

**Collect, Readings and Sermon**  
**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> 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.

**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."

### **1 Corinthians 12:3b-13**

No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

### **John 20:19-23**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

### **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

Over twenty years ago now, I decided to undertake the three peaks challenge, climbing the three highest peaks in the United Kingdom in 24 hours. Starting with Ben Nevis at about 7 o'clock on a Friday evening, we then summited Scafell Pike quite early on the Saturday morning, and were climbing Snowdon, in glorious sunshine obviously, on the Saturday afternoon, finishing in just over 22 hours. I completed the climb with a group of people I hardly knew, all colleagues of a person I had met on a counselling training course.

There were many highlights to completing the challenge, but perhaps the greatest for me was the experience of how the team worked together. Of the handful of people, a couple were athletes. They were extremely fit and had the most energy on the uphill. However, some of the group had made an unsuccessful attempt the previous year. They believed that one of their mistakes was that they went off too quickly. So as we climbed each mountain, it was often me who chose the pace. I had a general level of fitness, but was no athlete, so I was able to set a pace that we could all manage – and the fittest among us kept up morale.

As is so often the case with athletes, it was on the downhills that they struggled most, some having knee injuries. It was then that I was able to keep their spirits up. Integral to our team were the two colleagues who agreed to drive the minibus. They did not complete the challenge, which meant that they could sleep while we climbed, allowing us to get a little sleep while they drove. One decided to climb Snowdon with us at the end, and we knew that without their support, we would not have been successful.

What surprised me the most over the weekend was the way that what I had originally considered to be a personal challenge became a team challenge. Once we had given and received support during each of the climbs, there was a very real sense that we all wanted everyone to succeed. If we left anyone behind on one of the climbs, it felt as though the challenge would not have been completed.

When St. Paul speaks of varieties of gifts but the same spirit, I sometimes have in mind experiences like the Three Peaks, when I have experienced team work in a way that has

made the whole so much more than the sum of the parts. This way of understanding God's Spirit as working in each one of us, yet producing different results, is one with which I can identify. The infinite variety of humanity is such a gift, with each one of us bringing different skills, strengths and personalities. There is a place for each one of us, and the world works so much better when we value our diversity.

Of course I wouldn't be being honest if I didn't acknowledge that each of our different gifts can also present challenges. I expect some of you, like me, will have experienced training courses over the years in which you have sought to understand something about the difference of other team members. Sometimes these focus on the role that we might play within a team; sometimes they are more focused on our different personalities. But it is fair to say that the reason for such courses is often because teams do not always function well. For those who value attention to detail, someone who prefers to look at the big picture and skim across the detail can be frustrating. For those who like to dream, those who see the possible pitfalls of each suggestion can feel difficult.

The reading from Corinthians reminds us, though, to value our differences and seek to notice the gifts of the spirit both in ourselves and in others.

If that is one image of Pentecost that we get from this morning's readings, the others are somewhat different. In Acts of the Apostles, we hear about the first Pentecost, which frankly sounds like quite a riot. Tongues of fire descend and suddenly people are all able to speak languages that they did not previously know, such that they can understand one another. The effect is that some of those looking on think that they're drunk.

For those of us who are most comfortable with relatively sedate forms of worship, the idea of the Holy Spirit whipping up the kind of frenzy of which this reading speaks can feel a little uncomfortable. And yet there are such important things to notice. For example, the way the Spirit enables those affected to understand one another. The description here is literal – they can speak and understand languages that they did not previously know. If we extend the image, we might ask ourselves whether the Holy Spirit can help us to understand one another better in all kinds of ways. I wonder whether you have sometimes found yourself in

a meeting where you understand the words that are being said, but the ideas just don't make any sense. One of the things that I loved about teaching was that quite often a pupil would be struggling to understand, and then one of the other children would suddenly say: "what miss means is ..." I had thought I was being entirely clear, but it turns out that I wasn't being understood.

The suggestion from the reading from Acts is that the Holy Spirit might enable us to have moments of clarity in understanding one another. I sometimes think that this is especially important in church. We all experience faith in such different ways, and sometimes the way that others speak of their experiences, beliefs and indeed aspirations can sound so alien. I wonder whether sometimes we might seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in prayer in our attempts to understand more. A lack of understanding can so easily make us dismissive, but sometimes when we are enlightened, we all move forward.

If we turn to the gospel reading, we get a slightly different perspective again. While the feast of Pentecost offers the image of tongues of fire landing on the disciples, the image in John's gospel is more personal and intimate. It is of Jesus offering the Holy Spirit through his breath. And this gentler way of receiving the Spirit is mirrored with its impact. What Jesus is seeking to bring is peace, and I think what is meant here is a deep, inner sense of peace. Perhaps you can recognise times in your life when you have felt more or less at peace, and we all know that there are times in our lives when peace is hard to find. Yet the suggestion here is that somehow God's spirit can hold us in those times and bring glimpses of an inner peace, even in difficult situations.

There is a suggestion, too, that the gift of the Spirit also brings responsibility. How hard it is to hear those words about forgiving and retaining sins. And yet somehow there is truth in the fact that our behaviours will always have consequences. We are offered peace; and we are given responsibility. We are, of course, surrounded by God's love. But our responsibilities as we relate to one another are not always easy.

Which in a way brings us full circle to remember that we gather together at church in order to support one another; to appreciate and value one another's gifts; to rest in the peace that

we can be offered; to support and encourage one another through the challenges and joys, and as we seek to make wise decisions. And as we do so, we know that we are held in God's love, freely and abundantly offered through the Holy Spirit.

Amen