

The Parish of Christchurch

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



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Dear Friends

Today the Church keeps the Festival of Pentecost and we remember how the promised gift of The Holy Spirit came to rest upon those first disciples of our Lord. Jesus had promised them that he would leave them not comfortless, and in the second chapter of the book of Acts we are reminded of just what occurred on Whit Sunday. This was the start of their own public ministries as empowered by the Spirit, they stepped out from the shadows and into the light of Christian service. Their formal training period had come to an end and now was the time for them to go out into the world and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, and surely at that very moment they realised the truth of Jesus' words to them, that when they acted in His Name, they would never be on their own, the Comforter, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit would always be with them to guide and to lead them.

Over the next few weeks, in our bible passages we will hear again that the gifts of the Spirit are many and varied and no one person possesses them all, and also that no gift is more or less important than a different one. Well I believe that we are truly blessed within our parish that such gifts remain highly visible and active within the ministry provided by so many people. What is particularly pleasing though, is the way that we come together to utilise the full gifts of the Spirit and for the benefit of all who live in our local community. These are surely the signs of a good and healthy Church family at work.

In the ordination service, before the prayer calling for the Holy Spirit to rest upon the candidate and their ministry, the ordaining bishop reminds them, "You cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength." It is a vivid reminder that all good and healthy public ministry simply has to be rooted and grounded in Christ and be empowered and sustained by the Holy Spirit. As Christians have always known, the best ministries are collaborative in style and nature, always seeking to equip others and to release the gifts of the Spirit within other people. One man from our parish, one much loved man in our parish knows the truth of this sentiment as much as anyone else I know. Last weekend, Canon Graham Newton celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination as a deacon within the Church of England. Graham had been due to stand as liturgical deacon at the 9.30 Sung Eucharist at The Priory and to preach at that Service. There will come a time when we can meet to celebrate with Graham and to thank God for his caring ministry amongst us, I am equally sure that Canon Charles will invite Graham to Preside on the corresponding Sunday next year as he celebrates the 50th anniversary of his ordination as a priest. Today, let us give thanks for Graham's ministry, for his pastoral love and care, for the gifts of the Spirit that have enabled him to exercise his ministry in several places during this 50 year period, and for the quiet but heart felt love that he offers to many of us in our parish today.

At the heart of all public ministry, lay and ordained, is this very pastoral care that we provide to each other, as we nurture one another in faith, journey together in discipleship, face head on the challenges that confront us and pray with one another in the good and the sad times in our own lives. In these difficult times, we as a ministry team under Charles' leadership as the chief pastor in our parish, continue to

attempt to do all of this, all be it in very new ways for us all. Thank you for your messages of support and encouragement, it is a source of spiritual tonic to us all, it is also testimony to the fact that such ministry remains Christ centred and exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit. Of course we, like you, miss the eye to eye and heart to heart contact that is always most powerful when we are in the physical presence of each other, and I am so pleased that this is now permitted on a small scale in the open air. I am so looking forward to having a face to face cup of coffee with Charles tomorrow, the first time we have been able to meet in over two months.

Today I can share with you that our preparations are well under way to ensure our Churches are as safe as is possible for when we are permitted to enter them once again. Initially I am sure this will be only for private prayer. After that, there is bound to be a step by step approach to be followed before we can arrive at the point when everything appears “normal” once again. We will of course keep you fully updated in these pastoral letters and via the website.

We have noticed that the 0800 number previously circulated for pastoral contact with the clergy has received virtually no use whatsoever. With this in mind we have decided to withdraw this number. If you do need to contact one of us, PLEASE do so, I really cannot emphasise that point enough. We are always here for you and we also know that you are here for us.

Charles’ telephone number is 01202 800888, and his day off is on Tuesday.

Jonathan’s is 07305 736042, and his day off at the moment is on Saturday.

My number is 07903 252230 and my day off is on Monday. I will be off on holiday (in my garden!) between 8th – 13th June.

You will also know that in our weekly bulletin there is a section for those who we have all been asked to pray for. From this Sunday this will appear on the website under the page called “Parish.” This list needs updating on a regular basis so we will ask you to contact us once a month if you wish the name to remain on the list. If you would like someone included under any of these headings, those unwell and receiving treatment, for the long term sick, those who are housebound, those who have recently died and those whose anniversary of death falls at this time, please do send me an email (email address at the top of this letter) or call me on the phone. But please do get permission from the person concerned before asking their name to be included on the list for the sick, long term unwell or the housebound.

The address for other prayer requests is prayers@christchurchpriory.org or via one of our phone numbers. Please do state on this email if you wish the prayer to be said at Morning Prayer where we have an open invitation for all to attend, alternatively they can be said when the clergy meet together for private prayer.

Finally, I am sure like me you found it wonderful to see Charles presiding at the Eucharist from inside the Priory last Sunday morning. Not wanting to put any of you off, this week it will be my privilege to Preside and next Sunday, Trinity Sunday, it will be Jonathan’s turn. May the gifts of the Holy Spirit rest on us all as we seek to do the will of our Lord in this our parish of Christchurch.

With my love, prayers and very best wishes to you all.

Richard.

Reverend Richard Partridge