

St Michael and All Angels Mill Hill



Second Sunday of Epiphany *The Baptism of Christ* Safeguarding Sunday



Sunday 12th January 2025

10:30 am





Sunday
19th
January
6:00pm

Mill Hill Churches
United Service

St Paul's Church
The Ridgeway
London NW7 1QU

The Processional Hymn (NEH 47)

Please stand

As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright,
So, most gracious God, may we
Evermore be led to thee.

2 As with joyful steps they sped,
To that lowly manger-bed,
There to bend the knee before
Him whom heaven and earth adore,
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek thy mercy-seat.

3 As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger rude and bare,
So may we with holy joy,
Pure, and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee our heavenly King.

4 Holy Jesu, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds thy glory hide.

5 In the heavenly country bright
Need they no created light;
Thou its Light, its Joy, its Crown,
Thou its Sun which goes not down:
There for ever may we sing
Alleluyas to our King.

The Greeting

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

The Lord be with you

All: And also with you.

Introduction

Martin introduces the service

Welcome to our Service.

This Safeguarding Sunday Service has been prepared as part of the work of the PCC, as safeguarding is an important part of our work as a Church, as we work with children and vulnerable adults.

Opening Prayer

O Father, as we come to worship,
our prayer is that we see the world as your love shows us:

A world where the weak are protected,
no one is poor and no one is starving.

A world where the wealth of creation is fairly shared
and everyone can enjoy it.

A world where different nations live in harmony and respect.

A world where peace is founded on justice, and justice on love.

Give us the vision and courage to build it on these foundations,
for the sake of Jesus Christ

All: Amen.

Prayer of Preparation

**All: 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.**

Prayers of Penitence

In a moment of quietness, let us prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries by calling to mind the ways in which we have failed God and our neighbour, and then let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**All: Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you
in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

Absolution

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

A Kyrie confession

You made your church to be place of safety and refuge,
yet people have been hurt and harmed.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy

You call your church be a voice for the voiceless
and the oppressed,
yet we have remained silent and not spoken out about injustice.
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy

You send your church to be an example of love to the world,
yet we have been selfish and not shown love
to those who are hurting.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy

Kyrie

Choir All Choir ...

Lord have mer-cy, Lord have mer-cy, Lord have mer-cy. Christ have mer-cy,

Christ havemer-cy, Christ havemer-cy. Lord havemer-cy. Lord havemer-cy, Lord havemer-cy ^{GW}

Gloria

Glo-ry to God in the High - est and peace to His peo-ple on Earth.
Lord God, hea-ven -ly King, Al - might - y God and Fa - ther. We wor - ship you, we
give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry. Lord Je - sus Christ On - ly
Son of the Fa - ther, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the World, have mer - cy on us. You are sea - ted at the right hand of the
Fa - ther, re - ceive our prayer. For you a - lone are the ho - ly one, you a - lone are the
Lord. You a - lone are the most high, Je - sus Christ with the Ho - ly Spi - rit in the
glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - - men. CW

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.

All: Amen.

First Reading

Please be seated

Genesis I: 1-5, 26-31

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.³ Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light.⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'²⁹ God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.'³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so.³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

This is the word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 91 v9-16



9 For thou, Lord, art my hope :
thou hast set thine house of defence very high.
10 There shall no evil happen unto thee :
neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee :
to keep thee in all thy ways.
12 They shall bear thee in their hands :
that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone.

13 Thou shalt go upon the lion and adder :
the young lion and the dragon shalt thou tread under thy feet.
14 Because he hath set his love upon me,
therefore will I deliver him :
I will set him up, because he hath known my Name.

15 He shall call upon me, and I will hear him :
yea, I am with him in trouble,
I will deliver him, and bring him to honour.
16 With long life will I satisfy him :
and shew him my salvation.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :
and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be :
world without end Amen.

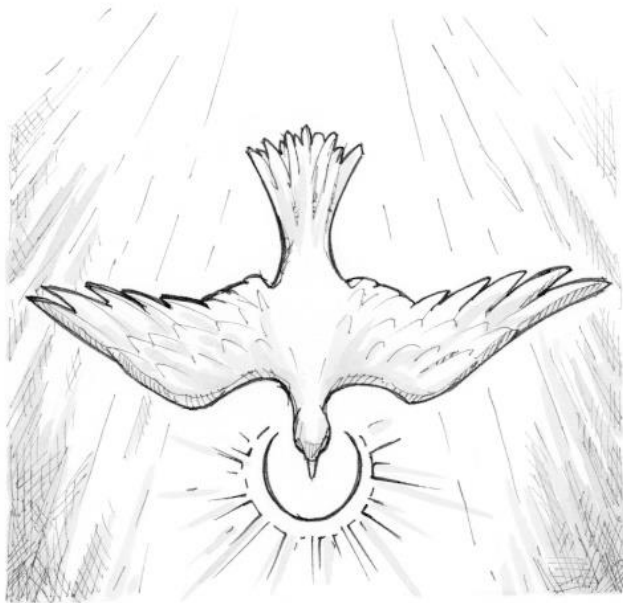
Second Reading

Ephesians 5: 8-14a

⁸For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— ⁹for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴for everything that becomes visible is light.

This is the word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.



Safeguarding Sunday

Leader:

As well as providing resources like the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Handbook and this service, the Safeguarding Panel provides advice, support and training for those who work or volunteer with children and vulnerable adults in the local church. Perhaps we associate safeguarding mainly with the need to apply for a DBS check, but safeguarding is much more than filling out forms...

Today is 'Safeguarding Sunday', although that is somewhat misleading, because really, every Sunday should be a Safeguarding Sunday and every part of our service and activities as a Church should be safe where every member, from the youngest to the oldest, feels safe.

Creating a Safer Church means that all of us involved in the Church ensure the safety of everyone within our activities and reassure each person attending that they are safe.

Prayer

We come to you in prayer, O God our Father,
creator and sustainer, knowing that you are a sanctuary,
a safe place and our strength in times of trouble.
Help us to open our eyes to see the beauty of your creation
and teach us to be responsible citizens who respect that creation.
Help us to open our eyes to see the good and the truth
in the acts of kindness of our fellow human beings.
Help us to open our ears to the truth of your Word
and to hear the cry of the needy and lonely wherever they are.
Help us to open our hearts to experience the passion
of your love in Jesus Christ and for our actions
to be according to your will.

All: Amen.

The Gradual Hymn (NEH 64)

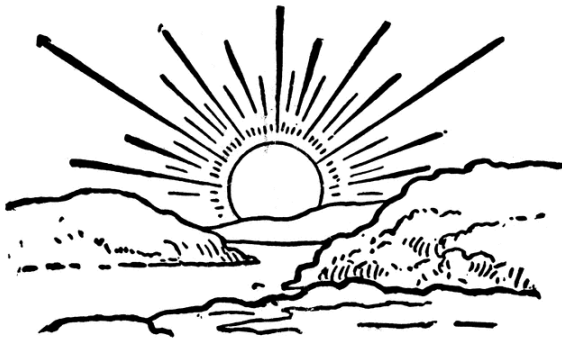
Please stand

Be thou my guardian and my guide,
And hear me when I call;
Let not my slippery footsteps slide,
And hold me lest I fall.

2 The world, the flesh, and Satan dwell
Around the path I tread;
O, save me from the snares of hell,
Thou quickener of the dead.

3 And if I tempted am to sin,
And outward things are strong,
Do thou, O Lord, keep watch within,
And save my soul from wrong.

4 Still let me ever watch and pray,
And feel that I am frail;
That if the tempter cross my way,
Yet he may not prevail.



The Gospel

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al -
le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Jones

The Lord be with you

All: And also with you.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
according to Luke

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John 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. ¹⁷His 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.'

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and 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.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

Safeguarding Talk/Address

Please be seated

The Creed

Please Stand

**All: We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one being with the Father.
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is
worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Please be seated, or kneel if you prefer

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ
let us make our prayer to our heavenly Father.

Compassionate God, our refuge and strength,
defender of the weak, the weary, and the oppressed,
we come to you with humble and thankful hearts.
As your children, you call us to be like you,
to speak up for the rights of all who are vulnerable.
Help us as we strive to be a place of safety for all,
May we listen to those who are hurting, learn from Jesus' example,
and love one another as you first loved us.

Prayer for Safeguarding Sunday

A Prayer written by Cerys Morgan, a victim and survivor of church abuse.

Father,
Thank you that as your church you entrust to us your work here
on earth.
We pray that through your Spirit, you will empower us to do the
right thing for the benefit of those suffering abuse and injustice

That we will not fear to be bringers of your justice. That we will be
your voice for those whose voices are silenced.
That when your light shines into dark areas of abuse we will have
courage as your representatives, to face our fears, and to show forth
your heart of compassion and justice, and to speak your words of life
and freedom into broken hearts.

Teach us as a Church to be your body fully knitted together and
working in unity. To care for one another with extra care and dignity.
Enable us to be instruments of your love, that chains will be broken
and broken hearts restored.
That we will teach everyone how precious they are to you.
That they will know you are a God who sees and feels their pain.

We pray that through your Spirit and your church fully trusting in your word, victims will become victors and their mess become a precious message to your love and restoration in their lives. We ask this in your name and for your glory.
Amen

An act of commitment

As the people of God, we are called to follow in the way of Christ, to walk humbly and love mercy, and the speak up about injustice so that the church may be a place of safety and refuge for all. In acknowledging the role we all have in making our churches safer places, let us join together and pledge our commitment before almighty God:

Will you treat everyone with respect and dignity and seek to never knowingly hurt or harm others by what you do, or say?

All: With the help of God, I will

Will you actively support the work of safeguarding in this church?

All: With the help of God, I will

Will you support the Safeguarding Lead and all those who have safeguarding responsibilities?

All: With the help of God, I will

Will you use your voice to speak up about the injustice of abuse?

All: With the help of God, I

Will you make space to listen to those who have been hurt and harmed in our community?

All: With the help of God, I will

Will you commit to never knowingly hide or keep quiet about abuse that you know of or suspect?

All: With the help of God, I will

Will you call on the wider church to take steps towards change in this area?

All: With the help of God, I will

May the God in whom we trust, strengthen this commitment within us that we may truly be a place of safety and refuge for all.

All: Amen.

*Please pray for those who are sick or housebound
We remember by name:*

Anil Ameer Subryan, Anna Morison, Arlen, Ashraf Jafari, Fr Barry Wright, Beryl, Catherine Dalgliesh, Chandralakha and Scott Singh, Christine, Christopher Brown, Chris Robins. Colin Izzard, Colin Power, Claire, Clifford Brown, Crystal, Daniel Ejelonu, Daniel Whittard, David Mulloy, Fr David Sharpe, Fr Desmond Tillyer, Devon White, Edd Heimrich, Edna McGregor, Edward, Evelyn Semlyen, Gail Sparrow, Fr Hugh Moore, Helen Cloke, Janet B, Jenny Wardle, John, Johnny, Jordan, Judi Bryant, Julian, Katherine Barker, Lauren Reeves, Lisa Sweet, Logan, Mark, Mary Akpieyi, Mandy, Mina and Reginald Apiafi, Muriel Doris Bloch, Nicola, Nicole, Oliver Donald, Pamela Ashcroft, Pavol Husar, Rachel, Rahema Charles, Ray, Rella Persaud, Remi Babatunde, Robert Winston, Saffron Leigh, Sam Theodore, Sandra, Sarah, Sebastian, Susan and Vanessa Husarov, Susan Paterson, Taiwo Odebode, Thelma Martin, Valerie Snowden, Victoria.

*We remember those who have recently departed this life:
Lucy Dalgliesh, Zara Joseph and Liz Lightbown.*

*and all whose anniversaries of death fall at this time:
Leslie Frank Rice (Priest), James Stubbs (Priest), Kate MacWhinnie,
Frank Nevard, Eileen and Frank Cordingley and Norah Simpson.*

Rest eternal grant them, O Lord;

All: And let light perpetual shine upon them.

May they rest in peace

All: And rise in glory.

Merciful Father,

**All: Accept these prayers for the sake of your son
our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Peace

Please stand

We are the body of Christ.
In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace
and builds up our common life.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you
All: And also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace

All may exchange a sign of peace.



The Offertory Hymn (NEH 56)

Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesu, Lord, to thee we raise,
 Manifested by the star
 To the sages from afar;
Branch of royal David's stem
 In thy birth at Bethlehem;
Anthems be to thee address,
 God in Man made manifest.

2 Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;
 And at Cana wedding-guest
 In thy Godhead manifest;
 Manifest in power divine,
 Changing water into wine;
Anthems be to Thee address,
 God in Man made manifest.

3 Manifest in making whole
Palsied limbs and fainting soul;
 Manifest in valiant fight,
 Quelling all the devil's might;
 Manifest in gracious will,
 Ever bringing good from ill;
Anthems be to Thee address,
 God in Man made manifest.

5 Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
 Mirrored in thy holy word;
 May we imitate thee now,
And be pure, as pure art thou;
 That we like to thee may be
 At thy great Epiphany,
And may praise thee, ever blest,
 God in Man made manifest.

The Preparation of the Altar

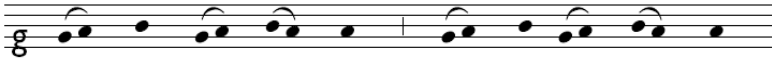
Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:
through your goodness we have this bread to offer you,
which earth has given and human hands have made.
It will become for us the bread of life

All: Blessed be God forever.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation:
through your goodness we have this wine to offer you,
fruit of the vine and work of human hands.
It will become for us the cup of salvation.

All: Blessed be God forever.

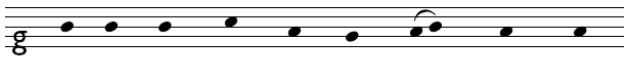
The Eucharistic Prayer



The Lord be with you **R.** and al-so with you.



Lift up your hearts. **R.** **We lift them to the Lord.**



Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



R. It is right to give thanks and praise.

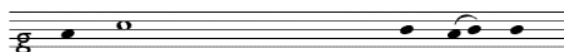
All honour and praise be yours always and everywhere,
 mighty creator, ever-living God,
 through Jesus Christ your only Son our Lord:
 for at this time we celebrate your glory
 made present in our midst.
 In the coming of the magi
 the King of all the world was revealed to the nations.
 In the waters of baptism
 Jesus was revealed as the Christ,
 the Saviour sent to redeem us.
 In the water made wine
 the new creation was revealed at the wedding feast.
 Poverty was turned to riches, sorrow into joy.
 Therefore with all the angels of heaven
 we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name
 and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

Sanctus

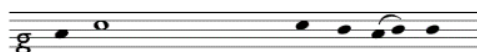
Ho - ly, Ho - ly, Ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might, Heav'n and Earth_ are
 full of your glo-ry, Ho - san - na in the high - est! Blessed is he who comes in the
 name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the High - est! CW

Please be seated, or kneel if you prefer

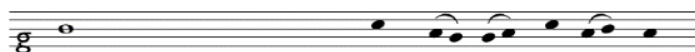
Send the Holy Spirit on your people
 and gather into one in your kingdom
 all who share this one bread and one cup,
 so that we, in the company of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
 St Michael and all the angels and saints,
 may praise and glorify you for ever,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord;



by whom, and with whom, and in whom,



in the unity of the Ho-ly Spi-rit,



all honour and glory be yours, al-migh-ty Fa-ther,



for ev-er and ev-er. **A - men.**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us so we pray:



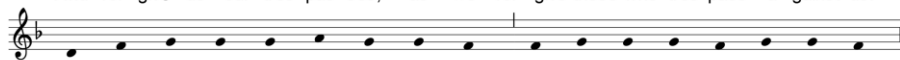
Our Fa-ther who art in hea-ven, hal-lowed be thy name; thy king-dom come,



thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our dai-ly bread.



And for-give us our tres-pas-ses, as we for-give those who tres-pass a-gainst us.



And lead us not in-to temp-ta-tion; but de-li-ver us from e-vil.



For thine is the king-dom, the power and the glo-ry, for e-ver and e-ver. **A - men...**

The Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ

**All: Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

Agnus Dei

Choir: Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world, have mer - cy on us.

All: Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world, have mer - cy on us

All: Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the world, Grant us peace. CW

Invitation to Communion

Jesus is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world.

Blessed are those who are called to his supper

**All: Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

The Communion

*Communicant members of all Christian Churches
are warmly welcome to receive Holy Communion.
Any member of the congregation may receive a blessing.
Those wishing to receive a blessing should please bring
this order of service with them.*

The Communion Hymns (NEH 295)

Please remain seated

Let all mortal flesh keep silence
And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly-minded,
For with blessing in his hand
Christ our God to earth descendeth,
Our full homage to demand.

2 King of kings, yet born of Mary,
As of old on earth he stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture,
In the body and the blood:
He will give to all the faithful
His own self for heavenly food.

3 Rank on rank the host of heaven
Spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the Light of light descendeth
From the realms of endless day,
That the powers of hell may vanish
As the darkness clears away.

4 At his feet the six-winged seraph;
Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the Presence,
As with ceaseless voice they cry,
Alleluya, Alleluya,
Alleluya, Lord most high!

(NEH 44)

Faithful vigil ended,
Watching, waiting cease;
Master, grant your servant
His discharge in peace.

2 All the Spirit promised,
All the Father willed;
Now these eyes behold it
Perfectly fulfilled.

3 This thy great deliverance
Sets thy people free;
Christ their light, uplifted
All the nations see.

4 Christ, thy people's glory!
Watching, doubting cease:
Grant to us your servants
Our discharge in peace.

The 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.

All: Amen.

**All: Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your son Jesus Christ,
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.**

Notices

The Blessing

Please stand

The Lord be with you

All: And also with you.

The peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All: Amen.

The Recessional Hymn (NEH 368)

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty,
Hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more.

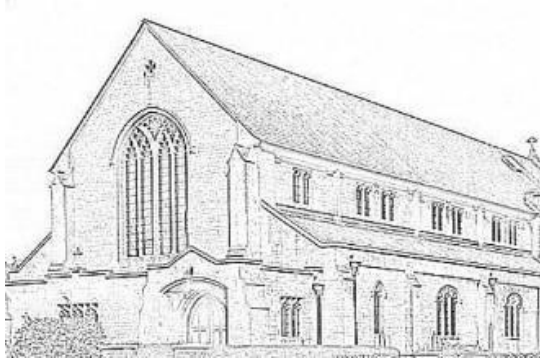
2 Open now the crystal fountain
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through:
Strong Deliverer,
Be thou still my strength and shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's Destruction
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.

The Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.



Services and events this week

- **Morning Prayer - Monday to Friday 10:00am on Zoom only**
- *There will be no weekday Masses this week*
- **Wednesday 15th January
1:00pm Community Banquet in Hartley Hall**
- **Sunday 19th January – second Sunday after Epiphany
10:30am Parish Mass in the church**
*Lay Minister Colin Izzard will preside, with the Eucharist in one kind from the reserved sacrament.
This service will not be streamed on Zoom.*
**6:00pm Churches Together United Service
at St Paul's church, the Ridgeway NW7 1QU**



Community Banquet

Please join us for some home cooked food, hot drinks and fellowship. All are welcome and if you can please bring a dish to share (ingredients must be labelled)

This community banquet is brought to you by the
NW7Hub & St Michael & All Angels, Mill Hill

Next banquet
Wednesday
15th January
2025

Future Banquets

12.02.25

19.03.25

16.04.25

14.05.25

18.06.25

16.07.25

Spaces are limited so please
RSVP by Tuesday at
manisha@nw7hub.org.uk



SAFE.

What does it mean to feel, and be, safe?

It's holding the hand of someone you love.

Or a parent's magic kiss on a grazed knee.

It's a baby sound asleep in a loving embrace. That's safe.

It's when you're wrapped up warm and tight, indoors on a dark and cold night, somewhere you know, somewhere that's comfortable, where you can just 'be'. That's safe.

It's knowing you're not on your own because there's someone there at the end of the phone, to call or to text when you're feeling alone. That someone you can always rely on, that shoulder to cry on when things get tough. That's safe.

Safe can be the shield, the defence, the fortress, a lighthouse guiding you through the storm, or the harbour offering protection when the seas get rough.

Or safe can be that big red traffic sign that says stop, there's danger ahead.

And isn't that what the church is called to be?

A refuge for the refugee, a sanctuary for the broken.

A space for the hurting to find healing, a place for the last, the least, the lost, those on the margins and those in the centre, a place to find meaning.

For God's eternal banner over me and you is love.

And there is no fear in love, for His perfect love casts out all fear and is safe.

We've not lived up to that expectation, we've fallen short, instead we've prioritised our own reputation, and if that's not cause for lamentation, I don't what is.

I don't mean to be the voice of condemnation; It's just time to prioritise the conversation. Giving space for those who need to, to share, to be believed, be renewed and find restoration.

If those things that were once kept out of sight, and covered up, are brought into the open.
And we make space for the unspeakable things to be spoken.
Their power can be broken.

Because a church that faces its shortcomings, and gives space to listen, reflects something of the kingdom of God.
A church which truly loves is a church striving to be safe.

So, it's time to put safeguarding on the front burner of the church's agenda, to change the culture of yesterday, to pause and remember. Because safe is bold, it's the firm foundation beneath our feet, it means we can stand and take the leap of faith to have those conversations and be a church that's safe.

If you need to talk to someone, please contact the Priest or any member of the Safeguarding Team
(details on the poster **A Safer Church**)

