

# The Parish of Christchurch

*The Priory Church of the Holy Trinity, Christchurch  
St George, Jumpers • St John at Purewell*



*For Sunday 24 May, Easter 7*

Dear Friends,

This letter is being written on Ascension Day, an important Festival that is included in the list of essential Jesus-related events recorded in the Apostles' Creed: Jesus' conception, birth, crucifixion, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming. The Ascension is included because it is the final sign that the salvation won by Christ has been accepted; that humanity has been redeemed and accepted, and is now taken up into heaven with Christ. It is the sign that Jesus has been vindicated as our Saviour, and now reigns as Lord. It also confirms that, in Christ, we have direct access to God our Father: for the crucified, risen and ascended Jesus has restored the fellowship of heaven and earth.

Ascension Day is also the beginning of a period of anticipation. This is because, over the past twenty years or so, the Church has recognised that Pentecost, when we celebrate the sending of the Holy Spirit on the first Christians, is also the eighth Sunday of Easter.

For those of us who were raised (in Anglican terms, at least) with a knowledge of the Book of Common Prayer Calendar, this may have come as a surprise: there, both the Ascension and Whitsun are followed by days of special provision. Yet, the roots of this apparently new understanding in fact go back many centuries; and it is good that they are once again able to nourish the worship, prayer and service of the Church.

By contrast, from Ascension Day our liturgies, Morning and Evening Prayer, our Bible readings and our prayer all look forward expectantly to Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit. The refrain that runs through these days is, 'Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people, and kindle in us the fire of your love.'

This is also why **Thy Kingdom Come** takes place now, between Ascension and Pentecost. A reminder of some of the services and resources for Thy Kingdom Come can be found at the end of this letter.

In these days of Thy Kingdom Come, we look to be filled afresh by the Holy Spirit, and to pray that we may be guided, refreshed, comforted, inspired and accompanied every day by the Spirit who is just like Jesus.

Our utter dependence on the Holy Spirit is perhaps more obvious in these challenging days, when so much has had to stop. As I have been reflecting on this during the week, the Bible passage that came to mind was from Isaiah chapter 43, where God speaks through the prophet to his people:

'Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43.18-19)

We need the Holy Spirit to help us perceive what God is already doing in our midst now. Of four things we may be sure:

- God is in our communities, in our churches and in each of us – he has not left, nor has he paused his creative and recreative work in our lives;
- God is good and his purposes for us all are good;
- God sees opportunities and possibilities that we have neither dreamed of nor imagined;
- and the best, safest, most fulfilling place to be is in the centre of his will.

**That** is why we need the Holy Spirit more than ever. I urge us all to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit as we approach Pentecost, and to be open to the Spirit's work in our midst.

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Many thanks to everyone who has responded so generously to last week's pastoral letter by sending a donation. I am delighted to be able to tell you that, as of today, we have raised just over double the £5,000 figure that was given us by the diocese to 'redeem our curate'! This is wonderful news. It means that the Revd Jonathan Evans is already back at work, collaborating with Fr Richard and myself in the ministry of our parish.

Jonathan writes:

'I find it hard to know quite what to say or how to respond to the kindness and generosity that has been shown to Alice and me in relation to the whole sorry business of my being placed on furlough. The support shown to us - the messages, the cards, the enormous hampers of goodies from the PCC and of course the donations of money that have enabled me to resume my duties as part of the ministry team are all overwhelming and humbling. I also felt wonderfully held by you all in prayer while I was not able to be with you in person. Not a day went by without my noticing some blessing and there was never a sense of abandonment. Not all curates and their families are as well looked after as we are and I am deeply grateful to you all.'

As I promised in this weekend's pastoral letter, and in the interests of transparency, any donations already received that are surplus to our target will be placed in the parish's General Account, and used to help fund future Common Mission Fund contributions. CMF used to be known as 'Parish Share'; it covers the costs of all our clergy.

It may be that some of you have not yet made a donation, but had intended to; and others may have posted a cheque, which may have arrived after we met our revised target. Those of you who were intending to make a donation may still do so, of course. Any online gifts for this purpose received from now on will be transferred to the General Account. If you have posted a cheque, we shall contact you by phone to ensure that you are happy for it to be used in this way. Whether online or by cheque, your gift will support the ministry and mission being delivered here in Christchurch and, online, to many hundreds beyond the parish boundaries.

Thank you again for your prayers, your generosity and your encouragement. God bless us all,



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**Daily Hope**, a free national phone line launched by the Archbishop, is still accessible by anyone with a phone. The free phone line, available 24 hours a day on 0800 804 8044, was set up particularly for anyone who is unable to join online church services during the lockdown. Callers will hear a special greeting from the Archbishop before being able to choose from a range of options, including hymns, prayers, reflections and advice on COVID-19.

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### **A reminder about Thy Kingdom Come**

You can find out more about Thy Kingdom Come and the resources available this year on our parish website, [www.christchurchpriory.org](http://www.christchurchpriory.org). There are also links to:

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| Sunday May 24 at 6.00pm | A Taizé Service from this parish, available on our website |
| Sunday May 31 at 6.00pm | Deanery Pentecost Service from Ringwood                    |

In addition, you are most welcome to join our parish Morning Prayer on Zoom, at 8.30am every weekday morning. Please email [conference@christchurchpriory.org](mailto:conference@christchurchpriory.org) or phone 01202 800888 for information on how you can share in Morning Prayer.