

**Saturday 1 January 2022**

# The naming and circumcision of Jesus

## Annual Covenant Service



The naming of Jesus  
by William Blake

The Church has observed this scriptural festival since at least the sixth century. It has three strands:

- The naming of the Jesus as a week-old baby.
- Jesus keeps the Law (it obeys the covenant between God and Abraham 'and his children for ever').
- Traditionally, it was also the first shedding of the Christ's blood.

The idea of a covenant between a Christian and God appears frequently in the Bible. John Wesley, who started the Methodist movement, wrote a 'Covenant Prayer' to be read aloud once a year at a special service. It was meant to help people to open themselves more fully to God.

He developed a custom of holding Covenant Services near the beginning of the New Year. Typically, as here, the Covenant replaces the Creed

**Sermon and prayers of intercession** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

**Liturgy** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

**Bible readings** © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes this service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1** [How sweet the name of Jesus sounds](#)

([please click on this link](#))

## The Welcome

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

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## The Preparation

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

Hear the words of the angel to Joseph:

‘You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’

Therefore let us seek the forgiveness of God through Jesus the Saviour of the world.

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

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

**All** Amen.

## **The Gloria**

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

**All** Glory be to God in Heaven,  
Songs of joy and peace we bring,  
Thankful hearts and voices raising,  
To creation's Lord we sing.  
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,  
Glory be to God our King:  
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,  
Bore the load of this world's sin;  
Only Son of God the Father,  
You have brought us peace within.  
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,  
Now your glorious reign begin:  
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,  
You we praise with one accord.  
None in heav'n or earth is like you,  
Only you are Christ the Lord.  
With the Father and the Spirit,  
Ever worshipped and adored:  
Ever worshipped and adored.**

## **The Collect for the naming and circumcision of Jesus**

God in Trinity,  
eternal unity of perfect love:  
gather the nations to be one family,  
and draw us into your holy life  
through the birth of Emmanuel,  
our Lord Jesus Christ.

**All Amen.**

## **First reading**

A reading from the Book of Numbers

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to Aaron and his offspring, saying, "Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.' *Numbers 6:22-27*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## **Second reading**

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Galatians

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. *Galatians 4:4-7*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**



HYMN 2 [Jesus, name above all names](#)[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

*Luke 2:15-21*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

It's not uncommon, when talking to parents about the imminent baptism of their child, to hear them using the service as a kind of naming ceremony. It's also an opportunity to give thanks for the safe arrival of their child and wonder what that child will grow to become. When the name or names of the child are being discussed, one of the parents will often say something like, 'I was going to call him "Jack" but when I first saw him he I knew was more of a "Sam"! or words to that effect. They are saying that the name somehow says something about the person.

The ancient Jews thought the same but went much further. Firstly, the name had to have a meaning. While the Bible describes people named 'Joshua', 'Mary', or Samuel, or Peter, for example, in their original language these names had a definite meaning: 'Peter', for example, means 'Rock' and 'Joshua' means 'The Lord saves'. We see something like this way of using names in Africa, so a child might be 'Merit' and remember that a recent President of South Africa was called 'Good-luck'.

This giving of a name with a meaning was not so much a nice idea as intending to be prophetic: a person called 'Merit' would grow to become a person worthy of Merit; a person called Peter would be a real Rock of a person—strong and reliable.

This way of thinking also helps explain some of the stranger elements in the Christmas story. I wonder if you've noticed how, at the start of Matthew's Gospel, the High Priest Zechariah goes against custom and calls his son John—the child becomes John the Baptist—and *all the people are alarmed*. Zechariah's choice of name means 'God has been gracious' or 'Graced by God'. The family probably think it's a hostage to fortune ... but God certainly did heap His grace onto this wonderful child. Then again, remember how the Angel Gabriel tells Mary to call her baby 'Jesus' because (in its Jewish original of 'Yeshua') the name means 'The Lord saves'. Giving a child this name means that, if indeed prophetic, God will do something that leads to salvation through them. And He certainly did!

Which brings us to today's service. We remember that the baby Jesus formally received his name when he was a week old, and today is seven days after Christmas. The child is now formally 'Jesus': his parents and wider family now anticipate that their baby will somehow help enact the salvation of the people. It's a big responsibility.

And there is another naming going on in today's service. Being the first Sunday of the year, we renew our covenant with God. The actual words may come from the founder of the Methodist Movement, John Wesley, but the idea is ancient. We receive a new name, the prophetic name of 'Christian'.

Before we go further, it's important to remember that the name 'Christ' is not Jesus' surname. His actual surname was 'son of Joseph' so 'bar Joseph'. 'Christ' is a title, akin to a nickname, and means 'anointed or filled'; in context, Jesus was filled and anointed with the Holy Spirit. 'Jesus Christ' means 'Jesus who was anointed'.

We are Christians, *Christ*-ians. By taking this nickname, we each say that we want to be more like Jesus and want to be associated with Him. We take His name onto ourselves. We're saying we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit and, to that end, we want to be ready for that anointing and filling with the Holy Spirit. And that's where the Covenant comes in.

In this Covenant service, we offer ourselves to God. we make ourselves available. We therefore start 'I am no longer my own but yours.' Only then do we offer ourselves—all aspects of our lives, time, talents, our everything—to God. In this way, we seek to fulfil the prophetic name given to us at our own baptism or dedication, when someone prayed over us and gave us the name 'Christian'.

Today in this service, then, we read about Jesus' receiving his name for the first time and remember how he grew into it; we also remember how, through Him, the Lord did indeed save. And we remember our own name of 'Christian' and work afresh to grow and change, so that we too can grow into our own prophetic name, the strong and wonderful name of Christian.

## The Covenant Prayer

Beloved in Christ, let us again claim for ourselves this covenant which God has made with his people, and take upon us the yoke of Christ. This means that we are content that he appoints us our place and work, and that he himself be our reward. I therefore invite you all to renew your Covenant with God the Almighty.

**All** I am no longer my own but yours.  
Put me to what you will,  
rank me with whom you will;  
put me to doing,  
put me to suffering;  
let me be employed for you,  
or laid aside for you,  
exalted for you,  
or brought low for you;  
let me be full,  
let me be empty,  
let me have all things,  
let me have nothing:  
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things  
to your pleasure and disposal.  
And now, glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.  
And the covenant now made on earth,  
let it be ratified in heaven.  
Amen and Amen.

## Prayers of intercession

The Lord Jesus has many names in Scripture: he is Jesus, 'the Lord saves'; he is Emmanuel, 'God is with us'; and he is saviour, mighty counsellor, friend of sinners, redeemer and Lord. Help us to make it our New Year's resolution to submit to his justice and might to become more like Jesus.

We pray in Jesus' name.

Lord in your mercy:

**All** Hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who are called by the name of 'Christian'. Help us all to live prophetically, that we grow into this name and become ever closer in our discipleship. To that end, we pray for your Church that it will grow and transform into an instrument for holiness.

Help us to make it our New Year's resolution to become more like Jesus. We pray in Jesus' name. Lord in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in the world who feel nameless and without identity: the poor, the marginalised, immigrants, refugees, the unwanted. As we turn from 2022 to 2023, help us to live our covenant prayer and allow ourselves to be used by God to make the world a better place.

We pray in Jesus' name. Lord in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

The name Jesus means 'the Lord saves'. The scriptures show him saving with healing as a sign of his authority. We bring before God those who need healing in body, mind, or spirit [ ... ].

We pray in Jesus' name. Lord in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

In scripture, St Peter says 'There is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved'. We bring before God the souls of those who have died in faith [ ... ] and those whose years' mind occur at this time [ ... ].

We pray in Jesus' name. Lord in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## **The peace**

Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favours.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 Purify my heart**

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)



The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

## The Dismissal

The love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,  
the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service,  
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
and the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 4** [What a beautiful name](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere,  
mighty creator, ever-living God,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We praise you that on the eighth day  
he was circumcised in obedience to the law of Moses,  
that he might fulfil the law and reveal to us your grace and truth.

For here is foreshadowed  
his perfect self-offering upon the cross,  
the shedding of his blood to set us free from sin and death.

In baptism we die with him and are raised in him,  
that we might walk in newness of life,  
and proclaim the wonders of his saving name.

Therefore with all the angels of heaven  
we lift our voices to proclaim the glory of your name  
and sing our joyful hymn of praise:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:

Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.

Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:

Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.**  
**Christ is risen.**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

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

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All** We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us.  
**Amen.**

Communion is distributed.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Eternal God,  
whose incarnate Son was given the Name of Saviour:  
grant that we who have shared  
in this sacrament of our salvation  
may live out our years in the power  
of the Name above all other names,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All** **Amen**

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