

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING

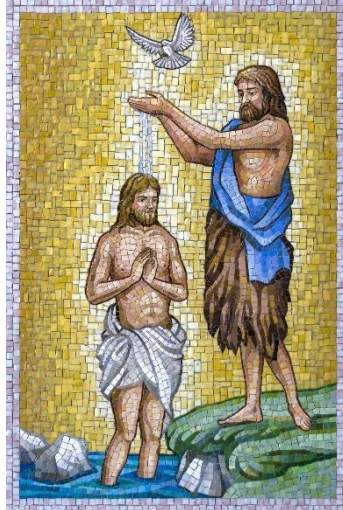
1st Advent Sunday and Baptismal Service

10.30 am 30th November 2025

Led by Revd Zoltan Biro and Pauline Mbukwa

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

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Theme: Love and Humility the right attitude to the gifts of the Spirit

Welcome and Theme

Last week's sermon by Simon helped us to understand the roles and Responsibilities and the diversity of the gift of the Spirit. God has given us different gifts but how do we use these gifts: today we focus on love and humility as the right attitude to the gifts of the Spirit.

Call to Worship:

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

We worship you.

The mountains are his, the rivers are his.

We worship you.

The trees are his, the flowers are his.

We worship you.

Every person, every breath, every word is his.

We worship you.

We come to you, Lord, the God who loves us all and keeps us all.

We worship you today. Amen

Song:

Come on and celebrate

His gift of love, we will celebrate

The Son of God who loved us

And gave us life.

We'll shout Your praise, O King,

You give us joy nothing else can bring,
We'll give to You our offering
In celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate, celebrate
Celebrate and sing,
Celebrate and sing to the King.
Come on and celebrate, celebrate
Celebrate and sing,
Celebrate and sing to the King.

Patricia Morgan and Dave Bankhead © 1984 Kingsway's Thankyou Music.

Prayer of Adoration

Oh Lord our God how excellent is your in all the earth
Creation sings of your glory

You are an awesome God.

We fall silent before you.

Pause...

Almighty God, all your works are wonderful!

In Jesus you demonstrated sacrificial love

At you feet we find healing, peace, and love.

You care for each one of us in our sorrow, in our pain, in our delight.

You are an awesome God. We fall silent before you.

Pause...

Sustaining God, all your works are wonderful.

Through the power of your Spirit you build your Church and transform your world.

You inspire us to worship and give us strength to serve.

You are an awesome God. We fall silent before you.

Pause... Amen!

The Lord's Prayer: *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and 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 and ever. Amen.**

(There will be an offering taken during this song)

Song:

The splendour of a King, clothed in majesty
Let all the Earth rejoice
All the Earth rejoice
He wraps himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
Trembles at His voice

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God

Age to age He stands
And time is in His hands
Beginning and the end
Beginning and the end
The Godhead Three in One
Father Spirit Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God

Name above all names
Worthy of our praise
My heart will sing
How great is our God
You're the name above all names
You are worthy of our praise And my heart will sing
How great is our God

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God

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BAPTISM

Introduction to Baptism

Some may ask, why is there a pool of water in a church and why are people have a public bath? The short answer is that we are following the example and command of Jesus Christ.

Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' Matthew 28.18–20

On the day of Pentecost when through the Holy Spirit the first Church came to being:

Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.' Acts 2.38, 41f.

Following his resurrection, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In obedience to Christ and in joyful thanks for God's redeeming love, we gather to baptize those whom the Holy Spirit has led to repentance and faith.

Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan, and still disciples are called to follow Jesus Christ through the waters of baptism, to be buried and raised in union with him.

Here is the grace of God: washed free of sin, disciples of Jesus are immersed into all that God has done in Christ and all that he promises to do through his Spirit.

By the one Spirit we are baptized into one body, patterned after the likeness of our Lord Jesus and anointed for his service.

Prayer

Almighty God, we give you thanks for your Son, Jesus Christ, who was baptized in the river Jordan and passed through the deep waters of death.

We praise you that you raised him to life and exalted him. Send your Holy Spirit, we pray, that this baptism may be for your servants a union with Christ in his death and resurrection, so that, as Christ was raised from death through the glory of the Father, *they* also might be raised to newness of life.

Pour out your Spirit and anoint *them* for service that they may grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. **Amen.**

Testimonies

Mr. Lo

I came to Hong Kong from Mainland China in the 1970s. In the 1980s, I met my wife, and together we built our family and raised two children. I am now living in Reading with my younger son, while my elder son has a daughter, making my wife and me proud grandparents.

Since coming to the UK and entering retirement, I have been able to enjoy playing table tennis in my spare time and attending church with my wife. I first came to Abbey Baptist Church in 2021. Although I may not attend as regularly as my wife, I come faithfully to listen to God's Word.

What truly moved me to become a Christian was my experience earlier this year, when I was diagnosed with dementia and began treatment. I received tremendous help, including from a Christian who not only guided me through the medical process but also reminded me of many important details, allowing everything to go smoothly. In the church, I have also been met with understanding and support from brothers and sisters, which has touched me deeply. This made me long to join the big Christian family and follow the Lord.

May all glory be to our Father in heaven. Amen.

Amir

My name is Amir, I am 41 years old. I grew up in a family and a society where there was no opportunity to learn about Christianity, and I had no chance to truly know this faith.

When I came to the UK, I was going through one of the most difficult periods of my life. I was struggling physically, emotionally, and with my living situation. I felt that I needed to find a truth that could give me peace, hope, and light in the middle of all this darkness.

During this time, I became close to a friend who was a Christian. His kindness, honesty, and the way he treated me without judgement were very different from what I had experienced before. This compassion and humanity touched my heart and made me curious to learn more about the teachings of Jesus.

I slowly began reading the Bible and attending church meetings. The more I learned, the more I felt that the teachings of Jesus about love, forgiveness, truth, and hope were exactly what my heart had been searching for. I felt that God was speaking to me through this faith, calming my heart and guiding me toward a new path.

For me, becoming a follower of Jesus was not a decision made out of fear or pressure. It is a conscious, heartfelt, and genuine choice. Through this journey, I have felt a personal relationship forming between me and God — a relationship that has carried me through difficult times and has given me new meaning, peace, and hope.

Patrik

I grew up in a Christian family and went to church every Sunday, but for most of my life, I didn't truly believe in God myself. Even though I was surrounded by faith, I felt like something was missing. There was an emptiness in me that I couldn't quite explain, and I didn't feel fully satisfied with life.

Things began to change during a conversation with my dad. It wasn't dramatic, just a simple, honest talk, but it opened my eyes to the possibility of God being real. I didn't become a Christian at that moment, but I moved from not believing at all to believing that there was a higher power, unsure but searching.

The turning point came right before I started school this year. My family had just moved here, and I didn't have a school to go to. We were all anxious and unsure what would happen, but I decided to trust that God knew my path even when I didn't. On the very day I was supposed to start school, we received a phone call saying a local school had a space for me to begin the next day. That moment felt like God showing me He was there and working in my life.

Since then, I've chosen to put my faith in Jesus, and I feel full of the Holy Spirit in a way I never had before. Today, I'm getting baptized as a way of showing that I devote my life to Him and that I trust Him with my future. I'm grateful for the way God has guided me, and I'm excited to follow Him from this day forward.

Declaration of faith

Do you believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ
as your Lord and Saviour?

I do.

Do you turn from sin, renounce evil
and intend to follow Christ?

I do.

Do you promise to live within the fellowship of the church
and serve Jesus Christ in the world?

I do.

Mr. Lo, Amir and Patrik. We have heard of your testimony and declaration faith, so I invite you in the water to be baptised.

Blessing the Baptismal candidate (free prayer)

Act of Baptism

I now baptize you, my *brother* in the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Baptismal Songs

Mr. Lo

O happy day, O happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away!
He taught me how to watch and pray,
And live rejoicing every day;
O happy day, O happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away!

Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)

Amir

Patrik

You are here, touching every heart
I worship You, I worship You
You are here, turning lives around
I worship You, I worship You
//:Waymaker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper
Light in the darkness
My God, that is who You are:\\

Osinachi Okoro © 2016 Integrity Music Europe

Young people leave for their groups

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Our Father, we give you thanks and praise for the many blessings you bestow on us. God of all goodness and grace, receive the gifts we offer; and grant that our whole life may give you glory and praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. We also thank you for the wonderful gift of baptism that Mr Lo, Amir and Patrik have received. Thank You, Jesus, for the incredible work You have done in their life. We celebrate this significant step of their faith and the new beginning it represents.

Song

| | | |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Chorus: | Bless the Lord oh my soul | Sing like never before |
| | Oh my soul | Oh my soul |
| | Worship His Holy name | I'll worship Your Holy name |

The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes

Chorus

You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find

Chorus

And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore

Chorus

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Advent Sunday intercessions

Christ, light to us all,
in this season of Advent, we look for your coming
to brighten the dark places of our world.

Christ, light of the world, you come to us in the guise of
the poor and vulnerable, whose lives have been devastated by climate change,
the desperate, whose homes have been destroyed in Gaza and the Sudan
the despair of those recovering from the hurricane in the Caribbean.
Lord, in our generosity, may we share the light that Advent brings.

Christ, light of the world, you come to us in the guise of
refugees fleeing war for safety,
asylum seekers trapped by bureaucracy,
strangers in a foreign land looking for a new home.
Lord, in our hospitality, may we share the light that Advent brings.

Christ, light of the world, you come to us in the guise of
the homeless needing a bed for the night to protect them from the cold,
the sick who look for healing,
the lonely in need of friendship.
Lord, in open hearted welcome, may we share in the light that Advent brings.

Christ, light of the world, you come to us in the guise of
people who long to meet you,
who are searching for meaning and understanding,
who seek fellowship and belonging.
Lord, in our ministry and outreach, may we share the light that Advent brings.

Christ, light to us all,
in this season of Advent, we look for your coming

to brighten the dark places of our world. Amen

Song:

In Christ alone, my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live, I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Keith Getty / Stuart Townend © Thankyou Music Ltd.

Extra Song (if needed)

Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me.
Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me.
Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, move among us all.
Make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love.
Humble, caring, selfless, sharing.
Spirit of the living God, move among us all.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me;
break me, melt me, mould me, fill me;
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

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The newly baptised come back

Renewing the Baptismal vows

As the people of God in this place, do you believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

We do. This is the God in whom we trust.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?

We do. He has redeemed us and called us by name.

Do you turn from sin, renounce evil and intend to follow Christ?

We do. Christ is our way.

With the Spirit's help, we will follow this Jesus in the church and in the world.

Will you promise to pray, to encourage and to support Mr. Lo, Amir and Patrik,
and walk alongside them in ways that are known and yet to be made known?

**With the help of God's Spirit we will, for together we are disciples of Jesus Christ
and members of his body.**

**We are sisters and brothers together; praise be to God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Blessing the newly baptised with the following song:

The Lord bless you and keep you
Make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you
The Lord turn His face toward you
And give you peace

Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen

May His favour be upon you
He is with you, he is with you
In the morning, in the evening
In your coming, and your going
In your weeping, and rejoicing
He is for you, he is for you
He is, He is

Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen

Brown / Furtick / Carnes / Jobe © Worship Together Music, Capitol CMG Paragon

Handing out the Baptismal certificates

Bible Readings: Matthew 3:13-17 and 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Sermon: *Love and Humility the right attitude to the gifts of the Spirit*

How many of you like maths? Well, I think there some mathematical formulas, that we all recognise even if we don't like maths: $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$; $E = mc^2$; $F = ma$

What about this one: $[(L \times H) \cdot G] \Rightarrow C \Rightarrow GI$

Let me explain this one: G = Spiritual Gifts; C = Building Up the Church; GI = God's Glory Revealed; L = Love; H = Humility

So far in the series we talked about $G \Rightarrow C \Rightarrow GI$. The purpose of the Spiritual Gifts are to build up the Church, which is the body of Christ on earth, these gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to serve one another and bring the community of God closer together in unity. In turn this is what brings Glory to God.

What we haven't talked about is the first part of the equation $[(L \times H) \cdot G]$. So let me start with love,

1. Love: The Heart of Every Spiritual Gift (1 Corinthians 13)

You may remember that our core readings throughout this series were from 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 14. Apostle Paul does something surprising in 1 Corinthians 13. He interrupts his teaching on spiritual gifts with what feels like a diversion, but it is actually the *base* of everything he has been saying.

The church in Corinth was an amazingly gifted church, but they were also incredibly divided. So Paul looks at a gifted church in Corinth and says:

"If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am a resounding gong..."

A gong. Loud, impressive... but without a purpose. What Pauls tries to emphasise is that gifts without love create noise, not ministry.

Illustration: The Clanging of lids

Imagine someone playing the drums beautifully. The rhythm is perfect; the sound is rich. But then someone else walks up with two metal lids from the kitchen and starts banging them together—clank! clank! clank! It's loud, but it's not music.

That is what Paul says we become when we exercise gifts without love and care. We may draw attention, but we do not draw people to Jesus.

- **Power without love is dangerous. It will abuse others to achieve its goal.**
- **Ministry without love is meaningless. It won't last, because it lacks motivation**
- **Giftedness without love is empty. It can become boring, a chore even if we like doing it.**

Love is patient, so the prophets can deliver their message gently. Love is kind, so the teacher can be patient when building up others. Love is not proud, so the healer does not boast. Love is not self-seeking, so the one who speaks in tongues does not use it to show off.

Love is the atmosphere in which spiritual gifts breathe.

So, how do we cultivate Love in Ministry:

- **A question to ask:**
"Is this about blessing others or proving myself?"
- **A prayer to say:**
"Lord, let me love the people I am serving today."

- **A principle to follow:**
“Your gifts grow best when your heart grows first”
- **An attitude to develop:**
“Rejoice in the success of others rather than compare and compete.”

2. Humility: The Spirit’s Doorway into a Life (Matthew 3)

Now, if love is the foundation of the gifts, humility is the door through which we allow the Spirit to enter our lives. Our Gospels reading take us to the banks of the Jordan River.

Before Jesus performs his first miracle or preaches his first sermon, he comes to John to be baptized. John is confused. “I need to be baptized by You!”

But Jesus says,

“Let it be so now; it is proper for us to fulfil all righteousness.”

He who had no sin steps into waters meant for sinners. He who is the Savior stands in line with the ones who need saving. Right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus showed how humility empowers:

Look at the three things that happened when Jesus stepped into the water:

1. **The heavens open.** This is because humility invites God’s presence into our lives. Humility is an attitude that allows us to ask for help, to recognise that we need others in our lives.
2. **The Spirit descends like a dove.** Spirit rests on low places. He only enters when we are open to receive him.
3. **The Father speaks.** Humility brings divine affirmation.

Illustration: The Bowing Tree

There is a saying that goes: *The tree with the most fruit bows the lowest.* The more fruit God produces in our lives, the more humility should bend us toward others.

Jesus showed us the way by bowing low. Later he also said to his disciples: “If anyone wants to be great among you, should serve the others.”

So how can we develop this posture of Humility towards the Gifts?

- **Remember the gift is not yours; it is God’s.**
- **Helping others not only in public, but also when no one is watching you.** Humility is measured by what we do when no one is watching.
- **Let others share the stage.**
- **Stay teachable.**

3. How does Love and Humility relate to the Gifts of the Spirit

At this point someone might ask: “If God gives gifts freely, does it really matter how I use them?” According to the Bible: Yes, because the *purpose* of the gifts is to reveal Jesus. Love unveils His heart, while humility reflects His character. Without these virtues, spiritual gifts can be misused or misunderstood, losing their true purpose and impact.

Think of the gifts of the Spirit as instruments in an orchestra. Each instrument produces its own unique sound, but without a conductor to guide them, the music becomes disjointed and chaotic. Love and humility act as the conductor bringing harmony, unity, and direction. In the same way, when believers use their gifts in love and humility, the beauty and message of Jesus are expressed clearly and powerfully. Without these guiding qualities, the result is confusion and discord.

This is why I used the formula: $[(L \times H) \cdot G] \Rightarrow C$

Love multiplied by humility, operating through spiritual gifts, results in the building up of the church.

- If **love = 0**, gifts will be hidden and cannot build.
- If **humility = 0**, gifts become self-centred.
- If gifts (**G**) aren’t used, love and humility provides the potential but nothing will happen.
- When all three are active → **the church is strengthened.**
- And when **the Church is strengthened** → **God’s Glory is revealed**

In the end, both passages, 1 Corinthians 13 and Matthew 3, point us to Jesus.

He was the most Spirit-filled person who ever lived, yet also the most loving and most humble.
He spoke heaven's words yet washed feet. He carried divine power yet carried a servant's towel.
He healed the multitudes yet welcomed the forgotten.

**Let love be our motive.
Let humility be our posture.
Let Jesus be our example.
Let the Spirit be our strength.
So we can bless, heal, unite, and reveal the heart of God.
Amen.**

Song:

I had burdens on my shoulders all my life
I tried and tried to leave them all behind
But freedom's one thing I could never find

I said a prayer from the banks of a river
God met me there, showing me something better

My life was changed
When I stepped into the water
I couldn't see my chains
Since I gave them to the Father
Hallelujah, I've been delivered
Where is my guilt?
Where is my shame?
I left it in the river, oh
I left it in the river, oh

Now, there's nothing that can take this joy I've found
He raised me up and I'm not coming down
He washed me clean and now there is no doubt
He turned it all around

My life was changed
When I stepped into the water
I couldn't see my chains
Since I gave them to the Father
Hallelujah, I've been delivered
Where is my guilt?
Where is my shame?
I left it in the river, oh
I left it in the river, oh

I said a prayer from the banks of a river
God met me there showing me something better
I left my wrongs at the bottom of the river
I said so long, said goodbye forever

My life was changed
When I stepped into the water
I couldn't see my chains
Since I gave them to the Father
Hallelujah, I've been delivered
Where is my guilt?
Where is my shame?

I left it in the river, oh
I left it in the river, oh
I left it in the river

Colby Wedgeworth / Jamie Macdonald / Jonathan Gamble © Capitol CMG Publishing, Universal Music Publishing Group

Final Blessing

There are three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

**Enable us, Lord, by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world with your kingdom hope in our hearts,
to use our gifts with love and humility**

The Grace

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen**

Events next week:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Wednesday 3rd | 10.30 | Renew Wellbeing |
| | 12.15 | Bible Study |
| | 2.00 | iCaf 5 |
| Thursday 4 th | 10.30 | Bible study |
| | 10.30 | Toddlers |
| | 7.30 | Men's Bible Study |
| Friday 5 th | 10.30 | Prayer meeting |
| | 5.00 | Table Tennis Club |

| | | |
|------------------------|-------|--|
| Sunday 7 th | 10.30 | 2 nd Advent Sunday Worship <i>Waiting in Preparation</i> Isaiah 40:1-8; John 1: 19-27 |
|------------------------|-------|--|

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