

Pentecost
Sunday, 23rd May 2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

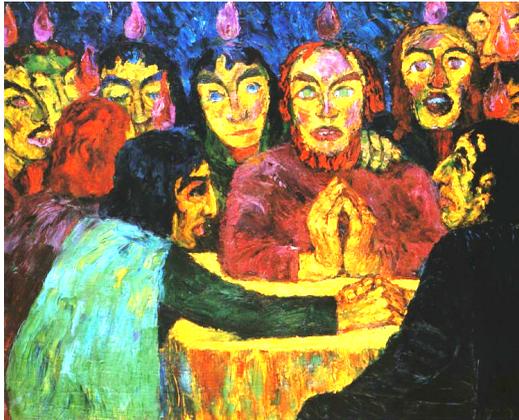
‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth’
(John 16: 13)

This Pentecost, it feels to me as if the Diocese of Winchester is reeling from the effects of the Holy Spirit, just as surely as the disciples did on that first Pentecost, as the Holy Spirit came to them, like a forceful wind or flames of fire; turbulent and forcing change for good in its wake. As some of you may have heard, the Bishop of Winchester, Dr Tim Dakin, has stepped back from his role as bishop for a period of six weeks, so that issues relating to leadership and governance in the diocese can be addressed. The Bishop of Basingstoke, David Williams, has also been asked to stand aside whilst this process takes place. The Bishop of Southampton, Debbie Sellin has been made Acting Bishop of Winchester by Lambeth Palace, and will oversee the review. A very sad time indeed. I would ask you all to pray for everyone involved, and for the Holy Spirit to guide our Diocese into all truth. As Psalm 46:10 reminds us, we must now more than ever: ‘Be still and know that I am God.’

Diocesan Prayer will be offered every Monday morning at 9am from 24th May, with the exception of the Bank Holiday. Please contact the Benefice Office for the Zoom link if you would like to participate. So, keep checking for updates. In the meantime, let us use this prayer:

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.

In the midst of all this turbulence, some good news. It would appear that I am not going to be made redundant as was feared. Nor will The Downs Benefice be allocated any additional parishes. This comes with my thanks to you all for your continuing support and encouragement of my ministry amongst you, for which I thank God daily.



'Pentecost' by Emil Nolde

As we begin to emerge from Lockdown, I have asked Alick Kay, Churchwarden at St Mary's, Crawley, to undertake a Service Review in order to ensure each parish across the benefice has a lively pattern of Worship and Holy Communion services, based on a realistic understanding of the limited resources we currently have.

At present, I am the only ordained priest working in the benefice, and so am the sole resource for sacramental services, including Holy Communion, Baptisms and Weddings. We are blessed to have our Lay Ministry Team, with Charlotte Nash as our Licenced Lay Minister (LLM). Alastair Barron, Andrew Kent, Carol Coleman and Sally Wesley are our (BCM) commissioned Lay Workers.

Alick has asked a representative team of people from each parish to join him in analysing a workable service structure which reflects the resources we have balanced against the needs and wishes of our worshipping community. As we come to Pentecost, I ask you to pray for the work of this Service Review Team, just as I ask you to pray for our wonderful Ministry Team, and all those who work with them, such as Carol Ward and Colin Sheath; all of whom consistently bring us first class services and help us all to better understand the word of God through their apposite reflections. This week's reflection comes to us from the heart of Colin Sheath at Chilbolton. I am sure you will join with me in thanking Colin for his words of faith and hope at this time of great upheaval for our diocese and for our world.

Yours, in the Spirit of all truth,

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Hope and New Beginnings in Faith – Reflection by Colin Sheath

Last Sunday, 16th May, was the Seventh Sunday of Easter and, as we draw to the end of the Easter season, we remember Easter Day, Resurrection Sunday and the joy of Holy Week as important festivals in our Christian lives which remind us of God's sacrifice of His Son, and also God's love for his people in Jesus Christ.

Easter is the most important festival in our Christian calendar. It celebrates God raising His Son, Jesus, from the dead, as well as the destruction of the power of sin and death through His resurrection. It symbolises the opening of Heaven with the gift of eternal life to everyone who believes.



'Pentecost' by Daniel Rice

This Sunday, 23rd May, is the Day of Pentecost. Pentecost is celebrated 50 days after Easter, and is when Christians remember the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the third part of the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - which is how we as Christians understand God, and is the means by which God is active on Earth.

So there is much to be hopeful about for not only has our faith helped sustain us through many difficult times, times of grieving for those we have lost, times of struggling to cope with the distress caused by the Covid-19 and dealing with the mental trauma of it all, our faith has helped enable us to look forward with hope for what lies ahead. As the world opens up and continues to deal with the traumas of a world at war with each other, and at war with disease and disaster, may we all be enabled to focus on the HOPE that is held so much within our faith.

May we remember the words of John 3:16: *'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.'*

On Monday of this week, our country saw the opening up and relaxation of many of the restrictions which have typified the way we have had to live our lives for more than a year because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. These changes are part of moving forward with hope. For many of us, our faith will have been at the heart of what has sustained and helped carry us through these difficult times.

Hope is so important, and keeping hope alive helps to protect our emotional and mental health, and in that hope, our faith can sustain us.

As we are given permission to do many of the things which have been restricted up to this point, may we all remember how important it is that we must still remain cautious and continue to protect both ourselves and those we love and care about. May we be enabled to focus on how our faith and hope in what the future holds, can be the inspiration which sustains us even when everything around us seems so difficult.

Our readings this week are so well known to us as Christians, and for me they signify hope and faith - both of which we need, as we move forward to overcome the difficulties we face. So may Faith and Hope be the pillars on which we build the way forward; sustaining us in God's beautiful world. To paraphrase the words of Psalm 23: *For then, surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, and we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever!*

I close, as I began, with the powerful words of John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.



'Pentecost' by Jen Norton

Collect Prayer for Pentecost

God, who as at this time taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Psalm 23:1-6 ESV

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



John 15: 26-27 & 16: 4b-15 – The Work of the Spirit

Jesus said: 'When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Service Schedule

NB: There have been some fraudulent emails circulating the ether purporting to come from me, and asking if you can ‘do me a favour.’ Another email asks you to help me out by buying an Amazon card for my niece’s upcoming birthday. I can assure you that I would never ask for financial help or support in this way. If you receive such an email from anyone **DO NOT REPLY TO IT** and **DELETE IT IMMEDIATELY.**

Date	Chilbolton	Crawley	Littleton	Sparsholt	Wherwell
23 May	Morning Prayer		Holy Communion + APCM		
30 May				Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer
6 June	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer			
13 June				Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
20 June	Holy Communion		Morning Prayer		
23 June			Midweek Holy Communion		
27 June		Holy Communion			