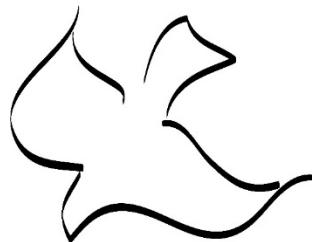


**Sixth Sunday of Easter
Sunday, 22nd May 2022**



Dear Friends,

'And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.' (John 14: 29)

This coming Thursday, 26th May 2022, the Christian church across the world celebrates the Ascension of Christ to heaven. Forty days after Easter, Christians celebrate Ascension Day, remembering that Jesus returned to His Father and left His disciples waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower them for their new mission of spreading the Good News of Jesus throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the very ends of the earth. After the very first Ascension Day, the disciples gathered with Mary, constantly devoting themselves to prayer while they waited for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Like them, our reliance on the gift of the Holy Spirit is total – on our own we can do nothing.



'The Ascension of Christ' by Gebhard Fugel

Thursday, 26th May also marks the first of eleven days of a global wave of prayer across the world. Called '*Thy Kingdom Come*,' this prayer initiative runs from Ascension Day to Pentecost Sunday.

Each year we are invited to join with tens of millions of Christians around the world, and across all denominations in praying specifically for five people we know personally to come to know more of God's love in Jesus Christ, and to pray that the Holy Spirit will empower us to boldly witness to them of the love, hope and salvation we enjoy.

I will be using the prayers below at St Stephen's, Sparsholt this coming Sunday morning at their Morning Worship service. I have set the prayers out here so that you can also offer up these payers individually, as we commit our Christian community to pray for others we love to find faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, for themselves.

Prayer for Thy Kingdom Come 2022

As we wait in silence, Lord,
make us ready for Your coming Spirit.

As we listen to Your word,
make us ready for Your coming Spirit.

As we worship You in majesty,
make us ready for Your coming Spirit.

As we long for Your refreshing,
make us ready for Your coming Spirit.

As we long for Your renewing,
make us ready for Your coming Spirit.

As we long for Your equipping,
make us ready for Your coming Spirit.

As we long for Your empowering,
make us ready for Your coming Spirit.

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your kingdom: inspire us with your Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your Word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



'Ascension' by Barb Carr

As a community of faith, we are particularly praying for families to find faith together. In our schools, young people are developing a vibrant and fulfilling relationship with Jesus, but oftentimes, when they go home from school, the pupils' families are not sharing their own faith experiences with their children, or are unwilling to explore the faith their young ones have found in Christ.

As a Benefice, I am asking us all to focus on praying for families to find the time and courage to open up to each other about their spiritual lives – talking to each other about what faith may or may not mean to them, and listening to what those who believe in the truth of the Gospels have to say about how their lives have been changed by letting the light of God's love into their hearts.

This is a conversation we can have across all generations within families. Believing in God changes everything about our lives. Because when we trust all that God promises to be to us in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit changes our hearts so we are blessed with joy, peace, love, and obedient hope. Isn't that what we want for all those we love, for families across the world and all for whom we pray? At the most fundamental level, a belief in God saves our lives! God tells us if we believe in Him, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, we will be saved from death and blessed with eternal life with Christ forever.

So, as we journey as a people of faith from Ascension to Pentecost, let us pray for others to find faith in Jesus, that they too might find the peace which passes all understanding in God's eternal and everlasting love.

Yours in the blessing of Christ,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.



Acts 16:9-15

During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.’ And she prevailed upon us.

John 14:23-29

Jesus answered him, ‘Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

Schedule of Services

Now that all national Coronavirus restrictions have been lifted, it is no longer necessary to book seats in our parishes for services. Neither is it mandatory for you to wear masks in church. However, Coronavirus is still very much with us. There are a number of people in our villages with it at present, so we are encouraging people to observe social distancing measures.

Date	Ch	Cr	Li	Sp	Wh
22 nd May			Christian Aid Morning Prayer Service	Morning Worship	8am – Holy Communion (BCP)
26 th May Ascension Day			7.30am – Holy Communion followed by Breakfast in the Church Room		
29 th May		5 th Sunday Benefice Holy Communion			
5 th June Pentecost / Whit Sunday / Platinum Jubilee	Morning Prayer - for Her Majesty The Queen	Holy Communion	9.15am - Prayers for Her Majesty The Queen		
12 th June Trinity Sunday	11am - Trinity Sunday Open-Air Benefice Service followed by BYO Benefice Picnic (Northwood Park)				

<i>19th June</i>	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	6pm - Peace & Wholeness	8am - Holy Communion (BCP)	
<i>22nd June</i>			Mid-week Holy Communion		
<i>26th June</i>	Thanksgiving Service for the Fete (<i>in the Fete Marquee</i>)		Morning Prayer	Morning Worship	8am – Holy Communion (BCP) <i>PLUS</i> 6pm – Spring Meditations