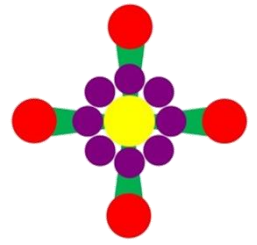


**The Benefice of  
Harden, Wilsden, Cullingworth, Denholme  
Sunday 22 June 2025  
First Sunday After Trinity**



**Today's Liturgy was prepared by Liz**

**Call to worship**

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.  
Let us recognise his presence with us.

*Silence is kept.*

As God's people we have gathered:  
**Let us worship him together.**

Faithful One, whose word is life:  
come with saving power  
to free our praise,  
inspire our prayer  
and shape our lives  
for the kingdom of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Confession**

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden,  
to ask for his forgiveness and peace.

*Silence for reflection*

**God of mercy,  
We acknowledge that we are all sinners.  
We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done,  
and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.**

**For the sake of Jesus who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past,  
and help us to live each day  
in the light of Christ our Lord,  
Amen.**

May God who loved the world so much  
That he sent his Son to be our Saviour  
Forgive us our sins  
And make us holy to serve him in the world,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised,  
**there is no end to his greatness.**  
One generation shall praise your works to another  
**and shall declare your power.**  
All your works praise you, Lord,  
**and your faithful servants bless you.**  
They make known the glory of your kingdom  
**and speak of your power.**  
My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord:  
**let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.**

**Collect**

O God,  
the strength of all those who put their trust in you,  
mercifully accept our prayers  
and, because through the weakness of our mortal nature  
we can do no good thing without you,  
grant us the help of your grace,  
that in the keeping of your commandments  
we may please you both in will and deed;  
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: Galatians 3:23-end**

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

**Thanks be to God for the gift of His word**

**Second reading: Luke 8: 26-39**

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me' — for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Legion'; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed

by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

## **Thanks be to God for the gift of His Holy Word**

### **Reflection with Astrid**

In my New English Bible it is headed 'Jesus cures a madman', but I am sure I am not the only one who thinks of it as 'the one about the pigs rushing over the cliff'.

Here is a story full of disturbing elements – a man suffering dreadfully from a graphically described mental condition, brutal treatment by his neighbours, whether for his or their own safety, the fate of all those pigs, the likely bad outcome for the men charged with looking after them. Even when we get to what should be the happy ending, we find the whole population so fearful they just want the healer to go away.

It is an incident recorded in very similar words in three of the Gospels. Now what can it be saying to us? There is an old French saying: 'Autre temps, autre mœurs' – generally interpreted as 'other times, other customs' or as the writer L P Hartley put it, 'The past is a foreign country. They do things differently there.'

Of course the words and actions of Jesus are for all people and all ages, but his life on Earth took place over a short and very real period of time and in a real place, and those who saw and heard him were real people of that particular time and culture. The witnesses to this healing heard Jesus use words they understood; they saw a naked man, disturbed and probably dangerous; they saw a breed of animals which they would have no dealings with, fall over a cliff; they saw foreigners they had nothing to do with run away in fear; they saw a man clothed and sitting peacefully and heard their leader's instruction to him.

Perhaps if something like this happened today, we would report what we saw with different words and different explanations, although I am not sure we have

moved on as far as we like to think in our response to deeply disturbed people whose behaviour we don't understand, concern for frightened foreigners, or our attitude to animals. But whatever words those first witnesses used and passed on to the Gospel writers, the messages are clear.

First and foremost, it is yet another demonstration of the ultimate power of Jesus, Son of God, over the forces of evil in whatever form they take. Secondly, this loving and merciful act took place in a foreign country on the eastern side of the lake and for the healing of a man of that country. This is just one of the events in the Gospels making it clear that the Good News knows no national or racial boundaries. This is reinforced when the healed man is told to, "Go back home and tell *them* everything that God has done for you."

In today's world with its constant news of disasters, crime, wars and inhumanity, let us find comfort and strength in the assurance of victory of the power of God over evil, whatever its origin, and let us not forget the instruction to go and tell, no matter how inadequate a messenger we may feel.

### Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and 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**

## Prayers of Intercession with Helen Ludkin

God of comfort, in the week that we remember the Indian plane crash, the protests in Los Angeles and the troubles in Israel and Iran (among other places), we pray for all those who have been affected and all those who have worked to rescue and care for them. We pray for your guidance through our world leaders at the G7 Summit.

God of comfort:  
**hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, thank you for the sunshine this week. Thank you for the joy sunny days bring to lots of people. But as the sun shines and we enjoy the heat we are reminded of the many places in the world struggling to cope with the impact of climate change and rising temperatures. May those with power and influence listen seriously to our concerns and act swiftly.

God of compassion:  
**hear our prayer.**

God of justice, as we remember people who deliver aid to troubled countries, we consider places like Sudan, and pray for a spirit of justice; that everyone in need is seen and attended to. Even in our own country, we are aware that reliance on foodbanks is growing even as donations are reducing due to the complexities of the cost-of-living crisis faced by so many.

Thank you for the work churches across our land are doing to relieve hunger. Help us, as your people, to be just mediators for those at the margins of our society.

God of justice:  
**hear our prayer.**

God of wholeness, with mental health issues on the rise, we pray for those suffering. We think of people we know personally who are struggling with their mental health, and we pray for healing and wholeness. For swift, appropriate interventions, and for the professionals working with people with mental illness.

God of wholeness:  
**hear our prayer.**

God of transformation, thank you for the promise that those who have been baptized into Christ, have been clothed with him and that previous divisions of gender or racial lines no longer exist, that we all are one in Jesus.  
Help us to be open, show your love, comfort, compassion and justice, in order to help others to find that wholeness in you.

God of transformation:  
**hear our prayer.**

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**

Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.  
The peace of the Lord be always with us all.

## Closing prayer and Blessing

Almighty God,  
We thank you for the gift of your holy word.  
May it be a lantern to our feet,  
a light to our paths,  
and a strength to our lives.  
Take us and use us  
to love and to serve  
in the power of the Holy Spirit  
and in the name of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.  
May God keep you in all your days.  
May Christ shield you in all your ways.  
May the Spirit bring you healing and peace.  
May God the Holy Trinity drive all darkness from you  
and pour upon you blessing and light.

## Sending Out

**We go into the world  
to walk in God's light,  
to rejoice in God's love  
and to reflect God's glory.**

### **United Benefice Service: 29 June 10.30am**

Sunday 29 June will be the fifth Sunday of June. On that Sunday we will have just one service in the Benefice. This will be 10.30am at Denholme Shared Church. The theme of the service will be Eco Church and we will hear how we in our churches we can care for the environment. We will also be saying goodbye to Richard at this service. It is a Churches Together event!

The Service will be followed by refreshments.

If you are able, please bring buffet food to share (not sandwiches or quiches)