

Hymn of the Week

Baptism of Christ

Songs of thankfulness and praise

Words – Christopher Wordsworth (1807-1885)

Tune – St. Edmund by Charles Steggall (1820-1905)

This week our Epiphany journey takes a big jump in time suddenly moving forward 20 plus years from the events of Christ's manifestation as an infant in the events in Bethlehem, the flight into Egypt and return to Nazareth as a child; now we see him manifest as an adult at the start of his redeeming ministry, coming in humbleness to his cousin John for baptism in the Jordan. Jesus of course had no need for baptism being born without sin but, having taken our form, he follows the route that we must take and in doing so is recognized by his Father and the Holy Spirit and manifest to the world.

The writer of our lovely hymn, that itself wraps up in a few verses the multiple aspects of the Epiphany, is less well known than his poet Uncle William but in many ways equally distinguished. Born in London, Christopher grew up in Bocking where his father was rector, was educated at Winchester and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he gained many academic distinctions, becoming Fellow of Trinity College on graduating in 1830. Wordsworth was ordained priest in 1835, and in 1836 was appointed Public Orator of Cambridge University. In the same year he became headmaster of Harrow School, he was subsequently appointed a Canon of Westminster where he became Archdeacon in 1865. In February 1869 Wordsworth was consecrated Bishop of Lincoln. He was an outstanding scholar of classical learning and of the church fathers, and published extensively in these fields, as well as writing a monumental Commentary on the Whole Bible (1856-1870). In addition to these achievements Wordsworth was a prolific hymn writer, his collection *The Holy Year* (1862) was intended to provide a hymn for every occasion of the church year. The first edition contained 177 of Wordsworth's own hymns and a supplement of 82 from other sources, fashions change but at least ten of these remain in regular use today.

Charles Steggall the writer of the tune, St Edmund, continues the Cambridge connection being a student of Dr William Sterndale Bennett and achieving his doctorate in music here.

It seems only fitting given the strong Cambridge connection that we should hear this hymn sung by the choir of Trinity College in another stunning arrangement by the late Richard Marlow

<https://youtu.be/j3ROyZGTHlg?list=RDj3ROyZGTHlg>

Keith Day 7th January 2026