

Hornsea URC
Apart but Together Worship
John Chapter 3 - 7th February

Good morning and welcome to this service where we are continuing our journey with John as we step into Chapter 3.

Please join in our call to worship with the lines in bold type.

Call to Worship

God's love is poured out on God's world.

From the foundations of time, God's love is woven into all things.

When we cry "Abba, Father!", God hears and lovingly responds to us.

Thanks be to God who forgives and lifts us up.

Now we are called to be born anew!

Open our hearts and our lives that we may truly be born with hearts aflame with

God's love.

AMEN.

From the very beginning of John's Gospel we read how God began the process of changing man's understanding of who he was through the birth, life and death of Jesus – or as Steve put it in the first week of our journey 'God in skin'.

Up until this time the Israelites had known God through the words of the prophets and ancient writings of the Torah – but in John chapter one we read '**God became flesh and walked among us.**' How mind blowing would that have been for the citizens of that time and to be honest for us too! No wonder some could not believe.

I thought Steve used a helpful illustration in his service – I don't know if you remember it.



It's a picture of soldiers going off to war in World War II.

The little boy's Mum would show him the picture and say 'Look, that's your Daddy. She would share stories with the young boy about his dad and try to explain what he was like.

Some four years later – the little boy said one morning 'Mum wouldn't it be great if Dad could step out of the picture and then I would relay know what Dad was like'.

Steve explained that, in a way that's what God did – he stepped out of Heaven and became a man so that you and I could look at Jesus and say – that's what God looks like.

Opening Prayers

God of majesty and power, how awesome you are to us!

The mountains tremble, the seas roar at the sound of your name!

Yet you have chosen to come to us in love and tenderness.

You have called us to be people who will act in ways of peace and justice in your world.

Open our hearts and our spirits, Lord, to hear your word, and having heard, to act in ministries of hope and peace for all your earth.

These things we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Prayer of confession:

We are so like Nicodemus, Lord. We come to you, hiding in the shadows of our own fears and terrors. We want you to give us peace and hope in our hearts. We want to know that everything will be all right; that the world will cease to be a place of terror and war. We want to be born again in a spirit of hope. But when we come it is for our own sake, and not to learn what you would have us be and do in this world. Forgive our selfishness, Lord. Calm our fears and heal our spirits. Let us truly listen to you so that we may be witnesses to your peace and justice which you seek for the world. Saturate us with your light and wisdom. Empower us to be those who bring peace, which is not only an absence of war, but peace which promotes an attitude of love. Clear away the clutter in our lives and place us on paths of service to you. In Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN.

Hymn Blessed Assurance – [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

The whole of Jesus' life and teaching about the Kingdom of God challenges our understanding and ways of being as we heard in chapter 2

There is one thing however that has not changed and that is God's love and knowledge of us.

As we read in **Psalm 139: 1 - 18**

You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.

2 You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thought from afar.

3 You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

4 Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it completely.

5 You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

7 Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

10 even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"

12 even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

13 For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

16 Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!

18 Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

Hymn Oh Lord you search me and you know me – [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

But the comfort of this Psalm is blown out of the water when we read

John Chapter 3: 1 – 15

1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. **6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. **7** You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’

8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

9 “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.

10 “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?

11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. **12** I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? **13** No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. **14** Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, **15** that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

What Jesus told Nicodemus was incomprehensible – he was a learned man, with the right religious pedigree and held high status within the church. He looked at things logically (as do many of us) and could not understand how on earth anyone could be born a second time!

Let’s just think about this for a minute ..

All of us here have been born – we are the physical proof of that.

We were either conceived as part of a loving relationship, we may have been a surprise or very much longed and waited for; We may have been conceived as a result of a night of passion or even through force and traumatic circumstances – but as we heard in Psalm 139 – God knew us and watched over us - as he still does this very day and every day.

I can almost guarantee that one of the first things people say when they are visiting a new born baby is “Oh, aren't they like” or “they have got your dad's nose ...”

It is a way of tying this little person into the family - how they resemble and sit within their heritage.

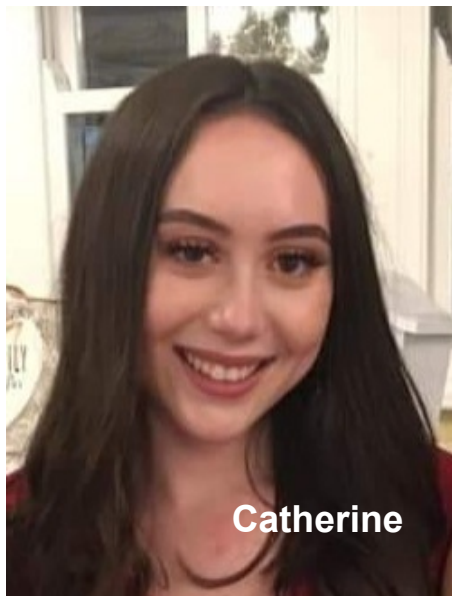
Look at these and see if you can see what I mean



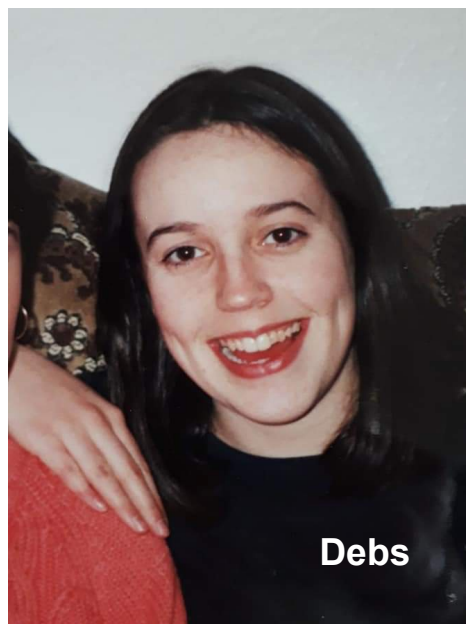
Jill



Lily



Catherine



Debs



Tom



Mike



Lexi



Sophie

Our worship over the past year has been forced to change radically - in the way that we come together to share the good news of Jesus and to worship our Father in Heaven. We have been forced to look at things differently and appreciate what is important in building a strong and close relationship with our creator God. What Jesus says to Nicodemus in verse – 6 “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” was forcing him to look at things differently.

We are always changing – nothing stands still for long – if you need proof, just look at a few old photograph of yourself!
Being a Christian is the same – Christianity is a relationship - within which - God's desire is that we change.

2 Corinthians 3:18 reads – “and the Lord – who is Spirit – makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image”.

As we grow and mature we change – we become aware of and see things differently ...

We all have a This is a summary of my story – so far.

I was in my 30's before I started to realise that there was more to life than just living. I had had a fantastic upbringing, in a loving, supportive family – all be it with some difficult times – but overall - joy, positivity and love had shaped the person I was.

I qualified as a teacher of Physical Education and began teaching at Drifffield school – it was my dream job and I was able to pursue my sporting interests to the level I wanted. Life could not have been better.

I was asked to be a God Mum to my cousins' little girl, Jennifer, and I gladly accepted. It was at the Christening that a seed, that had probably been planted years before, began to germinate.

As most of you will know, God Parents are asked about their belief – Do you believe in God; Do you believe in Jesus and Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

I had no problem saying yes to my belief in God, I could say yes to believing in Jesus but probably could not have given a reason why, but even though I said yes to believing in the Holy Spirit that was not strictly true – I had no idea how the Holy Spirit was relevant to my life at that time.

I had made these promises several years before when I was asked to be God Mum to my sisters' little girl, also called Jennifer, but somehow this time was different ...

The fact that I had promised something that I did not understand did not go away – even to the point where I had to find out about this Holy Spirit for myself.

That was the first hurdle to cross – sport was my life and I played hockey on Sunday mornings – finding out about God's Spirit would mean going to church - also on Sunday mornings. It was some time before I told the team that I would not be available to play (I did not tell them why) but by Saturday I was hoping that they may be a player short or they needed an umpire and I could step in ... which I did – but eventually I did go to church.

That was the next hurdle – which one!

The only time I had been to a church service, other than school or festivals, was when my sister and I went to stay with my cousins in the summer holidays so finding a church was a bit daunting that took me to the next hurdle

Going through the door

Church doors are big, heavy, foreboding looking things and hundreds of questions rushed through my mind as I peer in – someone gives me a book and I sat in the nearest pew, hoping no one noticed me - only to be asked to move because these were the wardens pews. To cap it all everyone is turning pages in the books they had been given and joining in with readings and I did not have a clue which page they were on or anything – let alone knowing when to stand or sit

That was the start of my long journey of discovery of who God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are.

Thankfully the church was full of loving prayerful people and when I eventually grew to a point where I could publicly own my Christian faith – the joy of those people was overwhelming as they shared how much they had been praying for me.

Eventually I realised that God had called me into his family, and just as we look for likenesses in a new born baby to tie them into their family heritage God gives us his likeness by giving us a new heart and mind through his Spirit.

Eventually, when we realise - we cannot serve the desires of our human nature **but need** to serve the desires of God's Spirit – it is then that we have to choose.

HYMN : Take my life, and let it be - [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)

Prayers of Intercession

Use the headings below to bring to God what is on your heart today.

- The Church of Christ
- Creation, human society, the Sovereign and those in authority
- The local community
- Those who suffer
- Those in our Prayer Book and those known to you.
-

Denise; Ruth, Malcolm and family; Lesley; Eileen; Sian and family; Kathy; Betty and Anne; David and Denise; Rose; Sally and family; Karen; Vicky; Margot

As we grow as Christians we will all come to a point when, as Paul says to the Corinthians in his second letter to them (5: 16-17) "So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old has gone a new life has begun".

This is what Jesus was offering to Nicodemus " truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. **6** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. **7** You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' **8** The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

The first birth of a person is of the flesh, but the rebirth, which makes us right with God, is of the Spirit. That old earthly man has passed away and we are a brand new creature in Christ.

Jesus explains to Nicodemus - "We can't see the wind or the Spirit".

To be born in the Spirit is to be born into the family of God. Just as you can see after a wind has gone through and rearranged leaves – it is the same with the Spirit. It has a way of rearranging lives.

After a windstorm, you see the results. After a new birth in the Spirit, you see the results, as well -

So the point that Jesus was making was that just as the wind cannot be controlled or understood by human beings but its effects can be witnessed, so also it is with the Holy Spirit. He cannot be controlled or understood, but the proof of His work is apparent. Where the Spirit works, there is undeniable and unmistakable evidence as we read in Galatians 5:22-23 NIV "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

That's when a person's whole outlook on life changes.

Nicodemus was a learned man of the law and all this seems so strange to him. Jesus tells him not to wonder at it. **It is so simple, just accept it.** Jesus makes sure Nicodemus knows what He is saying because He says it again here "You must be born again of the Spirit to inherit the kingdom".

And what does it take to be born again?

Simple surrender

HYMN : All to Jesus I surrender – [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN](#)



Over the past year we had the privilege of getting to know the character of this man, through media coverage. His achievements over that time have brought HOPE to so many people – which has been evident in the outpouring of gratitude and praise across the nation this week. You could actually 'feel' that hope in the news reports.

Just think – as we have journeyed with Jesus – we all have a story to tell.

We can help people to know the character of Jesus and to show what his accomplishment means for ours and theirs **eternal** HOPE – as we leave our places of worship today may we help people to know and feel the HOPE that God brings.



**This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.**