

REFLECTIONS

The passage from Acts that we read today is memorable - and not just because it is the one most dreaded by those reading a lesson in Church, on account of the string of difficult names it contains! The events of that day were dramatic and changed both the disciples and many who heard them speak.

The most striking and immediate of the effects of the Holy Spirit was the ability that it gave the disciples of Jesus to speak in other languages. And this ability to **communicate**, when we so often feel unable to find the right words or - even worse - put our foot in it by saying the wrong thing, is one of the most important features of the Spirit dwelling in us. In one of my favourite books, John Taylor calls the Holy Spirit the 'go-between God'.

The wind and flames in today's reading are images that are urgent and constantly moving - about **energy** and **empowerment**. We believe that while Jesus shows us the Way, it is the Spirit that galvanises the early disciples and gives them both the energy and the ability to go forward. In his letter to the Corinthians (12: 3-13), Paul speaks of the different gifts and activities inspired by the Spirit, but emphasises that it is the same Spirit that finds outworking in acts such as healing, teaching and prophecy. The disciples needed wisdom, guidance and empowerment as they moved on to establish the Church, as well as the God-given ability to communicate their message with clarity and in terms that really spoke to those they encountered.

Going deeper ... Our gospel reading begins: 'on the last day of the festival'. Which festival was this? As Christians, we are aware of the importance of the Passover, when Jesus died, and also of Pentecost. These are the two major festivals of the Jewish year, separated by fifty days. Today's gospel reading records words spoken earlier by Jesus when he had been in the temple in Jerusalem during another great festival -the Festival of Booths, or Tabernacles, which falls in the autumn. Here Jesus refers to the Spirit as a river of living water. The ceremony in the Temple included water being poured on the altar by the priest, so the imagery of living water would have resonated with those to whom he was speaking in that setting. It is an image used too by Isaiah (12:3) but most memorably by John (4:10) in the encounter of Jesus with the woman of Samaria at the well.

I wonder ... how others might recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES ONLINE

Sunday - Live on Zoom

9.30am Holy Communion

President: Paula Griffiths

Preacher: Alex Jeewan

9.30am Family Communion

President: Tim Hardingham

10.00am Holy Communion

President: John Saxon

Pre-recorded (youtube)

Act of Worship

Leader: Alex Jeewan

Tuesday - Live on Zoom

5.00pm Evening Prayer

Leader: Sue Walker

Wednesday - Live on Zoom

9.30am Holy Communion

Alex Jeewan Caroline Curren

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Mon 1st June Morning Psalm 85 & Mark 3:31-end
Evening Psalm 122

Tue 2nd Morning Psalm 132 & Luke 9:28-36
Evening Psalm 135 & Romans 1:18-end

Wed 3rd Morning Psalm 119:153-end & Luke 9:37-50
Evening Psalm 136

Thurs 4th Morning Psalm 143 & Luke 9:51-end
Evening Psalm 138

Fri 5th Morning Psalm 144 & Luke 10:1-16
Evening Psalm 145

Sat 6th Morning Psalm 147 & Luke 10:17-24
Evening Psalm 97

The Grapevine

COVERING THE PARISHES OF SAFFRON WALDEN, WIMBISH,
DEBDEN, ASHDON AND HADSTOCK.

Pentecost
31st May 2020

Collect

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.

First Reading: Acts 2.1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.' But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Gospel: John 7.37-39

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

See St Mary's church, SW, website at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org to find out more.

Please 'Like' our Facebook page so we reach more people! Click on the link on our website, or go to: www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden



PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In May please pray for:
Sewards End & Little Walden C of E, Radwinter Primary School

The family and friends of those who have died recently:
Eileen Wright, Violet Slade

EVENTS

THY KINGDOM COME May 21st - May 31st 2020 Join the global wave of prayer calling all Christians to pray between Ascension and Pentecost for more people to come to know the love and peace of Jesus Christ. We have a Prayer Space for Families and Prayer Spaces for All Ages on our website 'Thy Kingdom Come' page. A booklet 'Praying the Lord's Prayer with the Sonnets of Malcolm Guite' is downloadable from the website.

THE REVEREND JOHN SAXON has been appointed Team Vicar with responsibility for Debden and Wimbish. His licensing will take place via Zoom on **Tuesday 2nd June** at 5.30pm.
Ursula Lyons

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

In the hall, we have a chiming clock that has to be wound every week. Towards the end of the week, the chimes become slower and more drawn out, and the clock sounds very weary. An inanimate object it may be, but I know just how it feels at times! Lacking in energy, and losing its 'oomph'.

As someone who is not a key worker, and not going out regularly, except for exercise, this time of lockdown is having that sort of effect on me. It is not that there is not more than enough to do, yet it is sometimes hard to find the energy to get going. The week lacks familiar landmarks. In this context, thinking of the energy and empowerment that are marks of the indwelling Spirit of God is helpful. Much of this time of lockdown has corresponded with the Easter season, the time after the death of Jesus when the disciples were in turmoil and did not quite know what would come next. Now they face a call to action, resourced by God's Holy Spirit.

As lockdown eases, there will be a call to action for us too. There is a lot of thought at present going into how services will be held once churches can open again, which looks as if it may be in July. One important question is how to retain some of the things we have found useful in online worship, especially as not everyone will be able to come to church, even with appropriate social distancing. Some may not choose to. As we move forward, we want to take with us the good things we have learned. In addition, the Rt Revd Peter Hill, our Acting Diocesan Bishop, reminds us that we need as well to take forward the wounds of this time - the sadness at lives tragically lost, and of feeling alone - just as the risen and ascended Jesus still bore the wounds of his Passion. The future can be neither a 'return to normal', nor simply an improvement on the past, but must incorporate our shared experience, positive and painful. We all need the Holy Spirit not just to energise us but also to be our comforter and companion, and to give us wisdom and guidance as we face the future,

With love and prayers
Caroline Curren

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Sovereign God, energise us by the breath of your Spirit, giving power for living through your love and goodness. Open our hearts to the living water of your presence flowing within, blowing away whatever keeps us from you, so that we may live and work more faithfully for your kingdom, this and every day. **Amen**

NEWS

ALL CHURCHES IN THE TEAM AND THE PARISH OFFICE REMAIN CLOSED until further notice in accordance with national guidelines.

EMAIL BULLETINS We are issuing regular email bulletins that highlight information from the website, attach the Grapevine and service sheet and provide the Zoom links for live services that weekend. Please email Dawn at office@stmaryssaffronwalden.org if you would like to be added to the distribution list.

WORSHIP ONLINE There are several ways of joining in our team worship which can be accessed from links on St Mary's Church at Home webpage. <http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/churchathome> You can watch a pre-recorded services and you can participate in live Zoom Services around the team. The service sheets and Grapevine are also available on the webpage.

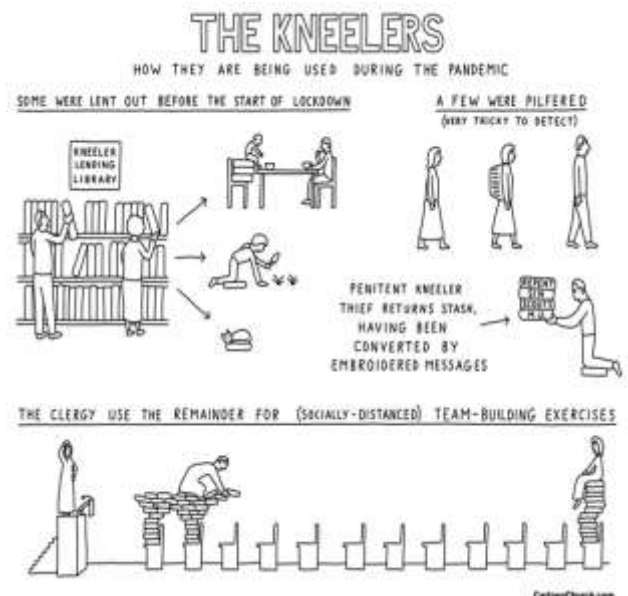
JOIN LIVE WORSHIP BY PHONE. This week we are enabling access to our Zoom services by ordinary phone - you don't need a computer or tablet. If you would like to know more please contact Steve Hasler 01799 525041 s.hasler@btopenworld.com

PRAYER STEWARDS We do not yet have any dates for opening the church building. I am expecting that, initially, no services will be held, but there may be an opportunity for private prayer. This will only be possible when we have stewards present to check all health measures are adhered to. I am currently drawing up a list of people to do this. We do realise many will still be vulnerable and we would not wish to put anyone at risk. If you are interested, please email me - gillcas@icloud.com *Gill Caswell*

COPY for next month's "PARISH NEWS" may be sent to the editor (andycoblebrooke@gmail.com) by Sunday 7th June.

June's edition of **PARISH NEWS** is available on the website at <http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews>

CARTOON BY DAVE WALKER



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