

Collect, Readings and Sermon
Sunday 24th May 2026
Pentecost Sunday

Collect

God, who 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.

Joel 2:21-32

Do not fear, O soil;
 be glad and rejoice,
 for the Lord has done great things!
Do not fear, you animals of the field,
 for the pastures of the wilderness are green;
the tree bears its fruit,
 the fig tree and vine give their full yield.
O children of Zion, be glad
 and rejoice in the Lord your God;
for he has given the early rain for your vindication,
 he has poured down for you abundant rain,
 the early and the later rain, as before.
The threshing-floors shall be full of grain,
 the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
I will repay you for the years
 that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
 my great army, which I sent against you.
You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
 and praise the name of the Lord your God,
 who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.
You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
 and that I, the Lord, am your God and there is no other.
And my people shall never again
 be put to shame.

Then afterwards

I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls.

Acts 2:14-21

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."

Post Communion

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.

Sermon

The images from this evening's readings are nothing if not dramatic. You will have noticed that first we heard the reading from Joel, which is then quoted by Peter in Acts of the Apostles. It speaks of the Spirit of God being poured out, and the impact that it has. It is, to say the least, utterly transformational for those who receive it. And if you were here this morning, you will also have heard the earlier section of the reading from Acts, which describes the tongues of fire, and people understanding one another, even though they had previously spoken different languages.

I don't know about you, but there are times when I hear readings like this about the way in which the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is received that I feel a little uneasy. Over the years I have experienced a wide range of different worship styles, and it is fair to say that I am not always comfortable with what can feel to me like frenzy, much as I appreciate that some people find it deeply moving.

Which has left me asking myself how it is that we see the Holy Spirit at work in each of the churches and the lives of individuals across this Ministry Area.

Although I have spent much of the last few weeks mainly based at St. Mary's, in the coming weeks I am looking forward to getting to each of the churches across the Ministry Area, leading services, meeting the congregations and listening to how you believe that the spirit is at work. There will also be a couple of opportunities in June for you to come and ask whatever questions you might have for me. Please be assured that I want to hear your thoughts and ideas – you know these places best. So if you would prefer to meet with me one to one, just let me know.

Here is what I think I am noticing about the work of the Spirit in this Ministry Area. I have come across some very dedicated individuals who serve each of the churches and local communities. This manifests itself in all kinds of ways. There are some people who always seem to make themselves available to support the things that need doing in each of the churches. Sometimes this is by doing practical things; sometimes by offering support;

sometimes by being at the end of the telephone. I am so conscious that we all have plenty of calls on our time and energies, but the willingness of many of you to get stuck in when necessary is wonderful to see.

I know, too, that there are some individuals who are passionate about various aspects of church life. It might be the worship; outreach into the local communities; governance matters, so that we make sure we are able to pay the bills. Some people have shared their thoughts and ideas with me, which has been so helpful. I expect that there are plenty of you who are still keeping your ideas to yourselves, but please be assured that I am keen to hear them. I absolutely love your passion – it can so often be a sign of God’s Spirit at work. And I also hope that you will bear with me as I get to know you and these communities better. I know it can be frustrating when it feels as though there is a lack of progress. I think, though, that prioritising will take a bit of time.

Which brings me to another way that I have seen the Spirit at work across this Ministry Area. Sometimes in my conversations, people have been gently reassuring to me. They have acknowledged that it takes time to settle and get to know people. I have even heard that wonderful phrase: “you can’t please all of the people all of the time.” In some of you, the Holy Spirit manifests itself in a deep compassion, concern and empathy, which is such an important gift.

When I think about how the Spirit is at work across our churches, I can’t miss out the clergy. The level of care shown by them for people and worship is inspiring. This service of choral evensong is also a reminder that we are blessed with musicians across the Ministry Area who help us to experience something of God through the musical elements of worship. There is so much about music that can help us to connect more fully with God, transcending if only for a little while the challenges of daily life.

I am painfully aware that I am only beginning to get to know you, and it is my hope and prayer that in the coming weeks and months you will help me to understand us and our communities better. One thing that I already treasure is the way in which each church has a separate and unique identity, yet we are already identifying ways that we can work together

in support of the beautiful work that each community is involved in. There is something precious about being able to acknowledge and support one another, while also recognising our own individual gifts.

On this feast of Pentecost, what I want to say most is be encouraged. There is so much of God's Spirit, working in our lives and our communities. Let's commit ourselves today to continuing that work; to supporting and encouraging one another; to recognising the gift of our uniqueness, alongside the strength of our unity; and to constantly drawing on the love that we find in God.

Amen.