, Rachel Oysten, and Doris Pearson.

RIP

*Robert Smith, Patricia Stublely, Maureen Graham, and Malcolm Peacock.
May they rest in peace and rise in glory*

Praying for Edwin in Bolivia

Lord God, we pray for Edwin to know your goodness and provision. We pray that he would place his identity in you. We ask that in the pressures of life, he would know you are his rock on which he can stand. We pray that through the challenges of school life, exams, and future decisions, you would lead him, guide him and bring him comfort. In Jesus' name, Amen

Collect

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever . Amen.

First Reading - Isaiah 43.1–7

Thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honoured, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, 'Give them up', and to the south, 'Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth - everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.'

Second Reading - Acts 8.14–17

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then Peter and John laid their

hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

Gospel reading - Luke 3.15–17, 21, 22

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Post Communion Prayer

Lord of all time and eternity, you opened the heavens and revealed yourself as Father in the baptism of Jesus your beloved Son: by the power of your Spirit complete the heavenly work of our rebirth through the waters of the new creation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMENTARY ON THE READINGS

Israel's story is today brought to a head in Jesus, as he identifies with humanity, is declared as God's Son, and heralds the bestowal of God's Spirit on all God's people.

Isaiah 43.1-7

'But now' marks a turning point in Israel's fortunes, making sense only when we read of her failure and desolation in 42.18-25. As they tramp home, the people will experience the glorious truth that Yahweh is not only their 'redeemer', one who has 'bought them back' as one might pay for the release of a relative from imprisonment for debt (v. 1), but the creator of the world, in charge of the elements of fire and water, well able to protect them from danger (v. 2).

What is meant by God giving other peoples as Israel's 'ransom' (vv. 3-4)? This sounds puzzling, even offensive – as if one nation was so favoured that God should sacrifice others for their benefit. We are dealing with poetry, not to be pressed in every detail, but the thrust of the message is surely that God is at work for good in the rise and fall of nations. We should remember that God's purpose for Israel as servant was that she should be a light to the nations (42.6; 49.6) and that this great homecoming was for the display of God's own glory (43.6-7).

Acts 8.14-17

This delayed reception of the Holy Spirit after people had already welcomed God's word and been baptised in Jesus' name is unique in Acts (those concerned were apparently disciples of John the Baptist as we see in in 19.1-7). It highlights three points. First, in Acts the reception of the Holy Spirit must have been very evident: it was clear when the Spirit had not come (v. 16) – and when the Spirit had (v. 17). Signs, wonders, tongues and the like are noted elsewhere as evidence of her work (for example, 2.1-13; 2.43). The evidence here is not stated. The Spirit may work in various, sometimes hidden ways, but Acts does not allow us to imagine that her ministry is vague and nebulous!

Second, this was the first advance of the gospel into Samaritan territory and, in this 'late' reception of the Spirit through the apostles' ministry, Luke may wish us to see confirmation that God's grace was indeed offered freely to all.

Third, we see the importance for Luke of the apostles, as those authorised, through their friendship with Jesus, to be witnesses of his resurrection (cf. Acts 1.15-26).

Luke 3.15-17, 21-22

Luke emphasises that Jesus began his ministry at a time of eager anticipation among the people of Israel (v. 15). This was heightened by the appearance of John, the prophetic figure in the wilderness. John, though, is anxious to portray his own ministry as a mere sign, pointing to something and someone far greater (vv. 16, 17).

The 'coming one' would have real power; he would be the master, before whom John saw himself as less than a slave; he would immerse people in God's holy presence (v. 16). John uses the picture of the winnowing fork, familiar from the Old Testament as a metaphor for God's judging activity (v. 17; see Isaiah 41.15-16; Jeremiah 15.7). Jesus' ministry is to involve a sifting and purifying of God's people.

John's fiery words may seem in stark contrast to Jesus' ministry, yet Luke clearly means us to see them as a correct interpretation of that ministry. Jesus says: 'I came to cast fire upon the earth' (Luke 12.49), and the tongues of flame at Pentecost (Acts 2.3, 4) symbolise the fulfilment of John's prophecy. Jesus is, like John, an assertive, prophetic figure who cuts a lonely path through the story. But the account of his baptism (vv. 21-22) reveals that he comes not to criticise Israel from outside, but to identify with her. Though the words spoken from heaven echo those spoken to God's appointed king (Psalm 2.7), they also echo those spoken to God's humble servant (Psalm 42.1).