

Bolingbroke Deanery Team Parishes

Faithful, Confident, Joyful

10th January 2021

The Baptism of Christ

First Sunday after Epiphany

(Gold/White)



Introduction to the Epiphany Season

In the Western churches, the Epiphany ('manifestation') became an occasion to celebrate one element in the story of Christ's birth, the visit of the far-travelled magi, understood as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Matthew's account speaks simply of 'wise men from the east'; later tradition fixed their number at three, made them kings and recalled their resonant names – Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. In this perspective, Epiphanytide is an apt season to pray for the worldwide mission of the Church. The feast of the Conversion of St Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, appropriately falls in the Epiphany season, as does the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. In the Eastern churches, the Epiphany is, rather, the celebration of Christ's baptism at the hands of John, when the heavens were opened and a voice from heaven declared Jesus to be God's beloved Son. The miracle of Cana in Galilee, where Jesus 'first manifested his glory', follows immediately:

Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;
and at Cana wedding-guest
in thy Godhead manifest. (*Christopher Wordsworth*)

The arrangement of the Sundays of Epiphany in the Revised Common Lectionary deliberately draws out these aspects.

The season of joyful celebration that begins at Christmas now continues through the successive Sundays of Epiphany, and the festal cycle ends only with the Feast of the Presentation (Candlemas). The child who has been manifested to the magi at his birth is now recognized by Simeon and Anna, when he comes to be presented in the Temple according to the Law of Israel. He is both 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' and 'the glory of God's people Israel'. But the redemption he will bring must be won through suffering; the Incarnation is directed to the Passion; and Simeon's final words move our attention away from the celebration of Christmas and towards the mysteries of Easter.

Baptism of Christ - Epiphany I

9.00am ☐ Plough Sunday

Discover the celebration of Plough Sunday in this online service.

Led by Rev Lindsay Yates, the service comes from Octagon Parish and features a sermon from Rev Will Adam.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

10.00am **Prayer in our own homes** See below

Church of England updated

The Government has announced a formal tiering review, whereby more areas have been elevated to tiers 4 and 3. The guidance for places of worship within tiers has not changed at this time, and public worship may continue in all tiers, in line with the Government guidance and the advice below.

We are also conscious of those who will not wish to attend a church building in light of increased numbers of cases, as well as churches who for different reasons cannot currently safely accommodate public worship.

Many churches continue to offer local streamed worship, together with national online weekly worship and daily audio prayer services via the Time to Pray app and podcast, and the Daily Hope telephone line for any who are unable to access the internet.

See church online for more details.

Whilst Government guidance permits certain activities to take place in church buildings, it is still vital that the necessary hygiene and social distancing precautions are kept in place.

Under latest Lockdown

Public worship in church, churchyard or other premises where church services are routinely held Permitted as 'communal worship' provided that any person attending is: alone or is part of a group all from the same household or from two linked households and **must not join any other group or mingle with any person from another group.**

A statutory risk assessment must be carried out and all reasonable measures taken to limit risk of transmission of coronavirus

Travel to church Permitted. But people are advised to avoid travelling outside of their village, town or the part of a city where they live.

First Sunday after Epiphany

Services in the Spilsby Cluster

9.30am Spilsby Eucharist (PC)

Services in the Marden Hill Cluster

9.30am East Keal Holy Communion (+DR)

11.15am Hagworthingham Holy Communion (PC)

3.00pm East Kirkby Service of the Word (FJ)

3.00pm Old Bolingbroke Holy Communion (PC)

Services in the Stickney Cluster

11.15am Stickford Morning Worship (FJ)

Services in the Partney Cluster

9.30am Candlesby Holy Communion (TMcL)

Services in the South Ormsby Cluster

9.30am Tetford Morning Prayer (PMcL)

Bolingbroke Churches on line:

We will continue to publish a short video on YouTube and link it to our website.

Our Web Site <http://lincoln.ourchurchweb.org.uk/spilsby/index.php>

Bolingbroke Team Churches

Monday Mary Slessor

10.00am A/C Gordon Brocklebank's Funeral

2.00pm Churches Together via Zoom

7.00pm East Keal PCC via Zoom

Tuesday Aelred of Hexham, Benedict Biscop

7.00pm Lincoln Archidiaconal Mission & Pastoral Committee

Wednesday Hilary of Poitiers, Kentigern, George Fox

10.30am Spilsby Eucharist

2.00pm Hundleby Bill Wright's Funeral

3.30pm Team Meeting

7.00pm To Love and Serve the Lord via Zoom:-

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86960407171?pwd=eTd5OE9jcVB0QIRJMVlhNngwOFJ5QT09>

All welcome – Please join in to develop this Course in order to grow our faith. Please contact Fr Peter for more information 01790 752526 or just join in on the night.

Thursday

Friday

2.00pm A/C Margaret White's Funeral

Saturday

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Services in the Spilsby Cluster

9.30am Spilsby Eucharist (PC)

3.00pm Firsby Evening Prayer (PC)

Services in the Marden Hill Cluster

9.30am East Keal Holy Communion (+DR)

Services in the Stickney Cluster

11.15am Stickney Morning Worship (FJ)

Services in the Partney Cluster

9.30am Aswardby Morning Prayer (PMcL)

11.15am Partney Family Service (TMcL)

Services in the South Ormsby Cluster

9.30am Tetford Holy Communion (TMcL)

Private Prayer in the Following Churches:

St James Spilsby	Daily	08.00 to 14.00
St Helen East Keal	Sun to Wednesday	10.00 to 15.00
St Nicholas Partney	Thursdays	11.30 to 12.30
St Mary Tetford	Thursdays	14.00 to 15.00
St Luke Stickney	Thursday	10.00 to 11.00
St Helen Stickford	Thursdays	10.00 to 11.30
St Mary Hundleby	Daily	10.00 to 14.00

Daily 8am Morning Prayer & at Noon

God of love, turn our hearts to Your ways and give us peace. Amen

The sick at home or in hospital,

Leo Seebacher-Hobson, Nigel Worth, Kathleen, Molly, Veronica, Dorothy, Maggie J. Betty Brawn, Tristan, Michael P, Joan T. Mark, Jossie Lee, June, Hilary, Michael, Harriet, Rose L., Abby, Sheila Janes, Fleur, Mary, Jeff Mason, Rosie, Bob, (Baby) Chloe Lear, Lawrence, , Ann Howman, John and Audrey Prince, Sylvia Bonsey, Anthea B, Jo & John, Rick Watson.

The Departed: Gill Maxim, Keith Hinds, Alana Poulton, John Tasker, Bill Birrell, Betty Edwards, Charles Wright, Gordon Brocklebank, Michael Hall, Barbara Warner, Pat Clarke, Margaret White (Spilsby), Barbara Hicks, Rita Lenton, Dorothy Harrison, Betty Strong, Geoff Ness, Michael Johnson, 'Tony' Wilkinson.

Anniversary:

Nancy Sorfleet, Peter Blanchard, John Burman, Doris Cash, Gordon Churchward, Louie Barker, Stella Godsmark, Wendy Cobb, Dora Boyle, Elsie Maddison, Betty Griffin, Tyler Boucher, Stephen Adkins(p), Robert Nixon, Wilfred Parsons, Kneale Whitton, Audrey Dunnicliffe-Smith, Harold Penson, David Churchyard, David Lambert, Ken O’Riordan(p), Alma Leverton, Brian Walker, Kay Wooley, Nelson Mandela, John Dorie, Jo Woodgate, Joyce White, Baby Baxter, Barbara Clarke, Mary Hampson, Norah Walls, Maurice Nicoll, Ben Ely, Winifred Ashley, Doris Collingwood Lillian Hunter, William Dracas, John Turner, Roy Dobbs, Dr A., Debbra Martin, Christina Litster, Joan Brough, Phylida Upex, Frederick Marshall, Carol Panrucker, Florence Green, Ivor Bogg, Tim Sumner-Wilson, Roy Cornall, Vera Lawrence, John Spalding, Jean Scott, Doreen Legsda, Peter Weston, Patricia Hales, Hazel Futter, Alan Toplis. Charles Leighton, Sarah Smith, David Sawyer, Ada Ashton, Helen Kinnon, Mick Clark, Derek Tayles, Des Woodford, George Atley, Noel White, Simon Barrett, Pam Hine, Fran Ness, Matt Soloman, Olive Needham, Mariann Raschcavitz.

Sunday 10 th	<p>Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’ <i>(Mark 1:10 – 11)</i></p> <p><i>The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia</i></p>
Monday 11 th	<p>The Suffragan Bishop of Grantham, The Rt Revd Dr Nicholas Chamberlain</p> <p><i>The Diocese of Afikpo – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Enugu Province)</i></p>
Tuesday 12 th	<p>Hon Assistant Bishop @ Lincoln (Diocese), The Rt Revd Dr Nigel Peyton</p> <p>Search & Nominations Committee Lincoln AMPC</p> <p><i>The Diocese of North Africa – The Episcopal / Anglican Province of Alexandria</i></p>

Wednesday 13 th	The Right Revd the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, The Rt Revd Christopher Lawson Bishop's Staff <i>The Diocese of the Horn of Africa – The Episcopal / Anglican Province of Alexandria</i>
Thursday 14 th	The Bishop's Chaplain, The Revd Jayson Rhodes <i>The Diocese of Agra – The (united) Church of North India</i>
Friday 15 th	The Bishop's Office: Diary & Correspondence Secretary – Georgie Hewitt <i>The Diocese of Aguata – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Niger Province)</i>
Saturday 16 th	The Bishop's Office: Administration Secretary – Hayley Coddington <i>The Diocese of Ahoada – The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (Niger Delta Province)</i>
Sunday 17 th	'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' (<i>John 1: 45</i>) <i>The Anglican Church of Australia</i>

Bolingbroke Team Ministry The Baptism of Christ



This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
We are the family of God and are called by God's name.
We are heirs of Christ's kingdom and born of the Spirit.
Let us, therefore, come together in thanksgiving. Amen.

Hymn

Praise the Lord! ye heavens adore him;
Praise him angels, in the height;
Sun and moon, rejoice before him;
Praise him, all ye stars of light.
Praise the Lord! for he has spoken;
Worlds his mighty voice obeyed;
Laws which never shall be broken
For their guidance he has made.

Praise the Lord! for he is glorious;
Never shall his promise fail;
God has made his saints victorious;
Sin and death shall not prevail.
Praise the God of our salvation!
Hosts on high his power proclaim;
Heaven, and earth, and all creation,
Laud and magnify his name.

Worship, honour, glory, blessing,
Lord, we offer unto thee;
Young and old, thy praise expressing,
In glad homage bend the knee.
All the saints in heaven adore thee,
We would bow before thy throne;
As thine angels serve before thee,
So on earth thy will be done.

Prayers of Penitence:

Lord, when you came into the world, things changed. When we came into a relationship with you, things changed. Life became filled with a new sense of purpose and peace. But, Lord, sometimes we let you down by doing wrong things or failing to do right things.
We are sorry, Lord.

Sometimes, Lord, through pride, stubbornness or fear we build barriers and keep others at arm's length – even you, Lord.
We are sorry, Lord.

At times we give in to our weaknesses and temptations, failing to draw on your strength. At times we are troubled by difficult situations and find it hard to trust you.
We are sorry, Lord.

Help us to turn such things around and turn to you. Help us to learn from the past and, drawing on your strength and peace, make a better future.
Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

O God, when Jesus was baptized, you spoke of your love for him. You showed your love for us through Jesus' death and resurrection. By the power of the cross, the darkness of our wrongdoing is banished by the light of your loving forgiveness. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Reading: Genesis 1: 1-5

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 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. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

Hymn

Name of all majesty, fathomless mystery,
King of the ages by angels adored;
power and authority, splendour and dignity,
bow to his mastery, Jesus is Lord!

Child of our destiny, God from eternity,
love of the Father on sinners outpoured;
see now what God has done sending his only Son,
Christ the beloved One, Jesus is Lord!

Saviour of Calvary, costliest victory,
darkness defeated and Eden restored;
born as a man to die, nailed to a cross on high,
cold in the grave to lie, Jesus is Lord!

Source of all sovereignty, light, immortality,
life everlasting and heaven assured;
so with the ransomed, we praise him eternally,
Christ in his majesty, Jesus is Lord!

Reading: Mark 1: 4-11

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

Homily from the Diocesan Website

In this season of Epiphany, our lectionary takes us to a number of epiphanies ('Epiphany' means 'revelation' the making known of things as yet unknown). They are 'light bulb' moments.

Last week we heard from Matthew of the revelation of Jesus as the Christ-child, the Messiah, to wise men who travelled from the east. This week we are taken to another revelation - this time when the adult Jesus is revealed as God's Son. A man from Nazareth unceremoniously walks among those from Jerusalem and the Judean countryside – he is an outsider – and is baptised by John. It is dealt with in very few words, characteristic of Mark, but it is a moment of huge significance for Jesus and for humanity.

This marks a BEGINNING. It is no coincidence that our Old Testament reading today is from the book of Genesis. Listen to what Genesis says and how Mark describes Jesus' baptism:

- In the beginning a wind (or breath, or spirit) of God swept over the face of the waters;
- At Jesus' baptism the spirit (or breath, or wind) of God descended on Jesus as he comes up out of the water
- In the beginning God said: 'Let there be light'
- At Jesus' baptism God said: 'You are my Son, the Beloved'
- In the beginning 'God saw that the light was good'
- At Jesus baptism God was 'well pleased'

We are given two great gifts from God – creation and Jesus. And, just like we heard in John 1 at Christmas, the two are inextricably linked ('the Word was with God and the Word was God... Through him all things were made'). What better to think about as we begin a New Year than these two momentous beginnings?

Jesus did not need to be baptised – but we needed Him to be baptised – for it is the means by which He identifies with us, and when we come to the waters of baptism we claim our identity in Jesus as daughters and sons of God. Everyone who comes to baptism makes a new beginning. As St Paul puts we have our own new beginning – “if anyone is in Christ the new creation has come: The old has gone the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17) The Greek here simply has “if anyone is in Christ – new beginning.” For Jesus baptism was a beginning too – the beginning of an earthly ministry in which He identifies with creation and with humanity.

Wonderfully too, this passage says much about the IDENTITY of Christ. It is an affirmation of His identity as the Son of God. It is an affirmation of His calling. Even Jesus needs that. It is true isn't it, that when we find ourselves in tough places and circumstances in life, knowing 'who we are' gives us the strength to continue and push through? Affirmed as the Son of God, hearing the voice of His Father pronounce Him as the beloved is the strength that enabled Him to push on and face the constant challenge, to confront the powerful and to see His mission through to the end.

Finally, those beautiful words spoken over Him by His Father: 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased. Jesus was bound to His Father in a relationship of LOVE that was both binding and freeing. He held

onto that that love through the deepest of despair, it is that love with which God pronounces us as 'Beloved'.

There is nothing greater than to know the love of God that binds you to Him yet frees you to be the you He called you to be; to know a love that is unconditional, immeasurable. There is nothing greater than to know the love of God that does not need you to achieve something to gain love, but actually just wants to offer it to you. There is nothing greater than the love of God that says this is not about what you might deserve, but it is about what I am offering. There is nothing greater than the love of God that can put right the wrongs of the past, that offers grace and forgiveness. There is nothing greater than the love of God that says to us that you don't have to try harder and harder to love me – just be still and receive.

What a start this was for Jesus – the heavens open, the Spirit descends, and the voice of God affirms God's presence in all His fullness, bringing words of love and affirmation, confirming Jesus' identity as Son of God and beginning the adventure that will cause many to ask: Who is this Jesus? Was that question part of your own new beginning?

Questions for Reflection

1. Have you ever had a moment or moments when you have experienced God's presence in a way that has surprised you, or overwhelmed you? If so, try to put it into words.
2. 'Who is this Jesus?' for you?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Affirmation of Faith

I believe in God who speaks through the prophets and lifts our gaze up to high and beautiful paths and peaks.

I believe in Christ Jesus, free of corruption yet willingly numbered among the sinners, baptised in the waters of the Jordan.

I believe in the Spirit who rested on Jesus like a dove, and who inspired him with such love as the world has not seen before or since.

I believe that those who are baptised into Christ shall share his Spirit, his mission and his ultimate victory over sin and death.

I believe that there is no human ability that cannot be enlarged, and no weakness that cannot be used by Christ to the praise of God.

I believe that this believing is a gift from God, not to be used for self-gratification but for the building up of the church and for humble service to the world

I believe in myself as a baptised child of God, the recipient of a healing grace which precedes and supersedes all my efforts to be true. With the help of God, I will attempt to live my belief all the days of my life, and by his grace, dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen!

Hymn

O love, how deep, how broad, how high,
It fills the heart with ecstasy,
That God, the Son of God, should take
Our mortal form for mortals' sake!

He sent no angel to our race
Of higher or of lower place,
But wore the robe of human frame
Himself, and to this lost world came.

For us baptized, for us he bore
His holy fast and hungered sore,
For us temptation sharp he knew;
For us the tempter overthrew.

For us he prayed; for us he taught;
For us his daily works he wrought;
By words and signs and actions thus
Still seeking not himself, but us.

For us to wicked men betrayed,
Scourged, mocked, in purple robe arrayed,
He bore the shameful cross and death,
For us at length gave up his breath.

For us he rose from death again;
For us he went on high to reign;

For us he sent his Spirit here,
To guide, to strengthen and to cheer.

To whom whose boundless love has won
Salvation for us through his Son,
To God the Father, glory be
Both now and through eternity.

Intercessions

Eternal God, it feels as if the whole world has changed and yet in you there is stability and the opportunity of a new beginning. So, we pray now for those whose lives are in turmoil, those whose lives have been turned upside down, those who feel lost.

May they feel supported, find fresh hope:

Lord, use our prayers in Jesus' name to strengthen them.

We pray for those for whom the lockdown has come as a relief, for those who now feel safer, but we pray too for those who now feel desperate, alone and worried about their jobs, their finances, their mental health.

May they feel supported, find fresh hope:

Lord, use our prayers in Jesus' name to strengthen them.

We pray for children and young adults as their schooling is disrupted, we pray for those who enjoy learning from home, but pray too for those who will lose confidence, who miss their friends, who feel vulnerable. We remember their parents and the parents of children with special needs, struggling to cope on their own. We pray for teachers, administrative staff, and all those who feel overwhelmed.

May they feel supported, find fresh hope:

Lord, use our prayers in Jesus' name to strengthen them.

We pray for the people of a divided America at this time of political and racial tension and transition, for outgoing President Donald Trump and President-elect Joe Biden. We pray too for countries around the world struggling with ethnic violence and militancy. We remember the people of West Africa and in particular the people of Niger, villagers who live in fear, those who have been wounded in recent attacks and those who have been bereaved.

May they feel supported, find fresh hope:

Lord, use our prayers in Jesus' name to strengthen them.

We pray for those who have been injured or lost their homes and loved ones in the severe weather, remembering particularly the people of Norway affected by landslides, and those in Australia battered by cyclones. We pray for those who work in the emergency services, those whose work is dangerous and traumatic. We pray for those in refugee camps with little protection from the weather, those who sleep rough, those who can't afford to heat their homes.

May they feel supported, find fresh hope:

Lord, use our prayers in Jesus' name to strengthen them.

We pray for one another, our families, our communities, our church fellowships. May we support those who are unwell or grieving. May we bring fresh hope to those who feel forgotten and are vulnerable, and may we – both practically and prayerfully – share our faith in your Son Jesus in whose name we entrust these prayers to you. Amen.

Collect

Heavenly Father, at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son: May we recognise Him as our Lord and know ourselves to be your beloved children; through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Hymn

Thou, whose almighty word chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight;
hear us, we humbly pray, and, where the Gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray, let there be light!

Thou who didst come to bring on thy redeeming wing
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind, sight to the in-ly blind,
now to all humankind, let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love, life-giving holy Dove,
speed forth thy flight!
Move on the waters' face bearing the gifts of grace,
and, in earth's darkest place, let there be light!

Holy and blessed Three, glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might;
boundless as ocean's tide, rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide, let there be light!

Closing Prayer

Lord, help us to be open to your prompting as we seek to discover what you would have us be and do. Remind us again and again that you have promised to be our guide and companion on our journey. Help us to look forward with renewed commitment, and bless our thinking and speaking and doing. In your name. Amen.

An act of Spiritual Communion

You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place.

You might choose to make your Spiritual Communion at a particular time of day, or after viewing a live streamed service.

Reflect on the day and on your relationships.

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What might I do tomorrow?*

You may wish to say or pray

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Read the following words from Scripture. If you have access to today's readings for Holy Communion, you may wish to read and reflect on them.

Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life.

Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'

John 6.35

Pray for the needs of the world, for your local community, and for those close to you. End with the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father...

Give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with you now.

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester Conclude with the following:

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.

Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

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William Laud

10 January
Archbishop of Canterbury, 1645

Laud was born in Reading in 1573, the son of a tailor, and educated at St John's College, Oxford, becoming a Fellow in 1593. He was ordained in 1601 and in 1611 became president of the College. With powerful patrons in both Church (Bishop Neile of Durham) and State (the Duke of Buckingham), Laud soon rose to prominence. He occupied the following posts – Dean of Gloucester (1616), Bishop of St David's (1621), Bishop of Bath and Wells (1626) and Bishop of London (1628) – before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633.

Perhaps Laud was bound to be involved in conflict since he was an Arminian when the Church of England was overwhelmingly Calvinist in its belief, an advocate of greater sacramentalism in an age of preaching and a believer in the 'beauty of holiness' when plainness and simplicity in worship were the norm. Laud's belief that 'ceremonies are the hedge that fence the substance of religion from all the indignities which profaneness and sacrilege too commonly put upon it' did not seem so innocent to militant Puritanism. And when Laud encouraged the use of candles, frontals and copes, insisted on the use of surplices and holy tables set altar-wise against the east wall of the church, and then used the full force of the law against any opposition, he put himself in the firing line.

Always a controversial figure, historians disagree on whether Laud or the Puritans were responsible for the religious (and later, civil) strife that engulfed

England. And there is a real question as to how much Laud acted on his own initiative in his religious policy or how much he was simply implementing Charles I's wishes.

It was the destabilizing of Scotland after Laud's attempt to introduce an Anglican liturgy there in 1637 that led to revolt and war. Though impeachment for treason failed, Laud was condemned to death by a Parliamentary Act of Attainder and executed in 1645. He prayed on the scaffold:

Lord I am coming as fast as I can, I know I must pass through the shadow of death, before I can come to see thee . . . Lord receive my soul and have mercy upon me, and bless this kingdom with peace and plenty, and with brotherly love and charity, that here may not be this effusion of Christian blood amongst them, for Jesus Christ his sake, if it be thy will.

Mary Slessor

11 January

Missionary in West Africa, 1915

Born to a poor family in Aberdeen in 1848, Mary Slessor came to faith as a teenager and engaged in outreach work amongst the deprived youth of Dundee. But she was already developing an interest in overseas mission work, still an unusual thing for a single woman in the mid nineteenth century. Like David Livingstone before her, Mary was born a Scots Presbyterian and spent her early life from the age of eleven working in the mills (in her case the linen mills of Dundee) for twelve hours a day, six days a week while at the same time studying in order to equip herself for mission work.

In 1876 she joined the Scots United Presbyterian mission, which had been founded by Hope Waddell at Calabar on the Niger Delta in West Africa. Able and independent, Mary became fluent in the local languages and showed both a humility and an understanding of Africans unusual in European missionaries of that generation. Instead of living in a European mission compound at a safe distance from the 'natives', Mary lived with her people. She gathered around her a household of outcast women and she adopted unwanted children, especially twins, who would otherwise be put to death according to the local superstitious practice. She also opposed other local practices, such as trial by ordeal, witchcraft and human sacrifice, eventually being successful in abolishing them altogether.

Unlike most missionaries of the nineteenth-century classical missionary societies, Mary adapted thoroughly to the culture of the people with whom she worked, eventually settling first with the Okoyong and later the Ibo people, in both cases doing much to assist their development. She encouraged the

indigenous peoples with whom she worked to engage in trade, as much for its civilizing effects as for the financial benefits.

Mary earned the respect of both local leaders and the British colonial administration. She was often called upon to arbitrate in tribal disputes and in 1892 she was appointed as the British vice-consul – an unusual role for a missionary and a unique one for a woman. She was known as 'Ma Slessor' to her people, and became famous as 'the white queen of Calabar' to the British public, who read glamourized accounts of her exploits in books and magazines. Mary remained in Africa to the end of her life and died at Itu in 1915.

Aelred of Hexham

12 January

Abbot of Rievaulx, 1167

Aelred was born at Hexham in Northumberland in 1109 the son and grandson of married priests (at a time when clerical celibacy was not universally practised in the Catholic Church). At an early age he was sent to the Scottish court for an education that would ensure his future as a noble and courtier. Here he acted as a page to the young Prince Henry. King David of Scotland saw Aelred's potential, promoted him in the royal household and, it is speculated, may already have had the intention of making him a bishop.

But at the age of 24 Aelred turned his back on the opportunities that awaited him at court and entered the religious life in the newly-founded Cistercian abbey at Rievaulx in Yorkshire. Soon he was appointed master of novices, and gained a reputation for the quality of the pastoral care he exercised to those under his charge. In 1143, when a new Cistercian abbey was founded at Revesby in Lincolnshire, Aelred was sent from Rievaulx to be the first abbot.

He did not remain at Revesby for long, however, for in 1146 the Abbot of Rievaulx died and Aelred was elected abbot. He now found himself not just the superior of a community of 300 monks, but the head of the Cistercian order in England. His new responsibilities saw him travelling widely both in England and Scotland and also on the Continent – an ordeal for him as he suffered from a painful kidney complaint. But his influence was considerable and he is said to have been instrumental in persuading Henry II to attend a meeting with the Pope and King Louis VII of France in 1162. The following year he was present at Westminster Abbey, when Edward the Confessor's bones were re-interred there, and was inspired to write a biography of Edward.

Aelred's writings reveal a person of love and humanity who deeply valued, and encouraged among his monks, the cultivation of friendship, both with one another and with God. His two best-known works were *On Spiritual*

Friendship and the Mirror of Charity. His writings and sermons (he left a considerable collection) indicated a love of Christ as Saviour and friend that was clearly the foundation of his faith and life. Aelred's writings constantly appealed to Scripture as his source of authority. His remarkable writings earned for him the epithet of 'the English St Bernard'.

Benedict Biscop

12 January

Abbot of Wearmouth, Scholar, 689

Benedict Biscop was a Northumbrian nobleman in King Oswy's court, who grew up under the influence of the Irish mission. At the age of 25, rather than accepting a land-grant from the king, he renounced his position in society, and began a life of travelling and pilgrimage.

Benedict visited Rome six times and stayed in 17 European monasteries, gleaning from them whatever he could about the monastic life. He finally returned to Northumbria where he founded the monasteries at Monkwearmouth (674) and Jarrow (682). The community at Monkwearmouth became very large (over 600) and very rich. Endowments were received from King Egfrith of East Anglia amongst others. Benedict imported masons and glaziers from Gaul, and on two further visits to Rome acquired books and pictures, building up the library at both his monastic communities. There was a great 'continental' flavour to the life of these communities. Benedict became totally loyal to the Roman Church, despite his upbringing in the Celtic tradition. He smoothed the transition from Celtic to Roman forms of worship and practice and, for example, he is recorded as having introduced a teacher of Roman chant. One of his students, Bede (see 25 May), was to become the foremost historian in the Saxon Church, and his learning shows the fruits of the library that Benedict established.

Benedict is one of the architects of the Romanization of the Church in Britain, accompanying Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (see 19 September) to Britain from Rome, and acting as abbot of his monastic community at Canterbury for a short time.

On his deathbed, Benedict reminded his monks of his 'rule of life'. These guidelines and principles by which he had lived his life were based upon the sixth-century Rule of St Benedict. He also stressed the requirement for his monks to select a new abbot on the basis of holiness of life rather than social class.

He made no secret of his zeal for religion, and showed what ecclesiastical or monastic instructions he had received at Rome and elsewhere. He displayed

the holy volumes and relics of Christ's blessed Apostles and martyrs, which he had brought, and found such favour in the eyes of the king, that he forthwith gave him seventy hides of land out of his own estates, and ordered a monastery to be built thereon for the first pastor of his Church.

Bede: The Lives of the Holy Abbots

Hilary

13 January

Bishop of Poitiers, Teacher of the Faith, 367

Hilary became a Christian only after a prolonged period of study and enquiry. Initially an Orator, born of pagan parents, Hilary became disenchanted with pagan philosophy and started to investigate Christianity. He became a staunch defender of orthodoxy against Arianism, which denied the full divinity of Christ. He was made a bishop in 350.

As a bishop, Hilary was influential and vocal in theological debate, and many in the Western Church considered him to be a mischief maker and one who spread discord. Much of his reputation rests on his activity in councils and debates. On account of his teaching on the divinity of the Son, the Emperor Constantinus, an Arian sympathizer, had him excommunicated in 353. He was exiled to Phrygia in Asia Minor, albeit with freedom of travel. This resulted in him having the opportunity to encounter many Greek Christian theological writings for the first time, especially those of Origen, and this period saw him develop his theological understanding, strengthen his anti-Arian stance, and deepen his spirituality.

Hilary took part in the Council of Seleucia in 359, unsuccessfully campaigning against Arianism. In 360 he returned from exile to Gaul and was welcomed with great rejoicing, although he was not reinstated as bishop. He brought an orthodox theological understanding to the West, and was moderate in both discipline and doctrine, persuading many Western bishops of the validity of Eastern theology. He has been compared to Athanasius in the East, as a defender of faith and a campaigner against Arianism.

Hilary wrote many doctrinal and historical works, and also hymns. He is the first known writer of hymns in the Western Church, which before him sang only songs from a scriptural source. Hilary was impressed by the Eastern use of song as a means of spreading orthodox doctrine, and on his return to the West introduced such hymns to Western Christianity. Unsurprisingly Hilary's hymns develop Trinitarian themes and stress the relation of Christ to the Father. However, some of them are so intricate and precise in their theology that they were said to be difficult to sing!

Oh you happy and glorious ones in the Lord, you who keep your confession of the perfect apostolic faith in your hearts and until now knew nothing of any written creeds! You did not need the letter because you were overflowing with the Spirit. Nor did you desire to use your hands for writing because for your salvation you confessed with your mouths and believed in your hearts.

Hilary, to the Bishops of Gaul, Germany and Britain

Kentigern (Mungo)

13 January

Missionary Bishop in Strathclyde and Cumbria, 603

Kentigern, also known as Mungo, was Bishop of the Strathclyde region of Scotland in the late fifth century. He was born the illegitimate grandson of a Saxon prince from the south of Scotland, and was brought up in a monastic school, close to the Firth of Forth, where he was taught by a Scottish bishop. 'Mungo' is a Celtic nickname, commonly given to those with the name Kentigern and it is said to mean 'darling'. The monastic way which he followed was of the Irish Celtic rather than Roman tradition, and when he was consecrated Bishop of Strathclyde it was by an Irish Celtic bishop, which served to emphasize Kentigern's freedom from Roman influence.

A casualty of the diverse and fragmented political landscape of Britain in the late fifth century, Kentigern spent time away from Scotland, possibly in Wales, where he is credited with the founding of the Church at St Asaph. This period away from Strathclyde has led to some historical confusion, and in the twelfth-century 'lives' that tell his story he is spoken of as being variously a native of Lothian, a Welshman and a Northumbrian.

When he returned to Strathclyde he lived in Dumfries, founded the Church in Glasgow, and re-established the memory of Ninian. Kentigern's legend includes the story of his comforting an unfaithful queen, who had given the king's ring to her lover. The king, on discovering the liaison, had thrown the ring into the sea, and demanded that the queen find it within three days, or face the consequences. As Kentigern comforted the queen, one of his monks caught a salmon, inside which was the ring. The work of Kentigern is acknowledged in the coat of arms of the city of Glasgow, which depicts the ring that was recovered from the salmon. Generally referred to as St Mungo's, the city's cathedral is dedicated to him.

George Fox

13 January

Founder of the Society of Friends (the Quakers), 1691

George Fox was born in 1624 at Fenny Drayton, Leicestershire, the son of a weaver. In 1643, when Fox was 19, he said that he received mystical revelations in which the voice of God told him to be directed by Christ alone. He described these revelations, which he took as a sign that everyone should be guided by their individual 'inner light', as coming to him while he waited in an absolutely calm frame of mind and as being preceded by violent physical agitation. He felt called to give up ties of family and friends and travelled in search of spiritual enlightenment.

In 1646, after many dead ends in his quest, he heard a voice which told him, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, who can speak to thy condition.' In 1647 Fox began to preach openly his 'inner light' doctrine. He objected to political and religious authority, opposed war and slavery, and believed that all human actions should be directed by inner contemplation and a social conscience inspired by God.

On Pendle Hill in Lancashire George Fox experienced a vision of 'a people to be gathered to the Lord'. He made many converts and it was in the north-west that Fox's teachings had the greatest effect. In 1659 he made his home at Swarthmore Hall near Ulverston, owned by an influential supporter, Thomas Fell. When Fell died Fox married his widow, Margaret.

Fox's overt opposition to the established Church (whether Presbyterian or Anglican) resulted in frequent imprisonment – in 1649, 1650, 1653, 1656, 1664–6, 1673–5 – and it was the judge who sentenced him at Derby in 1650 who contemptuously described Fox and his followers as 'quakers' – a name which was to come into widespread use.

In 1666, though weakened by hardship and the effects of imprisonment, Fox began to devote most of his time to the organization of the Quakers as a Church. He was greatly assisted by Margaret Fell, whom he married in 1669, the year of the first great Quaker meeting. He also made missionary journeys to North America, Germany and Holland.

Fox spent his final years founding Quaker schools and communities and lobbying for passage of the Toleration Bill, which granted freedom of worship to all except Roman Catholics and Unitarians, that was finally enacted by Parliament in 1689. The Quakers registered under the Act as the 'Society of Friends'. He died in 1691 and his Journal was published posthumously in 1694.

