

St David's with St Michael's and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter

Newsletter for 23 May 2021 – The Feast of Pentecost – Whit Sunday

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our newsletter for Pentecost. We celebrate the gift of God's Holy Spirit to the Church as a whole and to ourselves, as individuals. We are all entrusted with different spiritual gifts but St Paul reminds us that they are all given for the common good. How can we best use our gifts, and build up the gifts of God in those around us?

Our services today are:

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's (live streamed on St David's Exeter Facebook page) with celebrant, Belinda Speed-Andrews and preacher, David James
11am Mass at St Michael's with celebrant and preacher, Fr Robin Eastoe
4pm Thrive

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88685738289?pwd=WEh1dlNCY3NRQTlCcXFjK2ZlejR0UT09>

Meeting ID: 886 8573 8289

Passcode: 159821

Nigel is preaching today at The Queen's Chapel, St James' Palace as part of his duties as Chaplain to HM the Queen.

Services in church and online this week

Tuesday 25 May, 9.30am Zoom Morning Prayer (from Common Worship Book or Daily Prayer app). Please join us using this code <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

Passcode: 196651

Wednesday 26 May, 9.30am at St Michael's Mattins followed by 10am Mass in church (also live streamed on St Michael's Facebook page)

Thursday 27 May, 9.30am Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page
10.30 Holy Communion at St David's Church

Pray for YMCA Exeter

Last Thursday of every month

11.30am (after Thursday communion)
At St David's Church

Last year we started hosting a prayer group to pray for the YMCA, their staff, clients, and projects across the city. You can join in, either in person in the Lady Chapel (safely distanced etc as usual) or via Zoom using the link below.

Pray for YMCA Exeter
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88197392078?pwd=WlFvaEFzVUNKRit2RzJvbE1ZaW1VQT09>

Meeting ID: 881 9739 2078
Passcode: 161422

Whether you've been each time, not been for a while, or haven't been so far, you are welcome to join us praying in support of this lovely local charity.

Thursday 27 May, 6pm Sung Vespers live at St Michael's Church and on the Friends of St Michael's Facebook page

Friday 28 May, Helena, protector of the holy sites, 9.30am, Morning Prayer, on St David's Facebook Page

Sunday 30 May – Trinity Sunday

9.30am Parish Communion at St David's with celebrant, Nigel Guthrie and preacher, Ash Leighton Plom

11am Mass at St Michael's with celebrant, Nigel Guthrie and preacher, Ash Leighton Plom

4pm Thrive

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Covid-19 Safe for Public Worship

Please avoid touching door handles – Thank you.

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

Please wear a face covering in church unless you are exempt.

At St David's we are encouraging people to wear face coverings to come forward to receive Holy Communion and then to consume the host after moving away from the altar rail.

At St Michael's the priest will distribute Holy Communion to people in their seats.

Seating will be distanced to approximately 2 metres. Please sit on the seats where service books are placed. Seating is also marked by white labels at St Michael's.

Services should be 'no longer than necessary'; and congregational singing is still not permitted indoors.

Toilet facilities will be available and please follow the instructions for use.

Please avoid mingling inside church before or after services.

Please do not attend church if you are feeling ill or are shielding. Although we will do all we can to make the church safe you attend at your own risk.

Living in Love and Faith – continues this Tuesday

This Tuesday afternoon group continues this week exploring and discussing these resources from the Church of England which are billed as 'Christian Teaching and learning about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage'.

The group starts at 2pm and will be running on the following dates:, 25th May, 8th June and 15th June. The study course is based on videos which include personal stories and there is time for discussion and sharing of thoughts and feelings about the topics. Each session should last no more than 90 minutes. Please let me know if you would like to join on nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com

This is a very significant consultation for the Church of England and all those taking part will be invited to make their responses to the Church of England as the House of Bishops will be considering their approach to these matters during 2022. All the material can be found online by searching for 'Living in Love and Faith' and accessed free through the LLF learning hub.

Thy Kingdom Come

Thank you to Deborah Leighton Plom for hosting an hour of prayer as part of this prayer initiative.

Christian Aid Week

Thank you to those who joined in with the **Christian Aid Week online Big Breakfast**, and to those who very generously donated. I'm delighted that we have now raised £500 (plus £113 gift aid) for the amazing work of Christian Aid.

In view of the terrible conflict this week in Israel and the Palestinian territories you may like to look up this video which illustrates some of Christian Aid's long-term work in the area. It was made in 2016 but, sadly, many of the critical issues remain the same: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiiBvIov_aQ

Time for Quiet Reflection

Belinda will next be leading a time of corporate Silent Reflection on Friday 28th May at 5.30pm in person and on Zoom. Please email her for further details and joining link at bspeedandrews@gmail.com

Help with Churchwarden tasks

Often Churchwardens pick up tasks which could be done by others. We have already had some kind offers but there are a number of jobs which we will advertise in the coming weeks.

Would you be willing to help with one of these, please, even if you can't do every week?

Opening and closing the church on Sunday (weekly)

Updating the church inventory which is now online (annual job)

Clearing the churchyard on Sunday mornings before the service (equipment provided).

Thank you!

Keep the Fête Date – 17 July!

We are planning a Parish Fête for Saturday 17 July from 11.30am to 2.30pm. It may not be on quite the usual scale but we hope it will be a wonderful parish and community event. Offers of help or raffle prizes would be most welcome and there is sheet at the back of St David's Church where offers of help can be recorded.

The next 5 years - who are we and where are we going?

In the last year our whole world has been turned upside down by COVID. It has created in most of us emotions that we never knew we had and for some it has been a strange blessing. Whatever the impact on each of our individual lives it has within church communities challenged us to think about how we are a community. What does community mean for us here in our parish? What is our ethos? How are we to live God's kingdom now? Covid has opened the door for all of us to re-think and re-set what it is we say we are. I would like to encourage an open discussion about what the next 5 years could look like for our parish.

The bible verse I would like us to hold on to is from John 14: 12:

“Those who believe in me will do what I do - yes, they will do greater things”

Are we a blessing to the community around us?

Are our two churches places of encounter or just places for those who belong?

Often at the heart of all we want to do there is a question of resources, whether that is financial, time, space, or human input. But in the words of Sam Wells I want to argue that 'God gives his people all they need to follow him, and following him is expressed in answering the call to worship him, to be his friends and to eat with him.' In light of this I would like to bring together a group of 12 people from across the breadth of the community beginning at the end of May, to read through and discuss the book 'A Future that's bigger than the past'

(https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B07YNTLDKB/ref=dp-kindle-redirect?_encoding=UTF8&btcr=1) as we begin to think and discern what God is calling us to for the next 5 years. This would of course mean a solid commitment to meet once a month for up to an hour and a half to discuss one chapter at a time, to pray together, to share openly and honestly about our life together as a parish and how we become a blessing to and receive gifts from the wider community.

If you are interested in joining in the conversation please do email me directly at bspeedandrews@gmail.com

5 places have already been taken by clergy, churchwarden and a Reader.

The first date I have suggested (nothing concrete yet) is Thursday 27 May and then the following 4th Thursday for 4 months and our last gathering on Thursday 14 October, before a meeting with Archdeacon Andrew Beane.

The Clewer Initiative

The Clewer Initiative enables Church of England dioceses and wider church networks to raise awareness of modern slavery, identify victims and to help provide victim support and care. We will have a presentation from Clewer in church on Sunday 18 July. If you would like to join in a conversation about modern slavery before then please speak to Belinda in church after the service today

Painting Exhibition for Hospiscare- a message from Howard Friend

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday June 5th - 10 till 4 at St Leonard's Church Hall. I'm holding a Lockdown Art Giveaway Exhibition. Come and see what I've been up to during Lockdown (clue - painting watercolours) and if you like one you may have it FREE - as long as you promise to make a generous donation to Hospiscare. See my work on Instagram @ friend.howard.

Traidcraft Stall & St Michael's Bountiful Table

There will be a Traidcraft Stall at St David's on Sunday 23rd May. Those who would like to make an advance order should do so via R.W.Featherstone@gmail.com before midnight on Sunday 16 May. Many thanks, Richard.

We are delighted that our stalls are running again but please be careful to maintain social distancing and just approach the stalls one at a time. Thank you for your support.

Men's Breakfast

We plan to hold the next Men's Breakfast on Saturday May 29th at 9.30am. Unfortunately the pub can't accommodate us this time so we will meet by Zoom. Sorry you'll have to cook your own breakfast again – but hopefully next month...! Here is the code:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6602261392?pwd=VzdOaU1XUFBjWk9jV0xvMDZWajZBQT09>

Meeting ID: 660 226 1392

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Parish Magazine – New Leaves

The deadline for articles for the June magazine is today. Still time to sharpen your pencils!

Green Team

Thank you to everyone who contributes to the paper recycling scheme at St Michael's Church and to John Darch who organises the collection.

The Green Team are planning a morning focussed on the environment, with lunch of locally sourced food, for 11th September 2021. Please keep the date!

Cleaning at St Michael's Church

We will be holding a 'summer clean' on Saturday 3 July from 9.30-11.30am so please put the date in your diary and come along if you can to help. We hope to be able to provide refreshments (regulations permitting!).

Phone Networks

Many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community. If you would like to be phoned by someone and haven't had any contact, or would just like to talk, please let me know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com or by ringing me on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519.

Your Prayers are asked for...

Please remember those who have died recently including:

Frederick Stapley, Terry Ham, David Walford (formerly hospital and hospice chaplain), Bill (Belinda's uncle)

In the **Parish Cycle of Prayer:** for the Youth Offenders Service, staff and clients.

Please also pray for:

The people of Israel and the Palestinian Territories, praying for a reduction in violence and a will to tackle underlying injustice; students taking exams and finishing assessments; those working in care homes, hospitals and hospices - giving thanks for their commitment and courage; those suffering from Covid around the world, especially in India and Brazil

Please give thank for:

the vaccination programme in this country and praying for the equitable distribution of vaccine throughout the world and the Covax programme;

May God bless you and those you care for,

Nigel Guthrie

Prayers, Readings and Address for Pentecost, 23 May 2021

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 Reading - John 15: 26-27 & 16: 4b-15

‘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 judgement: 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 judgement, 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 the 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.

Address by David James, 23 May 2021

I remember coming back home after our twins were born. It was early in the morning and I returned from the hospital leaving Ruth to rest and recover from it all. When I sat down a verse from John’s Gospel came to my mind; and that’s when the tears flowed. It comes just after where the reading stopped this morning.

Jesus, as you’ll have gathered, is preparing his friends for the trauma they’re about to go through when he is arrested, tried and crucified. He does this by using the picture of a birth.

‘You will have pain, but your pain will be turned into joy. When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So, you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. ‘ (Jn 16.20-22)

Today, Pentecost, Whit Sunday, is sometimes described as ‘the birthday of the Church’. Today we remember the joy of new birth, the day when, having returned to their house in Jerusalem the disciples are filled with the Spirit, the one Jesus calls ‘the Advocate’, (paracletos) the Helper, the one who stands by you in court or, here perhaps, the one who will bring you to new birth - your spiritual midwife.

When our twins were baptised a few months later the theme of the readings was God the creator and the gospel reading was again from John. It comes from early on in the gospel and Jesus uses there the same imagery of birth. It's when Nicodemus first meets Jesus; he comes to him by night because he's afraid of being seen visiting him, being a member of the Jewish Council. And Jesus says to him 'No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.'

Nicodemus is understandably confused by this, because the Greek word for 'from above' can also mean 'again' and that's how he understands it. 'Can you go into your mother's womb again, for a second time?' he asks. Nicodemus needs to be 'born of the Spirit', Jesus tells him. He still can't understand, and who can blame him? But he will later, we assume, because by the time of Jesus' crucifixion he has become a follower. It is he who, according to John, provides the copious quantities of spices with which Jesus is buried.

It was a marvellous passage to have at a baptism, that ritual of being born anew into the life of Christ, rising up from the waters of death into a new world, a new creation, filled with the Holy Spirit.

For the disciples in today's reading from Acts their rebirth comes dramatically with tongues of fire and rushing wind. The earth quakes because what is being shattered is the old world; this is the moment of new birth, the moment when they enter into the new creation opened up by Jesus' resurrection. That event happened, not by accident, on the first day of the week. It was the creation of a new world, a new way of seeing and belonging in this world and a taste of the world as it will be.

Do you know that rather cheesy song from what was at the time a very popular musical, *My Fair Lady*? One of the characters, Freddy, Aynsford-Hill has just met and fallen in love with Eliza Doolittle and he sings:

I have often walked down this street before, but the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before. All at once am I several storeys high, knowing I'm on the street where you live.

Such is the transforming power of love. In Jesus God shows that love for us which transforms us and the world around us. It's that transforming love, the gift of the Spirit, that we celebrate on Pentecost. It changes everything. Things begin to have meaning and purpose. We begin to see things in a new way, to see the world through God's eyes, because of the one who helps us, the one who's on our side, our Advocate, our Helper.

So today we celebrate that wonderful gift Jesus gives us of himself, no less. He is at our side through the gift of his Spirit, the One who will guide us into truth, about who

we are and what the world is like but could become when transformed by his love and forgiveness.

Through the Spirit we are changed, and gradually through our lives we learn things that at first would have been impossible for us to understand, just like Nicodemus. They would, in Jesus' words, have been too much for us to bear. But gradually the Spirit leads us into a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us. So led by the Spirit the Church gradually changes, adapts and sees the world and its role in it differently. Often too slowly for the liking of some, but the Church of today is not the same as the one I grew up in. It has struggled with marriage and divorce, the ordination of women and now with issues of sexuality and gender in the LLF course. These have been difficult and sometimes very divisive issues, but what in 1921 would have been altogether too much to cope with is now either accepted or part of our attempts to discern the Spirit and view things from God's perspective. 'Many people don't realise,' said the spiritual writer Simone Weil, 'that religion is a process of looking.' The Spirit helps us see ourselves and the world as God sees us. So, we see the horror and the evil and the sinfulness of things around us - and sometimes in us. We see injustice and lack of integrity in others and in ourselves, and to confront such things we need the Helper.

So today is a day of celebration of the birth of a new creation and the work of the Spirit in us, in the Church and also in the world - for, like the wind, the Spirit blows where it will. Our calling is to live in the Spirit and change our world into the new creation that God is bringing about. In Christ we already have a foot in that new world and are offered its power to bring where we are and who we are to new birth, birth from above.

The gift of the Spirit is ours for the asking. When people receive it they are filled with joy and it's a joy that's permanent and powerful and transforming, enabling us to see the world anew.

'How do you talk about things that are not just out of the ordinary but that take you into a whole new world?' asks Bishop Tom Wright. 'One way of doing it is through music.'

As I began preparing this sermon I happened to hear a song by the English composer Gerald Finzi from a piece he called *Dies Natalis - Birthday*. It was a setting of a poem by Thomas Traherne, an Anglican priest who had lived for only 38 years and died in 1674. His poetry lay undiscovered for more than two hundred years and when it was finally published Finzi was one of those who set it to music. It is Traherne's vision of a world transfigured by God.

We'll end by listening to it now:

Wonder Thomas Traherne

How like an angel came I down!
How bright are all things here!
When first among his works I did appear O how their glory me did crown!
The world resembled his eternity,
In which my soul did walk;
And ev'ry thing that I did see
Did with me talk.
The skies in their magnificence,
The lively, lovely air;
Oh how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair! The stars did entertain my sense,
And all the works of God, so bright and pure, So rich and great did seem,
As if they ever must endure
In my esteem.
A native health and innocence
Within my bones did grow,
And while my God did all his glories show, I felt a vigour in my sense
That was all spirit. I within did flow
With seas of life, like wine;
I nothing in the world did know
But 'twas divine.

Closing Prayer and Blessing

Faithful God,
who fulfilled the promises of Easter
by sending us your Holy Spirit
and opening to every race and nation
the way of life eternal:
open our lips by your Spirit,
that every tongue may tell of your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,
Give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
And strengthen you to proclaim the word and works of God;
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father,
the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon us and remain
with us always. **Amen.**

Do join us next week for our services in church and online!