

# Baptism Service - Sunday 6th November 2022

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Preacher: Matt Wallace

[ 0 : 0 0 ] As I say, my name's Mount Navica here at St. John's, and it'd be good just to think a little bit about one of the main reasons why we've met this morning, which is the whole idea of baptism. And it's a very special day, as we were saying, for Erin and Harvey and Leila, for Lily, for Lucas and for Neil.

And it's a special day for all of us as we get to share in and see the joy, hopefully, of these baptisms and reaffirmation of baptism vows this morning.

To be baptised, as you may well know, it literally means to be immersed. And it's an ancient ritual that followers of Jesus have followed for nigh on 2,000 years.

And even before Jesus, indeed, the idea of being immersed in water as a kind of spiritual practice was long established. You know, water has this quality of helping us to feel cleansed and refreshed, both inside and out, as we seek to live in line with the ways of God.

For example, though, talking about the ancient way of this practice. In the gospel stories of Jesus' life in the Bible, we read about a guy called John, a pretty wild-looking prophet who pointed to Jesus as the one who would come to show us what God's love looks like in the flesh.

[ 1 : 1 8 ] Now, this John the Baptist guy, he got his name because he baptised people. Immersing them in water is his way of helping them to leave behind, if you like, the ways of life which weren't helpful in order to embrace a new start with God.

Indeed, with this baptism stuff in mind. We're going to watch a clip. We might have a little flick and see if we can get the screens working. Talk amongst yourselves for a moment.

Best laid plan to work. In fact, turn around and say hello to someone you haven't yet said hello to this morning. You can stop talking now.

That's all right. Nothing if not slick here, I tell you. All right. So, we're going to watch a clip of this John the Baptist guy. He's got some Cantonese subtitles as well this morning.

This is from the beginning of Mark's gospel, which introduces us to John and his baptising ways. The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet.

[ 2 : 4 0 ] He said, Confessing their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan River.

John wore clothing made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist. and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message.

After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

There we go. So a little short introduction to this locust-eating prophet John. I reckon he would easily win the bush tucker trials when I'm a celebrity tonight with that kind of diet.

And to be honest, I would love to hear a conversation between John the Baptist and Matt Hancock in the jungle. I tell you, those two. John would give him a piece of his mind, I imagine. But as we saw, it says, the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

[ 4 : 16 ] Now that's some crowd to attract. With John's message, as we heard of forgiveness and repentance, this idea that God longs for us to know the freedom of living life in the best way possible.

Now the writer of this book, Mark, he may have been exaggerating a little bit for sort of literary effect when he says that the whole of the countryside and all of the people of Jerusalem went out to see John and so on.

But at the very least, it does imply that there must have been a right old mix of people being baptised by John. All ages and stages.

You know, people from all sorts of backgrounds, but each expressing in their own way a genuine faith in God and a desire to do life in God's way.

And for us, this morning, in our service here, I think what's worth remembering is that for each of Lucas, Harvey, Aaron, Lily, Layla and Neil, each of them will have their own understanding and their own way of expressing their faith in God.

[ 5 : 23 ] Now the way we each demonstrate that faith, it may differ between us. So for some, we might find it natural to express our faith in words. And we're going to hear a little bit from Aaron and from Neil a little bit later on this morning.

Alternatively, or alongside our words, our actions might be the things which speak most profoundly of our faith. Equally though, it may well be what we could call our inner life, you know, our thought life, our prayer life.

Maybe that's the way through which our faith is best expressed. For the super six though, who are being baptised today, they've each got different personalities, different preferences.

Some are younger, some are slightly older. That's okay, full mix. The key though, the uniting factor, if you like, between them is that I'd say they've all had something inside of them causing them to say, yeah, I'd like to be baptised today.

Something inside which I say is God's spirit prompting them in the knowledge that they are each known and abundantly loved by God. You know, sometimes I worry in church circles if we make baptism sometimes too much of a head, an intellectual exercise, you know, too much about our mental understanding of things or our ability to put our beliefs into words.

[ 6 : 50 ] Instead, when we look at the life of John the Baptist and the way he did things, I can't imagine he'd have had the time or the inclination to put those who came to him through some six months worth of preparation classes or so on.

Now, I suspect for John, and I know for me as a figure, my preference, I guess, is always to welcome people as they are on the stage of the journey they're at, trusting that God, in his own way, is drawing each of us ever closer to himself.

Having said that, though, the equally heartwarming thing for the six who are taking the plunge today is that, again, in each of their own ways, I know that they're all on their own unique journeys of faith.

So for Lily and Harvey and Lucas, along with their brother and their mum, they're among the most regular and committed members of this church and have been for many, many years.

And so, whether it's through the conversations they have, whether it's through absorbing what's shared from up here, through their experience of worship, through their Sunday Stars group, through Donna's faith as she helps to raise them, through God's own voice in their lives, and so on.

[ 8 : 08 ] I'm delighted that Lucas, Harvey, and Lily want to make this step of faith today. Equally for Layla, I know along with her sister Jess, she's been with us for most weeks, for years now.

And through Sunday Stars, more recently FNF on a Monday, and I know through the way that Granddad Phil has been faithfully bringing his great-granddaughters each week. Again, for Layla, reaffirming her baptism vows today feels the right next step for her.

It is her mum said to me in her message this week. She said, Layla was baptised as a baby, but because she now belongs to church, she said she wanted to do it again for herself.

Now, she is older. And that's brilliant. That's this idea of reaffirming the promises that were made on your behalf when you were a baby. And for Erin, we'll hear a bit from Erin shortly.

But again, as a regular, here with us, I know her mum Julia and Kev's faith has been key inspiration for her. And yet there's also a commendably strong independent streak in her as well, wanting to reaffirm her baptism for herself now as well.

[ 9 : 22 ] And as I say, Erin's going to share a little bit with us in a moment. And then for Neil, again, he'll share in a bit, but he and Helen have been with us as a church since we came back from lockdown.

And it's fantastic having them both as an increasingly integral part of our life here at St. John's and our community. But equally, I know the faith which was fostered in their years at Wade Street, in Litchfield, the church there, along with numerous friends from there.

Well, God has certainly had his hand on Neil's life. That's without doubt. And yet for each of these folks getting baptised today, I think it's also worth saying that days like today are not in any way the end point or the finish line of that particular journey of faith.

Now, instead, baptism, what we might call this outward sign of an inner grace. In many ways, it's more like the start of a journey or at least a pit stop along the way.

It's the beginning of a new chapter, a refuelling, a new adventure from here on in. And that's the way I think it should be. Since our faith is in a God who through Jesus calls us not to arrive as a finished article or to pass a test or to achieve a certain degree of holiness before we're accepted.

[ 10 : 43 ] Nah. Instead, our faith is in a God of love who through Jesus calls us simply to follow him one step one day at a time.

Trust in him for the journey through life which lies ahead knowing that the journey itself with God is itself the destination, the journey with Jesus is the destination.

And what's interesting I think is that in calling us to follow him Jesus doesn't ask us to do anything which he himself has not already experienced or demonstrated including being baptised.

And so just to bookend things a little bit from that earlier bit of the Bible that we saw from Mark's Gospel. Here's how Mark's Gospel continues when it describes what happens when Jesus comes to see John as he baptises people in the River Jordan.

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water he saw heaven being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove and a voice came from heaven you are my son my love with you I am well pleased.

[ 12 : 22 ] It seems to me that in a way which both demonstrates Jesus' complete humility but also a desire to fully identify with us Jesus himself was baptised in an experience which came not at the end but as you were saying at the very start of his public life and ministry it kicked things off for Jesus.

And this aspect of following Jesus' lead well that's what makes this day so exciting for Neil and Erin Leila, Lily, Harvey and Lucas because they couldn't be putting their trust in anyone better than Jesus himself.

And that same invitation is the one which is open to all of us as each of us are invited by this same Jesus to follow him knowing that Jesus' promise is for us to have his Holy Spirit with us in us helping us to know both the forgiveness but also the fullness of life that God gives every step of the way.

Indeed just in the quiet and it's going to be a full morning with lots going on might be an idea just to maybe take a moment to think about where we're at because I suspect today is as good a time as any for each of us to be honest with ourselves and with God about how we're doing at the moment.

So if you think about your own life it could be it could be that you've had a faith you might have called yourself a Christian for a long time now decades even and things they may all be going pretty well for you if so good stuff you know you're in a good place with God you might say you know that's great and that is something worth celebrating today be grateful for that because I know being in a good place in our faith is not always a given in life that could be you equally though you might have been a Christian you might have been coming to church for a long time but then equally you might think actually things have gone a bit stale of late as well maybe you're aware you're perhaps going through the motions a bit maybe you're just tired in life if so again that's okay but between you and God it is good to be honest about that I'd say and maybe a quiet prayer for you today might be for God's spirit to give you some freshness in that maybe a bit more joy in your journey with him then again if that's not you perhaps this this faith stuff yeah it may be important to you and maybe you'd call yourself a

[ 15 : 12 ] Christian but it's sometimes hard to know how to go beyond that how to deepen your faith to grow perhaps in your prayer life and so on or how to be the person in practice that you and God know you've got the potential to be if so again maybe today's a good day to ask for God's spirit to be at work in you to be guiding and shaping your thoughts and your words and your actions and this idea of following Jesus more closely maybe that's where you're at today maybe that might be the kind of prayer you could pray or then again or where for some of us maybe this whole faith and church and God stuff is all pretty new to us and that whilst there's obviously something there because you're here today maybe you're not quite sure what to do with it or the extent to which faith in God is meant to make a life shaping difference to you again that's okay that's okay it's good you're here that this God stuff is a lot to get our heads and our hearts around so no wonder if some of us maybe a lot of us maybe you are at best a bit hazy about it all now if that's you if you're hazy with it maybe today's a good day to simply ask

God to show you more of what it might mean to know his love in your life for what it means and feels to have God's spirit leading you forward maybe that prayer sort of inviting God in a bit more maybe that could be one for you today but then lastly maybe today is a day when you know in your gut that yeah you want to you want to go deeper if you like with God you want to say yes to God in your life that you want to commit yourself afresh to him knowing that with Jesus there is forgiveness and life and love in all of its complicated but beautiful goodness maybe that kind of decision prayer is one that you want to say today and whenever we do baptisms we always make it open if you want to get baptized today you can jump right in there's no need for preparation just come on in we got some spare clothes if you want and we can borrow a towel don't worry about getting wet it's cool we can do it you can take the plunge today no pressure but if there's something in you as we go through that stirs and think actually I'd like to do that today's as good a day as any and the water's reasonably warm so yeah the invitation is there all of that though you know no pressure with where you're at out of all of those different stages perhaps but you'll know you'll know perhaps one of those is resonating with you but wherever we're at and before we invite those forward to maybe share a bit of their story or to be baptised themselves in the quiet let's just take a moment I'll stop talking and let's just offer our own prayers our own selves to

God and invite God to speak into each of our lives in a way that we might be able to understand so a moment of quiet for our own thoughts our own prayers are talking and with you together and we believe that we can adapt to our songs.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 19 : 49 ] Make the next step with you this morning in whatever way that is. Help us to know that you simply call us to follow you. And that we can trust you to be our guide.

And Lord, you are the best of pacemakers. You don't go too far ahead. You don't fall behind. You're right there alongside us, just steering us through life.

Help us to trust you with that direction and that pace, we pray. Lord, whether we need affirmation, whether we need refreshment, whether we need renewed desire, whether we need courage, whether we need perhaps more of an openness to your voice in our lives.

May today be a significant stepping stone for each of us on that journey as you lead us forward on a path that we know you've got for our lives.

In particular today, Lord, we're praying for them as we go through, but we ask, Lord, for your blessing to rest on Lucas and Harvey, on Lily, on Erin, on Layla, and on Neil now.

[ 21 : 04 ] It's a big thing, Lord. It's a big step to publicly declare their faith in you. And we pray that you would encourage and enrich them in their experience of you and the knowledge of your love in their lives.

We pray. All these things we ask in the name of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right. Well, I said we're going to hear from a couple who are getting baptised or reaffirming their baptism vows today.

So, we're going to go for Erin first. Do you want to come on down, Erin? Come on down. Let's give a round of applause. I can't remember the last time I was baptised.

Like everyone, I was only young. Back then, it was your parents' decision whether you were baptised or not. But once you get older, it's your choice if you want to get baptised again. Having grown up with people who were Christians made my decision just that little bit more easier.

[ 22 : 16 ] People like my mum, my auntie, my granddaddy who sadly couldn't be here today and my uncle who sadly passed away a few months ago. All these people in my life were baptised at least once or even twice.

And since having God in my life, I felt like it was a lot of weight lifted off my shoulders. Because when I was a bit younger, I really struggled with a lot of things in my life. I always felt different.

I struggled with school and making friends. I have anxiety and that is always hard. But knowing I have God, I feel like I'm not going through it alone. I have my mum and she is always there for me and my family.

I believe that after all that I've been through and all that's happened to me over the past few years, God has remained by my side and has loved me even if I thought that I couldn't go through my struggling times alone.

So now I will love God with all my heart and that is why I wanted to get baptised. Thank you for listening. Top stuff, Erin.

[ 23 : 26 ] Top stuff. Well done indeed. Not an easy thing. Well done. Thanks for sharing all that. And we look forward to having you at the pool in a moment. Thank you very much for that. And in part two, Neil.

Do you want to come on down? Let's give him a round of applause. Neil's going to share some of his journey with us as well. Having a drink. Good call. How on earth do I follow that?

That was brilliant. Well done, you. Right. Well, third time lucky for me. Tried at Easter and I got COVID on Easter morning. And then it was decided that the windows are more important.

So that was... So yeah, we're here today. I just want to start by saying a thank you for all your prayers at Easter.

I'm so thankful and blessed by you all. And I've saved all the cards that were sent to me for today. So thank you for that. I didn't have a faith when I was younger. And I wasn't brought up in a church-going household.

[ 24 : 30 ] The only time I went to church was when I was in the Cubs and Scouts. And it was so boring. Oh, I couldn't believe it. Having said that, I always had an interest in the stories from the Bible.

But I didn't really know why. The one thing I did always know, however, was that something was missing. And life was unfulfilling. Then I met my wife, Helen.

Now, I'm not saying that she is the reason I became a Christian. Now, I'm far too stubborn for that. However, she opened up the opportunity to explore what Christianity is all about.

And I was helped and encouraged by so many people along the way. And I'm blessed that a lot of you are here today. Thank you for coming. That journey started at Wade Street Church in Litchfield.

They made me feel so welcome as I started exploring what faith and God and this Jesus fella was all about. I did an Alpha course, which was interesting, but didn't make a huge amount of difference to how I saw things.

[ 25 : 35 ] Apart from people always talk about Jesus and rarely mentioning God, which I thought was a bit odd. But there you go. Oh, and fabulous cakes, of course. It was when I started to get more involved in church life that things began to change for me.

Slowly at first, but God revealed himself the more I got involved in his kingdom. I was lucky enough to be accepted by highway projects to go on a mission to Jordan, working in an additional needs and deaf school, where I helped out with lessons and building repairs, things like that.

A lot happened on that trip, which I don't really want to go into this morning. But one thing I will share was a trip to Mount Nebo. Now, this is where Moses was shown the promised land by God, but was also where he was told he would never enter it.

This was significant for me. Not the not entering bit, just like I was pointing that out. This was significant for me because as an engineer, I like to be able to see and touch and smell things to fully understand them.

And seeing the land laid out before me where the Israelites had walked through the desert for 40 years was a bit of a lightbulb moment. The day it all made sense to me, though, was driving back home to Chase Terrace from Litchfield after helping out at a church youth weekend.

[ 26 : 56 ] You could say I had a road to Burntwood conversion on Swan Island roundabout. I saw a group of teens hanging around, one girl with a can of beer in her hand and a baby in a pushchair.

And it all became clear to me. The difference between these kids and the ones I had just been with was God and their relationship with him.

So perhaps a little old-fashionedly, I said the prayer. I quickly got more involved with life at Wade Street, eventually becoming an elder, before feeling we were being called to worship and serve here in our own community.

So here we are at St John's where you've all made us very welcome. As for baptism, for me, being baptised today is all about new beginnings, a new church family, a new adventurous journey, and only God knows the destination.

Amen. Thank you. Well done, well done. Cracking stuff.

[ 28 : 15 ] Thanks so much, Neil. Great to hear some of your story there as well. Brilliant stuff. And it's great that I know there's a number from Wade Street here who have come to support you today. So we're grateful to be joining together as two churches in one this morning.

All right. So Harvey and Lucas are going to be baptised in the font. That's their choice. They'd rather do it that way than in the pool, which is just the same but equally valid.

So we'll get that set up. We'll also allow any of those who want to get changed into the gear to get into the pool, now's the time to do that as well. So we're going to baptise you over the font in a moment.

Who wants to go first? What do you reckon? Dropped in by his brother. Come on in, Lucas. Come on in, mate. This is called a font. And it's a bowl of water, which we're going to use as this way of asking that God's spirit, God's freshness, God's newness will be over you and in you every step of the way of your life.

Okay. And we know God loves you to bits and always will. This is our way of just helping you to know that deep inside, but also your way of saying to everyone, yeah, I believe in God and I know he's got me in his hands for now and always.

[ 29 : 31 ] Okay. So if you want to come forward a little bit, I'm going to just get your head wet with this water here. And it's Lucas, Eric, Ray, Brindley.

Okay. So, Lucas, lean forward a little bit, mate. There we go. I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Well done. And I'm going to sign you with the sign of the cross. That's the sign of the crucified and resurrected Jesus.

Jesus, may you, Lucas, always know that you are a friend of Jesus. And may you never be ashamed to call yourself that friend.

And Lord, we thank you for Lucas. Thank you for his family. Thank you for the joy that he brings us by coming here week by week. And Lucas, I pray for you.

[ 30 : 30 ] I don't know if you know what your name means. Each of us, our names mean something different. And your name, Lucas, means bringer of light.

It's a pretty cool name, I think. So, I pray, Lucas, that as you go through life and as you spend your time at home and at school, as you grow up, that you may be someone who brings light and love and laughter and life to everyone who knows you.

May you bring light to people so they know just how special they are through you and through the love that you share with them that God gives to you to share. So, God bless you, Lucas, now and always.

Amen. Amen. Well done. Let's give him a round of applause. Well done. Thank you. Do you want to stay up here for your brother as well?

There we go. So, hello, Harvey. How are we doing? All right. A thumbs up from Harvey. That's good. That's good. So, this is Harvey, David, Brindley. And we're going to do the same as we did with Lucas.

[ 31 : 35 ] We're going to baptize you. Then with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This way we understand God in three different kind of ways. But we understand most of all that God loves you to bits and always will. And that's what we're celebrating.

And I know you want to claim for yourself today. So, we're going to baptize you. Now, if you want to come forward a little bit, that'd be great. So, Harvey, I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. I'm going to sign you with the sign of the cross. Sign of the crucified and a resurrected Jesus. And as we sign you with that sign of the cross, it's a bit like asking for God's kiss to be on you and your life.

This way of you knowing that you're loved to bits by him. And I pray for you that you might take that knowledge with you every step of the way, every day. May you never be afraid or anxious because you've always got God with you in there and in there.

And I pray that blessing over you that that might be the story of your life, that you would know God's presence with you every day in every way. And just as we were talking about Lucas and what his name means, your name also has a meaning, Harvey.

[ 32 : 52 ] It means one of two things, okay? You can choose which one you want to have, okay? One means battle worthy, which is a kind of strength kind of thing. But the other meaning, and this one might be even better, the other meaning is blazing iron or Iron Man, okay?

So, Harvey, Iron Man, I pray that you might show through your strength that you've got deep inside you that God gives you, that you'd be able to maybe carry other people through life when they need it, that you'd be a shoulder of support for them, that you'd maybe help them with the things they're worried about, that you might have the strength that God gives you to pass that strength on to others.

You'd be the Iron Man, the superhero for them, pointing to the ultimate superhero, God himself through Jesus. And in that strength, I pray that you would be strengthened in your love and your faith day by day for your family and your friends for your time here.

May your life be a story that the Lord is your strength every day, we pray. So God bless you now and always. Amen. Amen. Well done, well done.

All right. Thanks, Donna. Great stuff, you two. Well done. And you can actually, do you want to come and hang out by the pool here? So if there's shorter folks or younger ones, if you want to gather around the baptistry pool, make sure you can have a good view of this.

[ 34 : 20 ] You're welcome to film. You're welcome to take photos as we go through. But do gather around a little bit more. And if the four who are going to be dunked in the pool, if you want to make your way forward as well, we're going to have Erin in the pool first.



So make sure you can get a good view. Do come around. I'll get my shoes off. So don't get my trainers wet. Come on in. You can gather around a bit more than that. Come on. You want to get a good view of this. I'll go in first. See what...

Oh, okay. Good luck, everyone. Good luck. November baptisms, eh? It's hard to keep the pool warm.

So what are we going to do? We're going to baptise Erin first. I know she's got Juliet, her mum and Helen, family friend, who's going to come and help with that. So Erin, come on down. Let's give her a round of applause as she makes her way there.

Well done, well done. How are we doing? Good stuff. Come on in, come on in. It's a little bit bracing, but yeah. Keeps it real. Actually, before we start, can we just thank Nigel and Dave, who have been immaculate in helping to clean the pool and get it all filled and looking after it for the last couple of days.

[ 35 : 34 ] Thank you very much indeed. And Nigel's going to be in the pool with us in a moment. So, Erin, great words earlier. Great to hear your story and some of your testimony of faith. And in a moment, we're going to baptise you just as we did with Lucas and Harvey in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and ask that God's blessing would rest on you both now and always.

So, your mum and Helen are going to help dunk you under the water. Okay, so come forward just a step. That's it. You might want to put your hands over your chest like that or hold your nose, whichever you fancy. But Erin, we baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Great stuff. Great stuff. Lovely stuff, Erin.

And I'm so pleased and proud that you're here. And your courage in coming forwards, your maturity and your faith, the way you express it is great to hear. And so, I pray for you and we pray for you that you might know the richness of God's love in your life day by day.

That whether you're out running, whether you're at school, whether you're friends, your family with the dogs, whatever you're doing, may it all be part of your story of knowing God's love and God's provision, God's peace and joy in your life day by day.

[ 37 : 02 ] We pray. And I also pray for you that as you grow and as you work out more and more what it all means for you, that you'd have just the right words and just the right way to share what you know is true with your friends and your family in a way which is contagious.

That you'd be a contagious Christian for God, we pray. Amen. Amen. And others are welcome to say a prayer if you want, Julia.

Helen, you're welcome to have a prayer if you want. Others, if you fancy, if you've got a word or a picture, something's come to mind maybe from God that you'd like to share for any of these in the pool, you'd be most welcome to.

But I also appreciate it's a big crowd. And you might just want to do that quietly with someone afterwards as well. So there's a moment if we need it, if we want it, just give us your hand if you want to say a prayer.

But if not, hold that prayer and then share it with Erin after the service. Jan. I just really pray for Erin that you would have a spirit of bravery, that there would be this inner confidence with you.

[ 38 : 05 ] I think you've got a really good sense of gut instinct. And so I pray that each day, as you know that God's with you, that you would have that sense of bravery to know that actually the core of who you are really is in tune with where God is.

And I feel that really strongly. So Father, thank you for Erin. And we just adore her. So we pray that each day she would know that sense of bravery as she gets herself ready for school or running or whatever she's doing.

Amen. Amen. All right. Let's give Erin a huge round of applause. Well done. Well done. Thanks, Julia. Thanks, Helen.

Do get yourself dry, but stay in here. Because... Where's Lily? Where's Lily? Come on down, Lily. That's it. Give Lily a round of applause. She makes her way in. And Nigel's going to come and help us with this one as well.

I know. I know. Keeps it real. Keeps it fresh. All right. So we've got to Brittany Hattrick this morning. This is Lily, sister of Harvey and Lucas.

[ 39 : 13 ] And yet, in her own right, in her own way, she wants to be baptised today, which is brilliant. So I'm going to say some words. I'll put the mic down. Then Nigel and I will dunk you. Same as did with Erin.

We're going to baptise you now, asking for God's spirit to rest and refresh and renew you. And you can start in a new way with him today. All right.

So, Lily, we baptise you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Lily, we're so pleased that you've made this step today.

And we're grateful, Lord, for all that you're doing in Lily's life and the way in which you've led her to this place. And I pray for you, Lily, that you might grow day by day in a huge sense of joy.

That you might know deep in your gut, not just your head, your heart, but deep, deep inside, just how special you are. Just how valued and precious you are by God.

[ 40 : 31 ] And if you think your family love you, how much more does God love you? And we pray, Lord, for Lily, that she would know your blessing on her work, her rest, her play. That she would know your peace when she's anxious.

Your rest when she's tired. And I pray that she would most of all know your love, especially when she needs it most. May she be assured of that day by day.

We pray. God bless you, Lily, now and always. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right. You are welcome. It's not the warmest, so we'll give Lily a towel.

But again, if there's anyone else who wants to say a prayer for Lily, you'd be most welcome at this point. But again, I appreciate a lot of people. So you may want to just have a quiet word with Lily after this service or pass something on to Donna.

Trish. Lily, we just want to pray for you, for your confidence, for your ability to stand up for your faith. It's difficult for teenagers these days to stand up for what they believe in.

[ 41 : 37 ] God loves you and he's always going to be with you. Whatever trials you face, whatever difficulties there are in front of you. God bless you, Lily. Thank you.

Thanks very much. And Marg as well. There we go. Father, we just want to thank you for Lily, for the blessing that she really is each week here. She's an absolute delight.

We know how much you love her and we also know how much she loves you. So we do thank you so much for this step of faith in baptism. You're such a delight. Amen.

I may not have known Lily for quite a while, but the last few weeks I have known her, she's very much made me laugh.

And told me stories about her school and other little bits and pieces. So she'll definitely be one of my friends now, definitely. Great stuff.

[ 42 : 41 ] Thanks, Erin. Well done, Lily. Well done, well done. All right. Layla. Where's Layla? Come on down, Layla. There you are. Come on down. Let's give her a round of applause. Well done. You're right there.

All right. Now, this is Layla. And again, I know you've been coming here for a... I remember you and your sister. We used to have a little soft play area in the corner there when you were very little.

And if I'm honest, sometimes it used to wind me up a little bit because there was a little bit of noise coming to things when I was trying to speak. And there was this clacking toy that you used to play with a lot. I know. I know when you were younger. But the good news is we got rid of that soft play area.

All right. So. But even better news is you're still here. And we're very grateful for that. We're grateful for your presence here each week and your commitment both to St. John's but more importantly to God.

And that's what we're celebrating. And that's what we're reaffirming for you after you were baptized as a baby. We're recalling those vows that were said on your behalf. Grateful that God's been faithful in those vows.

[ 43 : 40 ] But supremely grateful that you now want to make those vows for yourself as well. So. As with the others, we're going to baptize you. Or remember your baptism. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All right. So. You might want to cross your hands a little bit over your chest. Do it that way. But later. We baptize you. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Take your breath away a little bit.

But the good news is, I want to pray for you that you would know God's breath in you. One of the words that we translate as spirit is the old word for breath. And I pray that just as when you breathe in and out every single moment of your life.

You may know that as you breathe in, you've got more and more of God's presence. God's love in your life. And as you breathe out, may anything that's not of God. May anything that's not helpful for you.

[ 44 : 47 ] Anything that gives you worries or anxiety. Anything that isn't helpful for you. May that leave you and be replaced each moment of every day. By God's goodness and light and love and laughter.

We pray. So, God bless you, Leila. God bless your family. And I know the example you are to them. We thank you for the legacy of your generations above you.

The faith that they've had in bringing you here. And we're grateful and very proud that you claim that for yourself today. So, God bless you, Leila. Now and always. Amen.

Amen. Amen. All right. And open mic time. Anyone fancy praying for Leila B.

Ellen? You'd be most welcome. Ellen's FNF leader for her. Lord Jesus, we thank you for Leila, Lord. We thank you for everything. Who she is, Lord. And who you've called her to be.

[ 45 : 44 ] And we just pray now, Lord. That you'll have your hand over her life, Lord. That you will bless her immensely. That you will be her guide when things are going not so well. And when she's finding things tough, Lord, help her to navigate where you want her to be.

We pray that she's fierce, Lord. That you will be her light, Lord. And we thank you that she just lights up a room when she comes in, Lord. And we thank you for who she is. Amen.

Do you need anybody else? All right. Do we encourage this girl when you get out of the pool? But well done, Leila. Well done, indeed. There's a towel waiting for Sister Jess as well.

All right. Last, but by no means least. We've got Neil to come on down. His friend Doug is going to join him as well. So come on in. That's it, mate.

Well done. I know. No car keys. That's all right, yeah. Could be a long walk home otherwise. But yeah. All right.

[ 46 : 48 ] I said last, but by no means least. Because we know how special you are. We know how special you are to God. So we're going to baptize you as we do with the others in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And as we do that, let's all pray, as we bid for the others, that God's blessing would rest on you in a new and profound way.

We pray. So Neil, we remember and reaffirm your baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Great stuff.

Great stuff. Great stuff. And Lord, it's great to hear some of Neil's story earlier.

Thank you for the courage he's had in sharing that today. And we know, Lord, that his story with you is continuing, but in some ways it's only just started as well. So we're grateful that you are the eternal God who calls each of us, and Neil especially, to live day by day in fresh ways with you.

And Neil, I don't know if you know, but your name means champion. It means champion. It's a cracking name to have. And we pray that in some ways you'd be a winner for God.

[ 48 : 02 ] That's a bit cheesy, I know. But more importantly, I pray that you would champion other people, that you'd be a real encourager, that you'd be someone who uplifts and upholds and sustains other people. That you would be, and I know you are already, but that you would increasingly be a rock for others that they could rely on.

We've been singing that about God today, that we can rely on him. I pray in a new way that you would be increasingly someone who others know is Mr. Reliable, that you'd be championing their every need, every day, in every way.

So God bless you in all of the gifts that God's giving you, both now and always. Amen. Amen. All right. Father God, we just pray for Neil.

We just pray that you will fill him to the fullest measure of the Holy Spirit. And we pray that for everyone who is baptized today. And for this wonderful fellowship of believers here.

Father God, we also pray for your protection. We pray for your protection for everyone who is baptized here today. We just pray that you will send your angels to protect them.

[ 49 : 17 ] Father God, that you will bind the work of the enemy. And that what we'll see is a fantastic victory for everyone here today. And we thank you, Father, that you have won that victory. We ask these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks, Doug. Anyone else? A little word or a prayer? Francis, you fancy? You don't want to be baptized, Francis.

Excellent. All right. We'll do that one. Jax wants to say a little word for Neil, first up. Yeah, I just have this feeling from God that when you talked about the woman drinking a beer with a pram, I just feel that God's saying that you're going to see those people we need.

See those people's hearts that aren't softened. That you're going to soften them and bring them to the Lord. So I just pray that you continue to be courageous in your faith, but be bold in stepping out to those people.

Great stuff. Great stuff. Anyone else? Yeah, Helen? I'll try and do this without crying. I just want to say thank you so much, God, for this amazing man.

[ 50 : 30 ] Thank you for the journey that you've seen him on from all those years ago. And I just thank you that you're going to be with him, with us both in the future, that you'll use him. Thank you for his skills, his talents.

And yeah, just thank you for him so much. Thank you for your faithfulness to him. In Jesus' name, amen. Brilliant. Thank you, Helen. All right.

We'll let you get dry. Let's give a round of applause to Neil here and Doug. Thank you, mate. All right. So I said it's an open pool this morning.

I think Francis might want to take the plunge with us. Francis is our neighbour. We see her around the corner most days, don't we? And I'll tell you what. Shall we take your socks off? We've got some spare clothes if you need them as well.

You can have my towel. We know Francis has been with us now for a good few months coming in. And when I see her out and about, I know you're full of joy and you're full of light.

[ 51 : 29 ] And there's a real, thank you, there's a real sense that God's got you on a journey with him, hasn't he, very much. So do you want to come in the water? And we will gladly baptise you. Now, can you remember, were you baptised as a baby, Francis?

Or is this something new for you? What do you reckon? Okay, okay. What we'll do is we'll hedge our bets and we'll baptise you. All right, come on then.

So. God can work out the difference in the theology. That's fine. Let's give Francis a round of applause then as she makes her way down.

Thank you. It's holy water. All water's holy, I tell you.

Yeah, all made by a holy God. And we're using it for a special purpose today. It's a little bit cold. We grant you that. Yeah. All right.

[ 52 : 25 ] Come on down. This is Nigel. And we're going to. There we go. So you turn around for us here. So there we go. So everyone, this is Francis.

Francis has been with us for a few months on a Sunday. And it's a pleasure and a joy and a privilege to be baptising you this morning. So Francis, we baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Bless the Lord, says Francis.

There you go. And bless you, Francis. And look, we're grateful for your courage, your willingness, your desire to get baptised today. And I pray for you that you might know in such a profound, deep way just how special you are to us.

But most of all to God, that you are a daughter of his, that you are a friend of his, you are a child of his. And that you are someone he values amazingly much.

[ 53 : 40 ] So may you know God's joy and God's peace and God's light in your life. And as you do your thing around the streets and we see you out and about at Sankey's and so on, may your smile, may your greetings, may your warmth, may that speak of the love that you've got from God in your life as you share that with all those who you meet and live alongside.

Yes. And we're glad that you're our neighbour as well. So God bless you and your home both now and always. And your cats. Amen. Amen. All right. All right.

Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for Frances, her beautiful smile. Thank you for bringing her today and the courage of coming through those doors and going in that water.

God bless you every day, my dear friend. May he richly, richly strengthen you and give you all the joy of Jesus. Father, we want to thank you for Frances.

Frances, she is, she isn't called Lucas, but she is a bringer of light and she's always one who's got a friendly face and a smile for people. So we just pray that she would know that light and that smile on her life too.

[ 54 : 57 ] And that in the joy that she brings to others, she would know that joy for herself as well. Thank you for her enthusiasm. Thank you for her care and her kindness. And we love her. Amen.

That's it. Now, there is a little bag of my spare clothes. It might be a bit big for Frances, but in a Morrison's bag in the old resources room, there's some clothes if you fancy.

But Frances only lives around the corner, so we'll make sure she's warm and dry in no time. But let's give her a round of applause. Well done, well done. And the bell is nearly being rung, nearly last orders.

But if there's anyone else who fancies taking the plunge, you'd be most welcome. Going, going, gone for now. But we'll do this again another time, I'm sure. Let's thank Nigel for his help here as well today.

Thank you. And as Doug was praying, let's continue to pray for all those who've taken the plunge, been baptised at the front, reaffirming their baptism vows in the pool today.

[ 56 : 05 ] The band are going to lead us in a song of worship while we just get dried off, and then we'll begin to wind the service up. But thanks very much for your prayers and your love for everyone here today. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.