

die to ourselves and rise again to new life with Christ and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit. The dove is a symbol of peace, and we are called to be peacebuilders in our community. We are not peacebuilders in our own strength but go forward in the strength that God supplies.

We are a **community** of Baptised people. One of my many heroes is Archbishop Desmond Tutu who has just died. The biography of him describes him as a 'Rabble-Rouser for peace'. He is a person who affirmed the person whilst challenging behaviour in his work in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. I have been fortunate to have heard him speak twice, and he made his hearers laugh and cry. Brought up under the Apartheid system he knew first-hand of how the system degraded human beings. One of my memories is watching on TV how he rescued a young man who was about to be 'necklaced' in Soweto. He stood on the side of justice and reconciliation and even criticised the ANC for corruption and for the way brutal in which they too dealt with their miscreants. He often criticised the church for not engaging enough with Apartheid. We follow in the footsteps of our Lord if we seek to live in a reconciling way as a **Community** of Baptised people, seeking to reassure people of God's love for them and calling out the things that dehumanise

and degrade people. Who do you know who needs that affirmation of God's love today? What behaviours will you challenge?

**Prayers of Intercession:** Come Holy Spirit: **Fill our lives**

For the world for the many places where there is poverty, disease, and hunger.

For the Church. Help us to engage with our local communities, listen to needs and stand alongside the marginalised. Help us to be peacebuilders.

For the sick suffering from Long-covid, for our Health service staff.

For the bereaved.

For ourselves and for our own needs, for courage to challenge injustice.

**Hymn 59 Lord, the light of your love is shining.**

**The Blessing.**

May God the Holy Spirit, who came upon the beloved Son at his baptism in the River Jordan, pour out his gifts on you who have come to the waters of new birth. **Amen.**

**Prepared by Rev'd Clive Fowle**

## **Coventry & Nuneaton Methodist Circuit**

### **Worship for January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022 First Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Call to Worship

North, south, east, west,  
wherever we go, wherever we are,

**the Lord is near**

Night, day, morning, noon,  
whatever the time, whatever the  
season,

**the Lord is near**

Darkness, light, joy, despair,  
Whatever the day, whatever the  
moment,

**the Lord is near**

Near to help, near to care,  
Near to shelter, near to comfort,

**Praise the Lord who is with us.**

**Hymn 227 Brightest and best of  
the sons of the morning.**

## Let us pray.

As each point of the compass is mentioned, turn, and face that direction!

We turn to the north.

In the lands of snow and ice, you are there where polar bears roam and night is long.

**Your love is known, your people gather, your praise is sung.**

We turn to the south.

In the lands of sun and heat, you are there where parrots fly and seas are warm

**Your love is known, your people gather, your praise is sung.**

We turn to the east.

In the lands where the sun rises, you are there at the dawn of each day.

**Your love is known, your people gather, your praise is sung.**

We turn to the west.

In the lands where the sun sets, you are there at the end of each day.

**Your love is known, your people gather, your praise is sung. Amen**

## Prayer of Confession.

Lord in your compassion you promise to be with us always. Forgive us those times when we do not trust you enough to believe that you are near. Forgive us for those times when we have given in to our fears and not had the courage to face them with you. Forgive us our sins, and by your presence with us each day enable us to live as those called into your family. Hear Christ's gracious word. Your sins are forgiven.

**Amen Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**Collect.** Eternal Father, at the Baptism of Jesus you revealed him to be your Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful to their calling as your people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Readings Isaiah 43:1-7

**Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22**

**Hymn 233 When Jesus came to Jordan**

## Reflection

Thinking about the readings today around the theme of the Baptism of Jesus, three words come to mind which are **AFFIRMATION BEGINNING** and **COMMUNITY**. The prophet Isaiah affirms God's love and care for the

returning exiles. God has not abandoned them, and his covenant love is reaffirmed. God values them so much that he calls them by name just as our Lord Jesus calls each of us by name. John the Baptist affirms Jesus as the one who will baptise in the Spirit. A voice from heaven affirms Jesus, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' We probably do not affirm one another enough in the Church. As a mediator in disputes, one of our principles is to 'challenge behaviour and not the person'. For example, in workplace and neighbour disputes the temptation is to label a person 'a bully' which gives the person a negative identity. But in mediation we look at the behaviour of a person which causes a person to be called a 'bully'. It is important in all our relationships that we make this distinction, challenge behaviour whilst affirming the person.

In Isaiah 43:1 the words 'But now' mark the **beginning** of the turning point in Israel's fortunes. The baptism of our Lord marked the **beginning** of his public ministry. Why on earth did Jesus submit to being baptised by John? I think he was identifying with people in their search for God. It was a Baptism of repentance and Jesus is humble enough to go through the waters of baptism. We read that the 'Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove'. We associate in the Church the gift of the Holy Spirit with Baptism. It is as if we are under new management when we are baptised. We