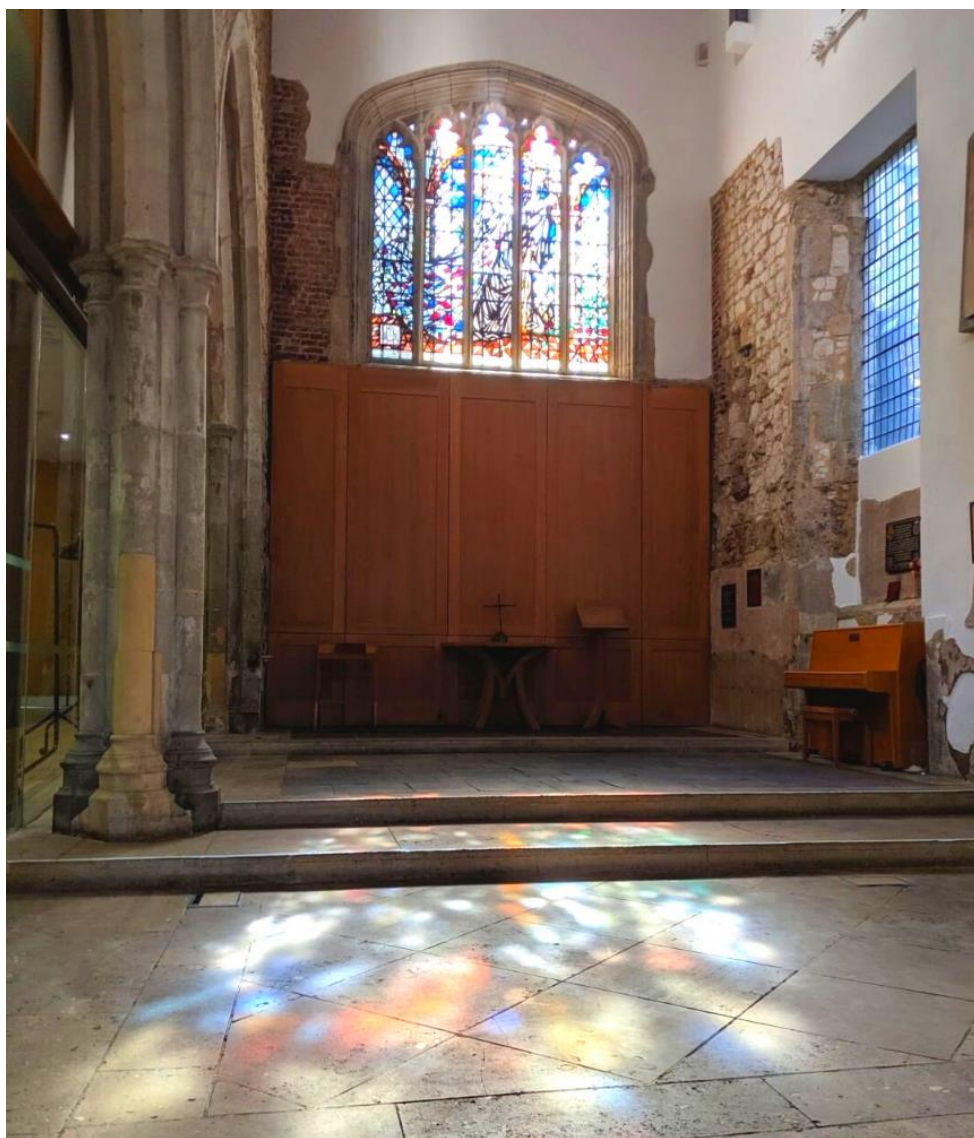


**Friday 5 April 2024**

# St Ethelburga



**St Ethelberga's Church**  
Bishopsgate, London

The Church was badly damaged by an IRA bomb and is now a centre for peace and reconciliation.

The main source for information for Saint Ethelburga (or Æthelburh) is Bede *Ecclesiastic History of the English Church*. Bede says she was the sister of Earconwald, who became Bishop of London. Before he became bishop in 675, Earconwald founded a double monastery at Barking for his sister. She was its first Abbess where she was, 'upright in life and constantly planning for the needs of her community.'

She is last mentioned in 686 AD. The ninth-century *Old English Martyrology* records a vision by a nun of Barking who saw Ethelburga's soul drawn up into heaven by golden chains.

**Sermon** © Jo Monk.

**Liturgy and prayers of intercession** © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

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

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. 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** [Father, hear the prayer we offer](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

### 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.**

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

**All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

### 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.**

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Therefore, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,

firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments

and to live in love and peace with all.

**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**

**All** Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.**

## **The Collect for St Ethelburga**

Eternal God,  
who made the abbess Ethelburga to shine like a jewel in our land  
and through her holiness and leadership  
blessed your Church with new life and unity:  
help us, like her, to yearn for the gospel of Christ  
and to reconcile those who are divided;  
through him who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**All Amen.**

## **First reading**

A reading from the Book of Psalms

**Refrain: My help comes from the Lord.**

- 1 O Lord, hear my prayer ♦  
and let my crying come before you.
- 2 Hide not your face from me ♦  
in the day of my distress.
- 3 Incline your ear to me; ♦  
when I call, make haste to answer me, [R]
- 16 Then shall the nations fear your name, O Lord, ♦  
and all the kings of the earth your glory,
- 17 When the Lord has built up Zion ♦  
and shown himself in glory;
- 18 When he has turned to the prayer of the destitute ♦  
and has not despised their plea. [R]

- 19 This shall be written for those that come after, ♦  
and a people yet unborn shall praise the Lord.
- 20 For he has looked down from his holy height; ♦  
from the heavens he beheld the earth,
- 21 That he might hear the sighings of the prisoner ♦  
and set free those condemned to die;
- 22 That the name of the Lord may be proclaimed in Zion ♦  
and his praises in Jerusalem,
- 23 When peoples are gathered together ♦  
and kingdoms also, to serve the Lord. *[R] Psalm 102:1–3, 16–23*

**All**    **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:**  
**as it was in the beginning,**  
**is now, and ever shall be,**  
**world without end.**  
**Amen.**

## **Second reading**

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

What more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, without us, be made perfect.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

*Hebrews 11:32—12:2*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Brother, sister let me serve you** ([click on this link to hear the hymn](#))

## **Gospel reading**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

Again Jesus said to them, 'I am going away, and you will search for me, but you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.'

Then the Jews said, 'Is he going to kill himself? Is that what he means by saying, "Where I am going, you cannot come"?' He said to them, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he.'

They said to him, 'Who are you?' Jesus said to them, 'Why do I speak to you at all? I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.'

They did not understand that he was speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realise that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me. And the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.'

As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

*John 8:21-30*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

'Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see' (Hebrews 11:1).

This verse comes just before today's reading from the Letter to the Hebrews. The part we read lists well-known figures from the Bible who had that confidence in what they hoped for and assurance about what they did not see. Some of them experienced great triumphs: Gideon's army was outnumbered by more than four to one when he conquered the Midianites, Daniel escaped the lions' den unharmed and David went from shepherd boy to king.

But others in the list suffered for their faith and never saw an end to that suffering in this life. Almost all the twelve disciples were martyred or imprisoned for their faith. St Stephen was stoned to death and the dreadful reference to someone being sawn in two probably refers to the way the prophet Isaiah met his death. And of course, Jesus himself suffered death by crucifixion before he experienced the glory of resurrection.

- So faith is no guarantee of immunity from suffering. In fact, sometimes it's quite the opposite.
- So how can we continue to have faith in the goodness and love of God when sometimes our lives are wall-to-wall suffering?

It's a tough one and I won't insult your intelligence by trying to give an easy answer.

Perhaps part of a tentative answer is in how we look at suffering. In an episode of the BBC drama *Call the Midwife*, a young man dies after a tragic accident. One of the midwives asks Mother Julianne: 'How could your God let this happen?' and Mother Julianne replies: 'God is not in the event, but in the response'.

God is not in the event, but in the response.

When there is a traffic collision, bystanders rush to provide first aid and call an ambulance. Paramedics hurry to the scene with blue lights flashing. Doctors and nurses work flat out to heal the wounds. Friends and relatives rally round to provide support. The event is tragic and horrible, but the response is an outpouring of love. I would suggest that it's in this outpouring of love that we find God.

Our faith is not in some 'Disney-fied' world where those who pray hard enough will be safe from all harm. Our faith is in a God who is 'in it with us' ... as it says in Psalm 23, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me'.

It's hard to find God when we're suffering; sometimes nigh on impossible. Perhaps that's why the faithful are called to be a community: we cannot do it on our own. When my suffering is so great that I can't find God, I need your faith to hold onto; and when you're in such darkness that you feel completely lost, you need mine.

One of the key points in our church's Safe-guarding Policy for vulnerable adults is that anyone can become a vulnerable adult at some time in their life. Nobody is immune. We are members of the body of Christ on earth and we need each other, especially in times of suffering.

Our faith is work. It's a communal effort to find and hold onto the God who is love. It's an assurance that transcends the way we feel right now, today, in the midst of our busy and chaotic lives. And it's an effort we cannot sustain on our own.

Let's pray for such a faith, in the words of one of my favourite hymns:

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you  
in the night-time of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.     Amen.

## The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All   We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All   We believe and trust in him.**



Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

### **Prayers of intercession**

Let us pray to the Lord, who has conquered death.  
Jesus, bread from heaven,  
you satisfy the hungry with good things:  
grant us a share with all the faithful departed  
in the banquet of your kingdom.

Hear us, risen Lord,

**All Our resurrection and our life.**

Jesus, the light of the world,  
you gave the man born blind the gift of sight:  
open the eye of faith  
and bring us from darkness  
to your eternal light and glory.

Hear us, risen Lord,

**All Our resurrection and our life.**

Jesus, Son of the living God,  
you summoned your friend Lazarus from death to life:  
raise us at the last to full and eternal life with you.

Hear us, risen Lord,

**All Our resurrection and our life.**

Jesus, crucified Saviour,  
in your dying you entrusted each to the other,  
Mary your mother and John your beloved disciple:  
sustain and comfort all who mourn.

Hear us, risen Lord,

**All Our resurrection and our life.**

Jesus, our way and truth and life,  
you drew your disciple Thomas from doubt to faith:  
reveal the resurrection faith to the doubting and the lost.

Hear us, risen Lord,

**All Our resurrection and our life.**

May God in his infinite love and mercy  
bring the whole Church,  
living and departed in the Lord Jesus,  
to a joyful resurrection  
and the fulfilment of his eternal kingdom.

**All Amen.**

Merciful Father,

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

## **The peace**

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.  
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.  
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 I will sing the wondrous story** [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)  
**My hope is built on nothing less** [\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below:

## The Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,  
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;  
and the blessing  
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 God forgave my sin in Jesus' name**

[\(click to hear the hymn\)](#)

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.**

Father, you made the world and love your creation.  
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.  
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.  
And so we gladly thank you,  
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**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 Ethelburga and 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**

Merciful God,  
who gave such grace to your servant Ethelburga  
that he served you with singleness of heart  
and loved you above all things:  
help us, whose communion with you  
has been renewed in this sacrament,  
to forsake all that holds us back from following Christ  
and to grow into his likeness from glory to glory;  
through 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.