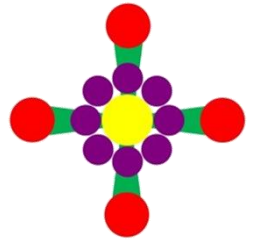


**The Benefice of  
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme  
25<sup>th</sup> January 2026  
The Third Sunday of Epiphany  
Today's Liturgy Prepared by Liz**



**Call to worship**

Lord of light and salvation,  
the stronghold of our lives,  
we come today to worship you.  
You shone in the darkness  
and have given us hope,  
we walk towards your light today  
knowing that your light can never be extinguished.  
Lord, we come today to dwell in your house.  
**Amen.**

Loving God,  
thank you that all are welcome in your presence  
and all have a part to play.  
Speak to us today and show us how to live  
as the body of Christ in this community,  
bringing good news to all.  
**Amen.**

**Confession**

The grace of God has dawned upon the world  
through our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own.  
Let us confess our sins.

Lord Jesus, illuminate the darkness in our hearts:  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to your saving love:

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, unstop our ears to hear your living word:

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of love

bring us back to himself,

forgive us our sins

and assure us of his eternal love

In Jesus Christ our Lord

**Amen**

Father God,

Thank you that you sent Jesus

who came to give us freedom through the cross.

You have called us to put down our 'nets' and follow you.

You have offered us new life in you –

a new path to follow, as a new light has dawned.

Thank you that you walk beside us on the journey,

the journey from darkness into your marvellous light.

Thank you that you offer us life full of adventure,

life in all its fullness.

**Amen.**

**Collect**

God of all mercy,

your Son proclaimed good news to the poor,

release to the captives,

and freedom to the oppressed:

anoint us with your Holy Spirit

and set all your people free

to praise you in Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

First reading: Isaiah 9: 1-4

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.  
You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.  
For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Second reading: Matthew 4: 12-23

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the lake, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

‘Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,  
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—  
the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death  
light has dawned.’

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

### Reflection with Robert

It’s four weeks since we celebrated Christmas and we hear again in the Isaiah reading about a great light dawning and shining ‘on those living in the land of deep darkness.’ The poetic words of the reading conjure up so easily the crib scene we are so familiar with. Indeed, if we read on a little further verse 6 tells us that ‘to us a child is born.’ Words that we heard so often at Christmas, during carol services or in a candlelit church and that create such a picture-perfect scene of peace and goodwill.

And so it is that association of Jesus as the child in the manger, the light of the world, that immediately comes to mind – and that is not wrong.

But our association of the coming of light as Jesus born in a manger can easily blind us to the full message in the Isaiah reading. The darkness that he writes about is not the passive darkness of December days but that of the darkness experienced by the people of Israel, of war, invasion and destruction. It is the darkness of violence and oppression and enduring suffering. And today unfortunately many places in our world are experiencing those very dark times. So, this takes our understanding far beyond the gentle coming of a child in a manger to the glorious liberating victory of a saving God. Of course, this is what the coming of Jesus is – God coming in victory to the world with a message of salvation.

In our cosy, comfortable Christmas scene, we probably picture friends and family standing around holding candles to hear of this coming light.

However, again, we must challenge ourselves to recognise that this is also a potentially uncomfortable message – that God’s salvation is moving outwards, beyond the people we automatically expect - those already called and gathered as God’s people - to encompass all people and all nations.

So, let us be challenged not to simply receive God’s saving light, but also to carry it onwards and outwards, into dark places where it will bring comfort and help. Let’s respond to the words ‘come, follow me’ and ‘leave our nets’ and follow as those early disciples responded to their calling. Let us help others to hear God’s word and to move outwards to help share that light with others.

This passage should stir us into action and challenge our complacency and coupled with the calling of the disciples, should remind us of our calling as active followers of Jesus, called to spread God’s light.

### Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.  
We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.  
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.  
We believe in one God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

Blessed are you, Lord our God, for you give us life, you give us love, you give us yourself. Lord, may we learn to follow, to give our life, our love, ourselves to you, for it is in such giving that we open our lives to you. Blessed are you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We give you thanks, O Lord, for all who have heard your call, followed you obediently, and served you faithfully. We give thanks for those who have shared their faith with us. We ask your blessing upon all who seek to witness to your abiding presence and your love. Jesus went about Galilee choosing his apostles, so we pray for all who are seeking to fulfil their calling in life. Give them courage and guidance in their service and be always with them. We pray for schools, colleges and universities. We remember, especially today, all who are being prepared for baptism, confirmation or ordination.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We give thanks for all who provide us with our daily food. We ask your blessing upon all who are involved in growing or supplying our food. We remember before you all who are being used as cheap labour. And we pray for fair trade and justice. May we all use the resources of the world with care and respect. In a world of uncertainty, we pray for peace, amongst nations and factions. We pray that the leaders of countries and big conglomerates serve their people wisely and honestly, caring for the welfare of the planet we all live on.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We give thanks for our homes and our loved ones, for all who have enriched us by their love and generosity. We ask your blessing upon all who are struggling through debt, poverty or homelessness. We pray for all who feel used, abused or unloved.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We ask your blessing upon all who are finding life difficult through illness or oppression. We pray for all who feel that their abilities are being wasted or thwarted through illness or circumstance. May we know that in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, God still loves us and calls us to love Him.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We rejoice that we are called to life eternal. We remember friends and loved ones who have departed from us. May we all share in your abiding love and the fullness of life eternal.

Merciful Father,

**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray  
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 for ever.  
Amen.

## The Peace

Christ is our peace.

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.

The old has passed away: behold, everything has become new.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

## Closing prayer and Blessing

Lord, send us out  
as renewed people.

Help us to turn away from what is wrong  
and turn to what is right.

Help us to turn towards our neighbours  
and to all who are lost.

Help us to turn away from distractions  
and towards more adventuring with you.

Help us now and always.

**Amen.**

May God keep us in all our days.

May Christ shield us in all our ways.

May the Spirit bring us healing and peace.

May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from us  
and pour upon us blessing and light.

**Amen**