

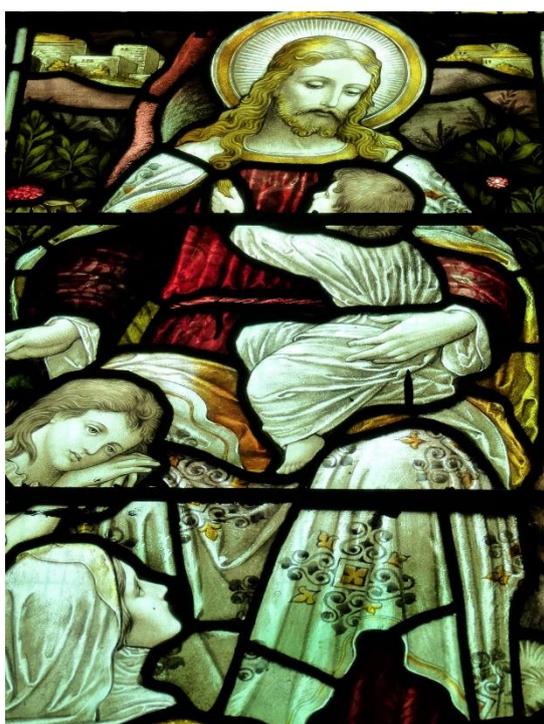
No. 29: 'Holy Trinity: back to the beginning...'

I start this month's blog, like last month, with a photo linking back to our celebrations in 1969 when the church celebrated its 150th anniversary. The photo shows a display of costumes worn to church in the 1800s, exhibited in the baptistery. This was located where the 'parenting lounge' is now, in the corner of our welcome area.



The font had been in the south-west corner of the church since the church opened, but its position had been moved in 1901 when the baptistery was reorganised. (Electricity was installed in the church at the same time). It is not known for certain whether the current font is the original, but records state that the font was altered when it was moved, suggesting it probably is. It appears to be made out of the same stone as the church is constructed. The font shares the same simple Georgian early-Gothic design with octagonal bowl and stem with blind arcading.

Two stained glass windows were installed around the baptistery at this time. One illustrates the story of Jesus blessing children from Matthew 19:14 and was given in memory of Louisa Cockroft and to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The other window is of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, given in 1901 in memory of Mary Hislop by her parents. The family are pictured in the crowd. Both windows are by Heaton, Butler and Bayne of London.



Palm Sunday 2013 was an exceptionally snowy morning and the church heating failed. The attendance was small and so the service was held in the welcome area, facing these 2 windows. The appropriateness of this location became apparent as Micah Wood was baptised there in that service.

In the mid-1960s the back of church was improved with new entrance doors, incumbents' board and panelling. These items can still be seen in the current welcome area. A new font-cover was donated at the same time, in memory of William and Elsie Lydall Pape, made (as were most of the items) by the Marsh firm of Crowther & Wilkinson. (The church had its first toilet installed at the same time).

Historically most churches had fonts near to their entrances, usually at the western end of the building. This was to remind believers of their baptism as they enter the church to pray, since the rite of baptism served as their initiation into the Church.

There are a number of reasons why fonts were designed in an octagonal shape. In some traditions, Easter Sunday is counted as an eighth day of Holy Week when Christ rose from the dead. By Christ's resurrection, He has loosened the bondage of death and receives the dead from their graves, symbolising dying to sin and rising to new life through baptism. Another reason given is that the creation took 6 days. God rested on the seventh day (the Sabbath), and the eighth, the day of resurrection, is the beginning of the new creation and reflects new birth. Some also believe that fonts are octagonal as a reminder of the Jewish rite of Circumcision on the eighth day, an act of dedication of the child and as a symbol of purification.



Holy Trinity's font was moved to the front of the church, near the vestry door in 1981, in preparation for the building of the 'narthex' (a meeting room and welcome area) beneath the original west gallery. Three pews were removed to make space for the font, and flooring of 'prime maple' was laid around it in keeping with the area at the front of church.

In more recent years, some parents have chosen to have their children dedicated rather than baptised. Generally baptisms are held during our 'all-age' services and tend to use the portable font which can be more easily seen on the platform at the front of church.

The portable font has a stone octagonal bowl and wooden stand. It almost certainly dates from 1914 and was originally part of the furnishings of the St James' Chapel at the Parish Hall in Marsh which opened that year. St James' was licenced for baptisms and between 1914 and 1934, 246 baptisms were registered there. After this time all baptisms were recorded in the same register at Holy Trinity but it's likely that further baptisms took place at St James'. The last baptism held at St James' was in February 1995 when the church building was being reordered.

In all, Holy Trinity's Baptism Registers record 7,212 baptisms. This sadly includes a number of emergency baptisms conducted at the old Royal Infirmary (which was in our parish) during the time that vicars of Holy Trinity served as hospital chaplains.



Baptism 1996

The first recorded baptisms took place on October 31st 1819, three weeks after the church opened. They were taken by the temporary curate-in-charge, prior to the first incumbent's arrival. The image below is a copy of the first page of the church's baptism register.

Page 1.

BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of *Huddersfield at Trinity Church*
in the County of *York* in the Year *1819*

| When Baptized. | Child's Christian Name. | Parents Name. | | Abode. | Quality, Trade, or Profession. | By whom the Ceremony was performed. |
|---|---|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| | | Christian. | Surname. | | | |
| <i>1819. October 31st No. 1.</i> | <i>John son of born Oct 25th 1817</i> | <i>Samuel and Hannah</i> | <i>Scarlet</i> | <i>Huddersfield</i> | <i>Iron keeper</i> | <i>John Pridham Assistant Curate</i> |
| <i>October 31st No. 2.</i> | <i>Maria daughter of born July 31st 1817</i> | <i>Samuel and Hannah</i> | <i>Scarlet</i> | <i>Huddersfield</i> | <i>Iron keeper</i> | <i>John Pridham</i> |
| <i>No. 3.</i> | <i>William</i> | <i>James</i> | <i>Scarlet</i> | <i>Huddersfield</i> | <i>Iron keeper</i> | <i>John Pridham</i> |

The Church of England teaches that **'baptism marks the beginning of a journey with God which continues for the rest of our lives, the first step in response to God's love. For all involved, it is a joyful moment when we rejoice in what God has done for us in Christ, making serious promises and declaring the faith.'**

The wider community of the local church and friends welcome the new Christian, promising support and prayer for the future. Hearing and doing these things provides an opportunity to remember our own baptism and reflect on the progress made on that journey, which is now to be shared with this new member of the Church.

The service paints many vivid pictures of what happens on the Christian way. There is the sign of the cross, the badge of faith in the Christian journey, which reminds us of Christ's death for us. Our 'drowning' in the water of baptism, where we believe we die to sin and are raised to new life, unites us to Christ's dying and rising, a picture that can be brought home vividly by the way the baptism is administered. Water is also a sign of new life, as we are born again by water and the Spirit. This reminds us of Jesus' baptism. And as a sign of that new life, there may be a lighted candle, a picture of the light of Christ conquering the darkness of evil. Everyone who is baptized walks in that light for the rest of their lives.'

[Common Worship p345]

In recent years Holy Trinity has been delighted to baptise a number of adult believers by full immersion and it was great to be able to kick off our 200th anniversary celebrations in this way in December 2016.

Easter is a time when traditionally new converts were baptised in the church. May this Easter time be a time when we remember the new life we receive through Christ's resurrection.

Andy Barber
April '19

References:

Common Worship 2000

Holy Trinity Inventory

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptismal_font

Baptism Registers held at West Yorkshire

Archives, Huddersfield Library and in church

