

Virtual Church News

Sunday 31 May

Pentecost

Welcome to Virtual Church News for Pentecost.

Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 356993 or email Jacqui.piper@btinternet.com

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

The Spirit of God lies at the heart of the Christian story. At the beginning of the Bible there are two things that begin the process of the ancient story of creation. One is the Word of God ('And God says, Let there be light.'). and the other is the Spirit of God ('The Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters.') (Genesis 1:1). In the ancient Hebrew mind there was no distinction between life, breath and Spirit and the word that was used to represent these things was Ruach (רוּחַ) and it was Ruach that formed the essence of the power of God in creation.

In the garden of Eden humanity chose to follow our own way, instead of God's way, so that our relationship with God was broken. At Babel, our pride caused us to separate from one another and speak in different languages. We, the human race, had fallen indeed but never from grace. We had separated ourselves from God, and from one another, but God's grace remained.

Grace can best be described as unconditional love, or undeserved favour, and that has proved the unfailing quality of God's relationship with his people. Even though we had been unfaithful to God, God remained faithful to us. His Spirit of breath and life was the Spirit that rested on God's chosen people, Israel. The same Spirit of God, that moved over the face of the waters, rested on Abraham, on Moses, and on the prophets;

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Cowslip Field, Biddenham
Photo taken by Edwin Martin

A Reading for the Week:

John 20.19-23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Join us for Online Services

Zoom services are held at 11am on a Sunday and 6pm on a Wednesday. Login details are sent out in the covering email to members of our church community. If anyone else would like these, please do get in touch. Everyone is welcome!



Message from Rev Eric Lomax

'The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,' (Isaiah 61:1) It was the Spirit of God that provided the conduit for that grace. He, because the Spirit is always the person of God and not simply a 'thing,' has always been at work in creation, he has never abandoned us. 'God is Spirit,' Jesus said, 'and those who worship, worship in Spirit and in truth.' (John 4:24)

In the very first line, John's Gospel tells us something wonderful about Jesus. 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.' (John 1:1). Jesus is the same Word, that echoed through time, bringing light and life to creation. He was always there, from the beginning, he is here now, and he will be there at the end of time. The Alpha and the Omega (verses 1:8, 21:6, and 22:13). At the end of John's Gospel, however, we have something deeper and more profound than that; 'When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.' (John 20:23) Through the breath of Jesus, the disciples of Jesus are anointed with the Spirit of life and truth. It is the same breath (Ruach) that moved over the face of the waters, at the beginning of creation, and Jesus is the same Word or voice of God that creates at the beginning of time. The writer of John's Gospel wants us to know that Jesus, the Christ, can be no other than God himself; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one.

It is equally true, that with all the hidden references to creation, the author of the Gospel wants us to know that God, through his grace and kindness has here brought about a new creation; 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.' (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). All that separated us from God in Eden, has been healed in Christ. Christ has restored Following creation to a right relationship with God.

The writer of Luke's Gospel gives us something no less profound. The same author gives us Acts of the Apostles, which tells us the story of the early Church. In the second chapter of Acts, following the departure of Jesus, the disciples are together in one place and we experience the sound of wind. Again this is synonymous with the Ruach of God, and we hear that the disciples are not only anointed with the Spirit, but are filled with the Spirit. The disciples are transformed from clueless followers, to powerful instruments of God in the world. God is no longer present in a temple, but is now present in Spirit and truth in the hearts of his people; 'Do you not know that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit?' (1 Corinthians 6:19).

This is Pentecost. Christians sometimes hide from this truth, and say it is not for them, but our call is to open ourselves to being this new creation. It is our call to allow God, in Christ to breathe his Spirit on us, and in us, so that we may be empowered to proclaim his word in the world. As he showed his grace to us, so we are called to show his grace to others, and for that we must be filled with his Spirit of Grace. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church, so happy birthday to you, because with his Spirit you are born again from above. (John 3:1-16)

God bless.

**May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
Be with us all,
Now and evermore.
Amen**

Hymns and Devotional Music



Tim Grant-Jones, organist at All Saints, and his wife Irene are live streaming hymns and other devotional music at 10am each Sunday (before the Zoom service). Find this and other music on Facebook by searching for Grant-Jones Musical Services or entering #gjmusicalservices. You can also request hymns in advance!

Church Finances

Some people have been asking about church finances at the moment so we wanted to give you an update for your prayers and consideration.

Income at both churches has been significantly affected, with no collection plates, no wedding/funeral fees etc. and no Barn/hall bookings. We remain committed to meeting our Parish Share for 2020 and as you would expect some outgoings have decreased, but unfortunately this decrease does not fully cover the drop in income.

We know that everybody's circumstances are different; some of you may be financially secure whilst others will also be suffering a fall in income.

We urge you to prayerfully consider your current planned giving (if any) to our churches and amend your monthly standing order if needed. If you would usually put money in the weekly collection, perhaps set aside an envelope and put your donation in it each Sunday? God always provides for his church and he/you know what is right for you!

If you would like details on how to give, either on a one-off or on a regular basis - including arrangements to enable your church to make a gift aid claim whereby the Government contributes a further 25% to the value of your giving, please contact Jacqui Piper (on 01234 356993 or jacqui.piper@btinternet.com). Also, do contact Jacqui if you need information on how to change your current level of planned giving (up or down).

Online Services

Join the Church of England on its website or Facebook page for this week's 9am Virtual Service.

You can also download the order of service and the sermon in pdf format from the Church of England website.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

Many other churches and cathedrals across the country are also providing online services.

Discovery Group

Meeting via Zoom on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays of the month at 8pm (after the clap!). Get in touch if you would like the login details.

Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following on Sunday:

- 8.10am on BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship from City Church, Cardiff
- 10.00am on BBC 1 - A celebration for Pentecost from Gorton Monastery in Manchester.
- 11.00am on BBC 1 - Sunday Worship led by the Bishop of Hereford, the Rt Rev Richard Jackson.
- 1.15pm on BBC 1 - Songs of Praise - Kate Bottely celebrates Pentecost, the birthday of the Church.
- 3.00pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from St David's Cathedral.

Wednesday 3 June:

- 3.30pm on BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong from St Mary's Collegiate Church, Warwick.

For the Children (& young at heart!)

Pentecost is the birthday of the church! Have you, or a member of your family had a birthday recently? Did you celebrate? At Pentecost we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the bible story for today from Acts 2.1-21 the Holy Spirit came like wind and flames. It filled the disciples and they were able to speak foreign languages. The disciples then went out into the streets and told the good news of Jesus in languages that the people understood.

Activity:

Wind and flame streamers. Try making streamers out of paper (blue/white for the wind and red/orange for the flames). Cut strips (about 1 inch wide) of thin (crepe/tissue would be ideal) paper and join them all together with Sellotape at one end. You can now wave them around like the wind and flames in the story.

Song:

Holy Spirit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>

Prayer:

Holy Spirit, you are welcome.

Come among us like a wind, like a fire, like a dove.

Come gently or come boldly.

We are waiting for you.

Amen.

Please pray with me

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
ignite in us your holy fire;
strengthen your children with the gift of faith,
revive your Church with the breath of love,
and renew the face of the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



For your prayers

- Teachers, parents and students: those going back to a school setting this week and those continuing with home learning;
- Our families, friends and local communities;
- All those who have recently been bereaved.

Our prayer group meets at 8pm on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Get in touch if you would like the login details or have any prayer requests.

Hymns/Songs of the Week

Holy Spirit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFByOX8Fb0M>

Breathe on me, breath of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5keJHZdWYM>

Be still, for the presence of the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>

Panis Angelicus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2m-M3QJtdOE>

Rev Eric Lomax Contact Details

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Bedford Foodbank

Please don't forget that we support the Bedford Foodbank, who need our donations now more than ever.

Donations of food can be placed in a box in St James's Church Porch, taken direct to the Foodbank (off Manton Lane) or put in the boxes in the supermarkets. Items currently needed include cup a soup, long life sponge puddings, UHT fruit juice, squash, tea-bags (160), tinned potatoes, spray cleaners, washing up liquid and washing tablets.

Alternatively please consider making a financial donation. More information can be found at <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>



Community Support Groups

Do you need support? We can help with shopping and companionship (via regular phone calls). Can you volunteer to help? Let us know if you are DBS checked (for any organisation). It doesn't matter if you aren't, we still need your help, but safeguarding is important!

Biddenham:

If you need support, ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

If you can volunteer, please email help@biddenham.org.uk

Kempston:

If you need support or can volunteer to help, contact:

Rev Eric Lomax: 852241 or 07805 879537

Alison/Brenda Walker: 851597

Alan/Anita Lowe: 857212 or 07751 659695