



A Prayer Guide to the parish church of St John the Baptist





Welcome to the parish church of
St John the Baptist on Lincoln's Ermine estate.
We hope that you enjoy your visit.

This leaflet will take you on a prayer journey
around the church.

It will take you to every part of the church
and help you to discover something of
its spiritual heart and story.

Please take time on your journey and
feel free to pray, to explore
and, if someone is available,
to ask questions.



Setting out

Go into the porch of the church. This is our shop window, and what we have on display will tell you a lot about us and our faith, prayer and activity. Take time to look at the notice boards. On the south wall (to your right as you enter the church) you will find information about our community, both the community we serve locally and the causes we support internationally. On the north wall you will find photographs of the church in action.

Now go to the statue of St John the Baptist, our patron saint. On the glass wall behind him, you will find a prayer for the parish. If you wish, pray this prayer or read it through quietly.

On the other side of the doors, you will find some holy water. If you wish, dip your fingers in the water and make the sign of the cross before you enter the church.

Taking it all in

As you enter the church, find somewhere to sit or to stand. Spend as long as you like noticing things. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel? What attracts your attention? Spend a few moments noticing what God wants you to notice.

If you wish, take a prayer card from the table (your choice) and quietly pray the prayer you find.



On the way

Now return to the doors of the church and stand with your back to them. Look down the length of the church. Notice how the carpet leads you past the font to the altar and to the crucifix on the east wall.

Start to walk down towards the font. Imagine that you are going down through the waters of baptism. Stop by the font and look at the bowl of the font. The outlet for the water is the geometric centre of the church in every direction.

You might like to think about how God is central to the life of the Christian soul and give thanks for the gift of his life to the world.

If you have been baptised, spend a moment recalling your baptism promises:

I turn to Christ

I repent of my sins

I come to Christ, the way the truth and the life

The Easter mystery

Now go up the steps to the sanctuary. You have left the waters of baptism and you are now ascending to the altar of salvation.

Turn around to look at the church. Notice the light and the stillness. Notice how the pews bend around the sanctuary. Look at the light bulbs – they form a snow shower of light and are in perfect straight lines whichever way



you look at them. Look at the outer walls of the church. Although the central area is curved, the walls are straight lines, a hexagon. You might like to think about the patterns of God's love for you.

Now turn back to look at the crucifix. Here is Christ suffering on the cross. Here is a prayer we use on Good Friday:

This is wood of cross on which hung the Saviour of the world, come let us worship

Look at the candle stands on either side of the sanctuary. They look like stylised suits of armour, Roman soldiers guarding the cross. The candles on them bear the sign for the Holy Mother Mary, reminding us of her presence at the cross.

Now kneel down and look under the altar (you might have to lift the altar cloth). What do you see? The altar is supported by irregular large blocks of concrete that suggest a body lying in a tomb. But this is a tomb on top of which we proclaim the resurrection each time we celebrate the mass and the bread and wine is filled with the risen life of our Lord Jesus.

Alleluia, Christ is risen, He is risen indeed alleluia!

The living presence

Go to the aumbry (to the right of the altar) above which a lighted candle burns. Here the consecrated bread and wine are reserved for people who are ill or housebound. Here is the living presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, revealed in bread and wine. Take a moment to give thanks for the gift of Jesus to the world.



A tent of meeting

Now proceed around the walkway of the church to one of the places where the roof touches the ground. Look up at the vast wave of the roof soaring away from you. It is a reverse hyperbolic paraboloid, the same shape as the universe, but it also reminds us of a tent, a temporary dwelling. It mirrors the Old Testament experience of a nomadic people always on the move, always aware that our true home is with God in heaven. As you look at the roof soaring across the building, so you might like to remember the words of the psalmist:

When I consider the heavens, the moon and the stars you have set in their courses

What is man that you should consider him, a mere human being that you should remember him?

Yet you have made him little less than the angels.

A breath of prayer

Go to the candle stand at the back of the church. If you wish, light a candle giving thanks for the work of the church on the estate, or for a concern that you have. Look up at the icon. What does it say to you? Mary holds the child Jesus, who looks up in alarm at the instruments of his death held by the angels. His shoe is hanging off, but he is still held in his mother's arms. Spend some time reflecting on the message of the icon for you. Offer a prayer here for all in need.



A rainbow of colour

Now find somewhere to sit or stand, and take a few minutes to look at the window above the altar. What strikes you as you look? Notice the shades of colour and the many different shapes. Notice the light coming through the window. If it is a sunny day, notice how the light from the window falls onto the walls or sanctuary.

Notice the three central hexagons, which mirror the shape of the outer shell of the church building. Taking time to look at the central panel, what does it say to you of the life of the Trinity, God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Now look at the hexagon on the right. Imagine you are looking from the sky at an image of the birth of Christ. An abstract angel in vibrant blue. Mary kneeling, the top of her head is green. Christ in red sitting up on an ochre manger.

Now look at the hexagon on the left. See Christ's head in the water at the bottom, with the head of John the Baptist leaning over him at the top, offering baptism. Above them hovers the Holy Spirit, a dove in vibrant blue.

It doesn't matter if you can't see these images in the window. It speaks to people of different things at different times of the day and year. What image, idea or prayer comes to you as you look?



The art work

Go to the door to the left of the altar. The posters around the walls start here. Take some time to walk around the church taking in the story the pictures tell or meditating on the images you see.

The Mary and Martha room

Return to the first picture. Go into the Mary and Martha room. This is our dedicated space for stillness and prayer. Spend some time looking at the images around the room and offer the prayer that comes to you.

A bit of history

In the cupboard marked "Archive" in the Mary and Martha room, you will find a number of binders. This is our archive. This is the story of our church and our estate. Please take some time to look through the folders, but please leave them as you find them.

Moving on

Thank you for visiting our church. We hope you have enjoyed spending time here. Please offer a prayer before you leave for our parish and its mission, our community and its needs.

If you would like to find out more, please check out our website:

www.stjohnthebaptistparishchurch.org.uk