



# St Columba's Bathgate and St Peter's Linlithgow



Rector: Rev Christine Barclay Curate: Rev Peter Woodifield

The Rectory  
85 Acredales  
LINLITHGOW  
EH49 6JA  
Tel: 07964 175 914

Tel: 07747 023 108

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Baptism of Jesus

**D**ear friends, it is with a real sense of sadness that we find ourselves restricted to worshipping on Zoom again as we try to get this pandemic under some sort of control before the various vaccines can be given to those most in need. On the other hand, it gives our two congregations the chance to draw closer together. I do hope that this week's readings, prayers and short reflection find a place in your hearts.

## Readings

Genesis 1: 1 – 5  
Acts 19: 1 – 7  
Mark 1: 4 – 11

## Collect

**E**ternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant that we, being born again, and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

## Reflection

**W**hat images come to mind when you think of baptism? Well, the older ones among us will probably think of a slightly nervous male priest, long white christening robes, a large font, parents, siblings, family, a clutch of godparents and of course an infant, who was generally bawling

after the deed was done, if not before. And in the past, quite often done in a private ceremony rather than in front of the whole congregation. All very traditional, very safe and quite frankly rather domesticated. Because, sadly, that is what the Church has done to baptism. Yes, the ceremony is solemn, the liturgy beautiful and reminds us that we are a new creation in our baptism and filled with the Holy Spirit.

But it is a million miles from what this week's readings tell us. There's nothing genteel about this 2,000-year-old ritual as it's portrayed here. It's wild stuff. In our New Testament reading we read how the Ephesian disciples baptised by Paul immediately started speaking in tongues. But even that is as nothing compared to what happens in our Gospel reading. First of all, Mark tells us it happens in the wilderness rather than in the temple. That when John baptises Jesus, the heavens are 'torn apart', the Holy Spirit – in the form of a dove – dive bombs Jesus, while God's voice fills the air. Can you even begin to imagine a baptism like that today? Well I certainly can't, and I suspect most of us can't because our more sedate baptisms are so culturally ingrained in us.



So what's going on? First, it's worth briefly considering our Old Testament reading of the creation story in Genesis 1 and Psalm 29, the appointed Psalm for the day. We are all familiar with the Genesis story,

but the Spirit that hovered over the formless void and elemental waters of creation is the same Spirit that descended on Jesus. Psalm 29 says God thunders, it talks of mighty waters, of how God's voice twists the oaks and shakes the desert. A God of storms, floods and flames. There's nothing safe about this God. As Annie Dillard said so memorably nearly 40 years ago, the power of the God we invoke is such that we should be wearing crash helmets to church, not straw hats, if we really believe what we say.

Mark tells us more about Jesus' baptism than any of the other Gospels. Matthew has John the Baptist trying to refuse to baptise Jesus, Luke doesn't tell us who baptised Jesus and John doesn't mention his baptism. Why do the Gospel writers and the Early Church seem so reluctant to make much of what is effectively the start of Jesus' public ministry? They seem to be almost embarrassed about it. The most likely explanation would appear to be that they couldn't fathom why Jesus, who was without sin, should need to be baptised with a baptism of repentance, ie the sort of baptism that sinners need, the sort of baptism that we need. But that is precisely the point. Jesus' first public act was to step into intimate relationship with sinful humanity, by sharing the baptism that they received – a baptism, it should be noted, that was most unusual for Jews to receive. It wasn't part of their normal rituals. But God prepared the way through John the Baptist. By responding to his call for repentance it was as if they sensed God was on the move.

One final point. In the final verse of the Gospel reading God says to Jesus You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased. As children of God and co-heirs of Christ, that verse is as true for us today as it was for Jesus then. I know we find it hard sometimes to believe that, but we need to claim it for ourselves until we believe it in our hearts as well as in our heads. There are many verses we can stick on our fridges or have on our desks; I think this should be one of them, along with one of the many versions of Do not be afraid for I am with you. Perhaps write it out with your own name and gender and read it out loud to yourself, especially at those moments when you don't feel loved or you don't feel pleased with yourself. The reality is that God knows all the worst bits about us and He still



loves us, He is still well pleased with us.

That is the power of baptism. Claim it; believe it; and live it.

**Rev Peter**

### Prayers

**O** God, as we celebrate the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ, may we know in our hearts by the grace of Your Spirit that we please You and are loved by You even in all the messiness of our lives. At a time of such turmoil, we need that assurance more than ever. We pray for the speediest possible rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines so that people can start going about their daily lives again without being fearful of the consequences and that we can return to worshipping freely in our two churches. We pray also for the healing of divisions, not only in our country but especially in the United States in the wake of the shocking events of the past few days. We pray for our own Scottish Episcopal Church, especially for our Primus Mark and Bishop John and all who lead. Guide our leaders, both spiritual and secular, in ways that will find solutions to the many challenges that our world faces today, not least this ongoing pandemic that continues to wreak havoc. In these difficult times be with all who are lonely, anxious, frightened, hungry and homeless. You are the Lord who heals, so we pray that You bring healing to those who are ill today, those suffering from COVID-19 and those suffering from other conditions, especially those struggling with their mental health and bless all who will be working in our hospitals and health services. We pray for those from our church families who have asked for our prayers... ..



**from St Columba's:** Kath Stutt, Pam Macdonald, Carol Main, Eric Dobson, Anthea & Katie McAlpin, Geoffrey Gerrard, Rev Duncan and Marjorie Shaw, Doug and Pat Laurie, Young Harry, Paul & Janice Moffat, and Elma Webster.

**And from St Peter's:** Peter McOwan, John Lewis, Harry and Connie Payne, Rita Manion (David's mother), Annie Gibbs (Olivia Moss's future mother in law), Barry Greig (Terry's twin brother), Anna Pink, Joe Lavery, Ronnie Adams, Bob Philip (Andy's father) Dot Pringle, Brenda Cook, Father John, Ruthie Cadell, David Szkudlarek, and Jan Robson. And for all their families.

We pray for those who have died in recent

days, for David Olwa's cousin Beatrice and for all who mourn. And we remember those connected with our church families whose anniversary of death falls at this time.

**From St Columba's:** Wilfrid Speight, Grace Brown, Betty Campbell, Rene Hickley and Jimmy Connor.

**And from St Peter's:** Victor Moss, Violet Hooton and Thomas Blackmore.

### Notices

**D**ear Friends, it was with great sadness that on Monday afternoon I asked Judy to circulate the message that following the first Minister's announcement that Scotland is going into lockdown again our churches will be closed until further notice.

Our Primus Mark on Monday evening wrote, on behalf of the College of Bishops, to the churches and congregations of the Scottish Episcopal Church – available on the SEC website. In it he said “the reclosing of our churches is difficult, especially for those who have had the privilege of meeting together over the past few months, yet it is now what we must do.....We must continue to pray for each other, for the communities we serve and for the authorities charged with protecting the nation...please continue to pray for the College of Bishops as we will continue to pray for you until with the help of science and our health service we can once again have the freedom to meet together.”

I am so thankful that our two churches have been able to remain open for worship these past 5 months, it has been precious time indeed, especially for Christmastide and I hope that it won't be too long until we can reopen our doors.

We will therefore revert to our Zoomed Eucharist service each Sunday morning at 10am – chat room opens at 9.30am! There is a blessing in all of this in that both St Columba's and St Peter's will once more meet for worship in this virtual environment and share chat and smiles.

Additionally, the Wednesday morning prayer room will be open from 11 – 11.30 am each week and Morning Prayer on Thursday morning @ 9am. Both via Zoom™  
Zoom codes for all services will be sent out each week from Judy Goldfinch.

Two messages from John, St Peter's Treasurer:  
*"Many of you are now paying your offerings directly to the Church bank account, by*

*standing order or by internet banking, and that is the best method, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Contact treasurer John Aitken on 0775 325 3555 for details. If you would prefer to use a set of Sequi offering envelopes during 2021, please let John know and he will deliver them to you."*

*"You can contribute on-line to the 2020 Christmas Sunday School collection for CHAS at <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/chas> until the end of January or by paying directly to the Church bank account with the reference "CHAS"."*

Pastoral visits – sadly, the current guidelines mean that pastoral visits to people's homes are not possible at this time, except in extreme circumstances.

Zoom Coffee and Chat on a Monday morning. The next one will be held on January 11<sup>th</sup> @ 11.15. Meeting ID 5111791282 Passcode 3i1TYq.

Jackie Jackson is organising a Burns social evening for both churches on Friday January 22, with a quiz and fun and chat. You'll have to provide your own haggis! Meeting ID 824 3710 1828 Passcode 431189. Full Zoom link in next week's Zoom list.

This is going to be a challenging time for each and every one of us in different ways and we are rather 'battle weary' 10 months into this pandemic aren't we. Please do remember that Peter and I hold you all in our prayers and we will be keeping in contact with you by phone, text and via our WhatsApp Groups and please don't hesitate to contact us at any time for a chat, with a question or to share news... whatever, we will be delighted to hear from you.

*Rev Christine*

### **SEC Morning, Evening and Night Prayer Liturgies**

Morning, Evening and Night Prayer daily liturgies are available at:  
[www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices](http://www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices)

Rev Christine and Rev Peter will be saying Morning Prayer @ 9am and Evening Prayer @ 6pm each day in their own homes and invite you to join in from yours. On Thursday mornings there will be sharing a virtual service via Zoom. If you would like to join in, the link every week will be <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/756114372?pwd=ZXpMWndaY210empVY1daL09paGlwZz09>

Any queries please contact Rev Peter [pw@woodifield.com](mailto:pw@woodifield.com)

For the coming week beginning Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January we enter into the week of Epiphany 2.

\*If you have a paper version of the big blue Prayer Book, for

**Morning Prayer** we will be using the form: Week A on p. 29. Follow the psalm set for the day in Set 1. Follow the Benedictus antiphon set for the day.

**Evening Prayer** we will be using the form: Week A on p. 64.

\*If you want to do it online by far the easiest way to do it is to click

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices/> which is updated three times a day for Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline

\*If you just want to do the readings and collect for each day they are as follows. (The online version of Morning Prayer uses the first two readings and Evening Prayer the third, the Gospel.)

Sunday:	Joshua 3: 1 – 8, 14 – 17;	Hebrews 1: 1 – 12;	Matthew 3: 13 – 17
Monday:	Isaiah 40: 1 – 17;	Ephesians 1: 1 – 14;	Mark 1: 1 – 13
Tuesday:	Isaiah 40: 18 – 31;	Ephesians 1: 15 – 23;	Mark 1: 14 – 28
Wednesday:	Isaiah 41: 1 – 16;	Ephesians 2: 1 – 10;	Mark 1: 19 – 45
Thursday:	Isaiah 41: 17 – 29;	Ephesians 2: 11 – 22;	Mark 2: 1 – 12
Friday:	Isaiah 42: (1 – 9), 10 – 17;	Ephesians 3: 1 – 13;	Mark 2: 13 – 22
Saturday:	Isaiah 43: 1 – 13;	Ephesians 3: 14 – 21;	Mark 2: 23 – 3: 6

*The Collects applies to both Morning and Evening Prayer*

**Collect for the Baptism of Our Lord**

Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant that we, being born again, and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

**Collect for the rest of the week**

O Lord, in your loving kindness, hear the prayers of your people as they call upon you: that they may discern your will, and also be given strength to fulfil it; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

**Each day we pray for:**

- The world: people, governments and leaders of the countries and specific issues arising in the news. Issues relating to social justice, peace, suffering and creation. And of course at this time for the devastating global covid-19 crisis.
- Our wider church, the SEC, our diocese, individual churches.
- Our community – residents in our area. For those with no faith, we pray for their introduction to the Christian faith, and for those with faith, that their faith may develop further.
- Those known to us who are unwell or in need.
- Our own church communities.



**Clergy contact numbers:**

Rev Christine – 07964175914; 01334769303  
Rev Peter Woodifield – 07747023108

**Rector's Wardens contact numbers:**

David Graham Service – 07901947345  
Jane Ramsay - 07982252666