

## Weekly Newsletter (64)

by and for the Christ Church and Paghams URC families

23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021

### Musings from the Manse

Dear Friends,

As I shall remark in the Call to Worship on Sunday morning ...

Today we look back to the great day of Pentecost, when a mighty wind surged forth from heaven, pushing the followers of Jesus out of the house, where they had been hiding, and into the streets. Flames danced above their heads, their tongues began to wag and people from all over the world heard what they said – no matter what their native language. Peter gave a sermon which would cause any preacher to turn green with envy – and three thousand people were baptised. The Church of Jesus Christ was born! What a magnificent sight it must have been! Yet, today, we are somehow nervous about the Holy Spirit - what it might make us do to take us out of the places we feel comfortable – and I am not the only one to ponder the mystery that has been called many things, including ‘Ruach’, ‘Paraclete’, ‘Intercessor’, to name but a few. Sheila Walker reflects in this way.... **‘Spirit Level’**



“To be honest, it’s always mystified me why, now that the Holy Spirit is ours for the asking, the Church isn’t sweeping everything before it in one stupendous global revival...

Instead, *‘singing in the Spirit’*, which should surely leave Bach standing, resembles nothing so much as an unpractised three chord trick; being *‘filled with the Spirit’*, which should burn in our bones like brandy wine, resembles nothing so much as half a cup of cold tea. And *‘moving in the power of the Spirit’*, which should send us into orbit, resembles nothing so much as hybrid clichés returning like homing pigeons.

OK; so that’s wildly unfair, exaggeration, poetic licence; but is there something we’re missing? After all ...

After Eden, after the Spirit’s awesome, ordering work in creation, God saves his breath, conserves his energy, making only a few judicious visits to a shepherd here, a prophet there, maybe a priest or a king, a modest PR operation with a simple message: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is **one** Lord, holy and just*; and here is the rule book. You’ll struggle, but hang on in there: help is at hand – eventually...

After Bethlehem, after the Spirit’s unique, ground-breaking work in begetting the Son of God, he finds he has a job for life and a home on earth, fullness of God in human being – Jesus Christ, letting the light of God catch the glass to magnify and burn up evil; following still when that same Spirit led through the valley of the shadow of death to produce his powerful masterwork: resurrection! Great feast of the Spirit, but God had only one Son...

After Pentecost, though, after the Spirit’s worldwide, online access, promise of God, password given to all who believe – how is it we fail to display the fire of Elijah, the wisdom of Solomon, the victory of David, the strength of Samson, the love of Jesus, the power of Peter and Paul? How is it the gifts of the Spirit appear to lie unopened, collecting dust, and the fruit of the Spirit is small, and hard and green on the trees?

Even with such a massive increase in client base, and delivery area, there’s no way that God will run out of breath; the fault, it seems, must, therefore, rest with us.

Let’s face it, the Holy Spirit is not your usual house guest who, with a bit of luck, will fall in with your plans, enjoy your food, help with the dishes but otherwise keep out of the way: no, he will accept our invitation for one reason and with one agenda only: transformation.

Change is his business - not changing rooms, not habitat, but **habit** is his remit, making us mature in Christ: holy – what else? But is that what I want, deep down; is that what I’m asking? Have I counted the cost to my pride, ambition, niceness, ease? If I’m not serious, forget it (remember, he hears not my well chosen words, but the cry of my heart).

Transformation, too, of my relationships, knocking off corners, planning sharp edges, smoothing ruffled feathers, mixing mortar to cement together a community of the most unlikely, unlike, tatterdemalion people to show the world the power of the love of God. But is that what I want, deep down; is that what I’m asking? Have I counted the cost of taking time to understand and love those to whom I would not normally give the time of day?

Transformation, not only of my circle, but of my agenda - equipping me for the work of ministry and mission – yes, me. No, not knocking on doors (stop making excuses ...), but, in my own way offering the love of God and the word of God to a lonely, illiterate world. But is that what I want, deep down; is that what I’m asking? Have I counted the cost to my comfort zone?

Holy Spirit, do we have only as much of you as you have of us? Are we – afraid? Do we reckon the cost of the adventure too high, not seeing that it is repaid a hundred times over with interest and joy?

Holy Spirit, is this why we are so faint and few? Do we have only as much of you as you have of us?"

On Pentecost Sunday, when we utter those words, '*Come, Holy Spirit, Come*' – should we only say them if we are prepared to change - to progress in our discipleship, even if we are scared of the consequences? I hope not – say them with conviction, with joy, with the knowledge that God gives us more than we will ever need, and with determination!

Yours in Christ, Helen <>

## **Word for today** John 15: 26, 27; 16: 4b-15

'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.' (John 16: 12-14)

## **Meditation of Peter, James and John**

**Peter** There were things he felt unable to tell us at the time - not because he didn't want to, or had something to hide, but because we simply weren't ready to hear them.

**John** We weren't expecting his death, for a start - each of us still secretly hoping he'd reign on earth, here and now.

**James** And, if we weren't prepared for his death, we weren't ready either for his resurrection. None of us believed the tomb was empty - not at first. We thought it was nonsense, do you recall?

**John** It was his return to the Father, though, that got me most – I just couldn't get my head round it. One moment he was back by our side and the next, gone again, or so it seemed at the time.

**Peter** And as for the gift of Spirit, power from on high, well, he may have promised it often enough, but we'd no idea what he actually meant. It took us by surprise completely!

**John** Yes, we've come a long way since we rode with him into Jerusalem - the crowds welcoming him as king. He'd told us what to expect, but we couldn't even take *that* in at first, let alone more.

**James** And, he continues to astonish us, even now, the Spirit, time and again, offering fresh insights into the things he taught us.

**Peter** We needed time to learn, to accept, to grow, and, of course, we still do; for we're talking here of the things of God, of grasping the unseen.

**James** It needs patience to do that,

**John** trust,

**Peter** discipline,

**James** a life lived with him.

**John** We're on a journey of faith,

**James** and we've not finished it yet,

**Peter** not by a long way.

**All** We've only just begun.

## **Prayer**

Mighty and mysterious God, we like to think we know it all –

that we have understood the gospel and grasped the wonder of who and what you are.

But the reality is different, for your ways are not our ways or your thought our thoughts.

So much is beyond us, leaving us baffled and bemused,  
and much else is, at best, only partially fathomed.

Time and again what we thought we knew is challenged and tested,  
needing to be either revised or discarded altogether.

Give us the humility we need to accept that our knowledge is incomplete,  
that there is always more to learn.

Open our hearts to the great adventure of discovery you set before us,  
until that day when we finally see you face to face,  
and know you, even as we are fully known. Amen.

*Word for today, Meditation and Prayer from 'A most amazing Man' by Nick Fawcett*

## Gathered for Prayer....

Meets at **9 am and 7 pm** each Wednesday. **All are welcome!**

Here's the link....

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5742722693?pwd=R3BEQ3pPV0ZJNndRWVKeWdvand6QT09>

Meeting ID: 574 272 2693 Passcode: xsX5UM

## Other news ...

*The Methodist Circuit Service for Pentecost*, with the theme of 'Justice and Peace', will be on **Sunday evening at 6 pm**, when Mr. David Booth, on behalf of Christ Church, will be doing a 3 minute presentation on the theme.

To zoom in, this is the link...

<https://zoom.us/j/93654747114?pwd=WjYyYU1tODZ5YzV6dmo1c0lIV2ZXdz09>

Meeting ID: 936 5474 7114

Passcode: 189175



To mark **World Environment Day on 5 June**  
we are inviting you to join us for a **National Day of Prayer, in the park!**

**Prayer in the Park** is a prayer event **uniting people and churches across the UK** as we celebrate the beauty of God's world, repent for the damage we've done and seek God's heart for a sustainable future.

Just days after the event, world leaders will meet for the *G7 summit in Cornwall* to discuss how to build back better from the coronavirus pandemic and create a greener and fairer future for all. And, in November, world leaders will gather for the *United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26)* to discuss how to tackle the climate crisis.

Decisions made at these gatherings will affect us all, now and for generations to come – especially those living in the poorest communities across the world, who are already being disproportionately affected by climate change.

**We want to bring this to God in prayer. Will you join us?**

There is a **Church Meeting for Christ Church on Thursday 27 May**

Here is the link: Topic: Christ Church Church Meeting

Time: **May 27, 2021 07:30 PM London**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89148186622?pwd=Z29WMkZzNktnRDJvaFdkam9hMTByUT09>

Meeting ID: 891 4818 6622

Passcode: 409974

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