

North Staffordshire Circuit (11/22)

Service Sheets For the Month of May 2026

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Sunday 3rd May 2026 – 5th Sunday of Easter

This service was compiled by Rev'd Liz Singleton in May 2023

Call to Worship:

O God, you are our rock and our fortress,
for the sake of your name, lead us and guide us.

Jesus, our Way, our Truth and our Life,
for the sake of your name, lead us and guide us.

Spirit of our God, our inspiration, our comforter,
for the sake of your name, lead us and guide us.

Hymn: Rejoice, the Lord is King! (StF 335/H&P 243)

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore;
mortals, give thanks, and sing,
and triumph evermore:
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
rejoice! Again I say: rejoice!

Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains,
he took his seat above:

His kingdom cannot fail,
he rules both earth and heaven:
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given:

He sits at God's right hand
till all his foes submit,
and bow to his command,
and fall beneath his feet:

Rejoice in glorious hope;
Jesus the Judge shall come,
and take his servants up
to their eternal home:

*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice:
God's trumpet-call shall sound: rejoice!*

Prayer:

Blessed God, we cannot see and know the depth of your being, but, for what we do see and know, we worship and adore you.

We find in you protection, guidance and love.

We find in you forgiveness, acceptance and repentance.

We see in you a way of living that is right and just, loving and caring.

We feel the spark of your Spirit in the depths of our beings and know you to be true.

You search us and know us and are forever with us.

Blessed God, father, Son and Holy Spirit, as you are one, may we be one with you and all.

Amen

Reading: Psalm 31: 1 – 5, 15 – 16 NLT

O LORD, I have come to you for protection;

don't let me be disgraced.

Save me, for you do what is right.

Turn your ear to listen to me;

rescue me quickly.

Be my rock of protection,

a fortress where I will be safe.

You are my rock and my fortress.

For the honour of your name, lead me out of this danger.

Pull me from the trap my enemies set for me,

for I find protection in you alone.

I entrust my spirit into your hand.

Rescue me, LORD, for you are a faithful God.

My future is in your hands.

Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly.

Let your favour shine on your servant.

In your unfailing love, rescue me.

The psalmist uses both inanimate and intimate images to describe God's saving presence – rock and fortress; ear, hand and face. Rock and fortress remind us of the strength and the certainty of God. Ear, hand, and face remind us that although God is not a person as we are we can, nonetheless, have a personal relationship with him and journey with him through life.

Hymn: Faithful One (StF 628)

Faithful One, so unchanging,
Ageless One, you're my rock of peace.
Lord of all I depend on you,
I call out to you again and again.
I call out to you again and again.
You are my rock in times of trouble.
You lift me up when I fall down.
All through the storm your love is the anchor,
my hope is in you alone.

Reading: John 14: 1 – 14 NLT

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.

²There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going."

"No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. Just believe that I

am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

“I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Reflection:

It is the time of the Passover Festival and Jesus is sat with his friends in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem. They have shared together in a meal, in bread, and wine. Jesus has spoken of betrayal and Judas has already disappeared out into the darkness to carry out his act of betrayal and pocket thirty pieces of silver. The conversation in the upper room continues. Things are beginning to feel intense, Jesus is talking with an urgency that is growing, he won't be with them for much longer. He commands them to love one another once he has gone and Peter's response is to want to know where Jesus is going. Somewhere that they cannot go explains Jesus but where they can follow him later. Peter wants to go *now* – he was always impetuous and impatient! He's up for going to wherever it might be there and then if it means being able to stay with Jesus – “I'm ready to die for you' he says. So imagine how he felt when the response he got was 'Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter – before the rooster crows tomorrow morning you will deny three times that you even know me.' Ouch! Yet, it is in this context that Jesus then goes on to share the most wonderful words of reassurance.

'Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.' Amidst all the emotions that are bubbling up into that room – desperation, bewilderment, frustration, fear, confusion – Jesus effectively says 'Don't be worried, don't be upset' and goes on to say 'You know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas's response to this is so like him and is probably the question that all the others were thinking but didn't have the nerve to ask. 'I am the way, the truth and the life'

When we find ourselves wondering what life is all about; when we don't know which way to turn; when we aren't sure who to believe or how to react, Jesus presents himself as the answer. “I am the way, the truth and

the life.’ This is a remarkable invitation to enter into a personal, a living, relationship which can change lives and offers the ultimate gift, eternal life. Jesus didn’t just say ‘My teaching is the answer’ he says that HE is the answer. And in a world where it is so often difficult to figure out where we are going, who is telling the truth, what is real, those words ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’ are words not just of reassurance, they are words of hope. For very shortly after he had spoken these words Jesus went to the cross but was then raised again, bringing a divine life affirming power to those words because through his resurrection Jesus is our living, and our life giving, Saviour.

These are the words of a song I remember from the early 1980s. It reached no.6 in the charts! It was sung by Jon and Vangelis. It speaks of a friend close by, of somehow finding a way home, of not being alone, and for me that all points to one thing – the presence of God in Jesus walking with me, talking with me, guiding me home.

You ask me where to begin
Am I so lost in my sin?
You ask me where did I fall
I’ll say I can’t tell you when
But if my spirit is lost
How will I find what is near
Don’t question, I’m not alone
Somehow I’ll find my way home.

My sun shall rise in the east
So shall my heart be at peace
And if you’re asking me when
I’ll say it starts at the end.
You know your will to be free
Is matched with love secretly
And talk will alter your prayer
Somehow you find you are there.

Your friend is close by your side
And speaks in far ancient tongue
A season’s wish will come true
All seasons begin with you.

One world we all come from
One world we melt into one
Just hold my hand and we're there
Somehow we're going somewhere

You ask me where to begin
Am I so lost in my sin
You ask me where did I fall
I'll say I can't tell you when
But if my spirit is strong
I know it can't be long
No questions I'm not alone
Somehow I'll find my way home.

Hymn: Going Home, Moving On (StF 734)

Going home, moving on,
through God's open door;
hush, my soul, have no fear,
Christ has gone before.

Parting hurts, love protests,
pain is not denied;
yet, in Christ, life and hope
span the great divide.

Going home, moving on,
through God's open door;
hush, my soul, have no fear,
Christ has gone before,
Christ has gone before.

No more guilt, no more fear,
all the past is healed:
broken dreams now restored,
perfect grace revealed.
Christ has died, Christ is risen,
Christ will come again:
death destroyed, life restored,
love alone shall reign.
Going home, moving on,

through God's open door;
hush, my soul, have no fear,
Christ has gone before,
Christ has gone before.

Prayer:

Prepare for us a place
where hearts can dwell in peace,
where souls can find their rest,
where bodies can heal their wounds.

Prepare for us a place
where longings are fulfilled,
where hunger is satisfied,
where thirst is quenched.

Prepare for us a place
where wrongs are set right,
where injustice finds an end,
where hatred finds no victim.

Prepare for us a place
where lands smell of Eden,
where rivers run free,
where fruit grows in plenty.

Prepare for us
a home,
a paradise,
a Kingdom.

Prepare for us a place
where God is:
the loving Creator,
the passionate Son,
the life-giving Spirit,
and lead us there.

Prepare in us a place
where love can grow,

where visions can flourish,
where hope can spring.

Prepare in us a place
where truth is lived,
where justice matters,
where good triumphs.

Prepare in us a place
a home,
a paradise,
a seed of the Kingdom.

Prepare in us a place
where God is:
the loving Creator,
the passionate Son,
the life-giving Spirit,
and lead us in your way.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Mike was a cross-country runner. Whilst taking part in one cross-country championship race Mike was one of only five runners who completed the course – 128 had lined up at the start! It turned out that at one point on the 10,000 metre course 123 runners missed a turn. Mike knew the course and began waving for those 123 fellow competitors to follow him. Only four of the runners chose to go with him!

'I am the way, the truth and the life' says Jesus. Who do you choose to follow?

Hymn: Christ is the world's light (StF 346)

Christ is the world's Light, Christ and none other;
born in our darkness, he became our brother.
If we have seen him, we have seen the Father:
glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's peace, Christ and none other;
no one can serve him and despise another.
Who else unites us, one in God the Father?
Glory to God on high.

Christ is the world's life, Christ and none other;
sold once for silver, murdered here, our brother-
he, who redeems us, reigns with God the Father:
Glory to God on high.

Give God the glory, God and none other;
give God the glory, Spirit, Son and Father;
give God the glory, God with us, my brother:
Glory to God on high.

Blessing:

God who is with us each step of the way,
protect those we care for and guide their journeying.
God who is with us at the end of the day,
protect our sleep and grant us good dreams.
God who is with us come what may,
protect our faith and help us to grow.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
bless us now and always. Amen

Sunday 10th May 2026 – 6th Sunday of Easter

This service has been compiled by Rev'd Joy Ventom

Call to Worship:

God of hope, thank you for the hope given in Jesus. Thank you for the hope inspired by the Spirit. Thank you for the hope shared when your people gather. Amen.

Hymn: All my hope on God is founded (StF 455)

All my hope on God is founded,
all my trust he shall renew;
me through change and chance he guideth
only good and only true:
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth
Deep his wisdom passing thought;
Splendour, light and life attend him
Beauty springeth out of nought.
Evermore, From his store
New born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty giver
Bounteous gifts on us bestow;
His desire our soul delighteth
Pleasure leads us where we go,
love shall stand at his hand,
joy shall wait for his command.

Still from Earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done;
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son:
Christ's doth call, one and all
Ye who follow shall not fall.

Opening Prayers:

Read these verses slowly, pausing at the end of each line. 'We are saved by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.' Amen. (1 Peter 3:21,22)

Lord God , sometimes we hold faith and hope to ourselves. We act as if faith is something private, to be held close, frightened to share it with others. Forgive us, Lord, and may hope replace fear. We fail to notice the people suffering around us, desperate for your love in their lives. We ignored their pain, too busy with our own concerns. Forgive us, Lord, and may hope replace fear. We forget that a sorrow shared is a sorrow halved. We ignore those who are ready to support us, scared to let them help us in our difficulties. Forgive us, Lord, and may hope replace fear. Amen.

Hymn: Breath on me breath of God (StF 370)

Breathe on me, breath of God:
fill me with life anew,
that I may love as thou dost love
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will,
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God
Till I am wholly thine

until this earthly part of me
glows with your heavenly fire.

Breathe on me, breath of God;
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity

Bible Reading: 1 Peter 3:13-22 English Standard Version

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered[a] once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which[b] he went and proclaimed[c] to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because[d] they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Thought for the Day:

'What are you hoping for?' is a question often asked at the beginning of a new year, season of life, or a new experience. We might look ahead and ponder what we are hoping is going to happen. This is often about our expectations for external situations – I'm hoping my team win the league;

I'm hoping this job will be good for my career; I'm hoping for sunshine on my holiday.

But Peter is talking to the Early Church about an internal hope: something already deposited in them, which will give them the strength to keep going. There is no promise that external circumstances will change in the immediate future, but there is a promise that God's eternal hope – available through the saving work of Jesus – is already with them and can help them in this difficult time.

In the Channel 4 series *Alone*, contestants are dropped miles apart from each other into the Canadian wilderness to see who can survive the longest. Some drop out due to physical circumstances, such as injury or ill health but, for most, the will to survive is about their mental perseverance. After several weeks living off wild berries and fish, sleeping in shelters made from branches and listening to bears stalk around them in the middle of the night, most of the contestants hit a low point. At this juncture, many of them choose to quit the competition, often because they miss people they love and struggle to know how to continue, completely alone. However, a few who keep going often do so because they are spurred on by the thought of their family and friends back home. They want to make them proud; they want to show them that they can persevere and overcome the challenge; they want to be a stronger person when they return to those relationships. The harsh reality of the external environment they are in doesn't change, but their internal focus is strengthened.

This is the encouragement that Peter offers to the Church: although circumstances are incredibly tough, focusing on Christ's authority allows them to have hope, and also to practise respect for those who persecute them. A reminder of who God is and what God has put within them brings a change in how they can deal with the world around them.

As we look at our own circumstances and ask, 'What are we hoping for?' can we invite God to reveal the hope that is in us, through Christ, and ask God to transform our perspectives so that we can keep going? Knowing the hope we already have will help us to share it with others

Hymn: In Christ Alone (StF 351)

In Christ alone, my hope is found
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone, who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Intercessions:

Gracious God, you hold the world. We hold before you in prayer our world in fear and turmoil: our hungry world, our war-torn world, our unfair world. In you we live and move and have our being: we hold up our world in need.

Gracious God, you hold our country. We hold before you in prayer our country, with many issues in the news: > MENTION HERE CURRENT NATIONAL AND LOCAL ISSUES.

In you we live and move and have our being: we hold up our world in need.

Gracious God, you hold those we love. We hold before you in pray those whom we want to pray for this day: the ones we love, the names you know, the people known to us in our hearts... > SPACE FOR PRAYERS – EITHER SILENT OR SPOKEN ALOUD, ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRACTICE. In you we live and move and have our being: we hold up our world in need.

Gracious God, you hold our church. We hold before you in prayer our needs and the needs of our fellowship in this place: > MENTION HERE PARTICULAR ISSUES FOR PRAYER IN THE LIFE OF YOUR CHURCH. In you we live and move and have our being we hold up our world in need.

Gracious God who holds all Creation, hold now our prayers. Teach us to have hope in you, that we might not despair, but share your love and grace with all of your Creation.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Hymn: Be thou my vision (StF 545)

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Be all else but naught to me, save that Thou art;
Be thou my best thought, in the day and the night;
Both waking and sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true Word;
Be thou ever with me and I with thee Lord;
Be Thou my great Father and I, Thy child let me be;
Be Thou in me dwelling, and I one with Thee

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower
O raise thou me heavenward, great power of my power

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise;
Be Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Be Thou and Thou only, first in my heart;
O sovereign of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright Sun,
O grant me its joys after victory is won;
Grant heart of my own heart, whatever befall;
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Blessing:

When we are troubled... God is our hope. When our faith is challenged...
God is our hope. When life is tough... God is our hope. Let us go share
God's love in the world because... God is our hope. Amen.

Sunday 17th May 2026 – 7th Sunday of Easter

This service has been compiled by Mrs Sheila Heap

**Wherever you are, welcome to this time of worship.
May you find it to be a time of blessing.**

Call to Worship:

Baby of Bethlehem, born in a stable, **we worship You.**

Child of Nazareth, full of grace and truth, **we acknowledge You.**

Man of Galilee, teacher, preacher, healer, redeemer, **we praise You.**

Son of David, coming in humility to claim Your Kingdom, **we greet You.**

Suffering Servant, bruised, beaten, broken, **we love You.**

Lord of the empty tomb, risen and triumphant, **we honour You.**

King of kings, exalted to the side of the Father, **we adore You.**

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, **receive the praise that we bring, to the glory of Your Name. Amen.**

Hymn: Sing to Him in Whom Creation (StF 14)

Sing to Him in whom creation
found its shape and origin;
Spirit, moving on the waters
troubled by the God within;
source of breath to all things breathing,
life in whom all lives begin.

Sing to God, the close companion
of our inmost thoughts and ways;
who, in showing us His wonders,
is Himself the power to gaze,
and His will, to those who listen,
by a still small voice conveys.

Holy people, priests and prophets
caught His accents, spoke His Word;
His the truth behind the wisdoms
which as yet know not our Lord;
He the love of God eternal,
which in Christ was seen and heard.

Tell of how the ascended Jesus
armed a people for His own;
how a hundred men and women
turned the known world upside down,
to its dark and farthest corners
by the wind of Whitsun blown.

Pray we, then, O Lord the Spirit,
On our lives descend in might,
let your flame break out within us,
fire our hearts and clear our sight,
till, white-hot in Your possession,
we, too, set the world alight.

Praise, O praise the Holy Spirit,
praise the Father, Praise the Word,
source, and truth, and inspiration,
Trinity in deep accord;
through Your voice which speaks within us
we Your creatures own you Lord.

Michael Hewlett (1916 – 2000)

Prayer of Praise and Adoration:

Almighty God, we thank You for the wonder of the Ascension, that marvellous yet mysterious moment in the life of the Apostles which left them gazing towards heaven in confusion, yet departing in joy. We thank You for the way that it brought the earthly ministry of Jesus to a fitting conclusion, signifying his Oneness with You, and demonstrating Your final seal of approval on all that He had done. We thank You that, through His Ascension, Jesus is now set free to be Lord of all: no longer bound to a particular place or time, but with us always – able to reach even the ends of the earth. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:

Forgiving and gracious God, You have called us to be Your witnesses. Forgive us when we are too impatient to wait for Your power to fill us. Forgive us for being self-centred and failing to look around us at the world

in need. Forgive us for failing to be Your hands and feet in the world. Help us to always be open to Your word and Your love. Challenge us to move in the ways of peace and hope for all people. In the name of Christ, our risen and ascended Saviour, we pray.

In the silence of this moment, may we each hear Your word of grace: Our sins are forgiven and we are renewed in Your Spirit. **Amen.**

You may like to join in the words of the Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven ... Amen

Reading: John chapter 17 vs. 1 – 11 NSRV

Introduction:

After speaking to His disciples during the Last Supper, Jesus prays for them. He knows what is coming and recognises that the disciples will need strength to survive without His physical presence.

The prayer moves on to a passionate request for protection, which reflects both the immediate danger to the disciples and the longer-term pressures faced by many Christian communities. Later in the prayer, Jesus asks for God's protection for believers to come. John understands the risks of following Jesus but also wants to emphasise the reward of faithful perseverance.

Jesus Prays for Himself (John 17:1-5)

¹After Jesus had spoken these words, He looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify You, ²since You have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴I glorified You on earth by finishing the work that You gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in Your own presence with the glory that I had in Your presence before the world existed.

Jesus Prays for His Disciples (John 17:6-11)

⁶"I have made Your name known to those whom You gave me from the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷Now they know that everything You have given me is from You; ⁸for the words that You gave to me I have given to them, and they

have received them and know in truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent me. ⁹ I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom You gave me, because they are Yours. ¹⁰ All mine are Yours, and Yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹ And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them in Your name that You have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Hymn: All My Days (StF 343)

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,
give my praise to the fountain of delight;
for in my helplessness You heard my cry,
And waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the Cross of my Redeemer,
I will sing of the blood that never fails,
of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,
of death defeated and life without end.

*Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor,
clothed in majesty, Lord of history,
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life.
Star of the Morning, glorious in holiness,
You're the risen One, heaven's champion,
and You reign, You reign, over all!*

I long to be where the praise is never-ending,
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades,
where countless worshippers will share one song,
and cries of 'worthy' will honour the Lamb!

Beautiful Saviour, wonderful Counsellor ...

Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Reading: Acts chapter 1 vs. 6 – 14 'JESUS IS TAKEN INTO HEAVEN' NSRV

Introduction:

Jesus' final parting from His disciples is symbolised by the cloud, a sign of God's presence from the wilderness (Exodus 40:34). The disciples are called to bear witness to Jesus and all that Luke has revealed about Him in

the Gospel, from the 'Nazareth manifesto' (Luke 4:18-19) onwards. They are reminded of this pressing task by the men in white robes, heavenly figures similar to the men who announced the resurrection to the women at the tomb (Luke 24:5-7). There is no room for nostalgia – the disciples have to shape the future through praying together as an inclusive community.

⁶ So when they [the disciples] had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when You will restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷ He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹ When He had said this, as they were watching, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight.

¹⁰ While He was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹ They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas (vs.12-26)

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as His brothers.

THE SAVIOUR LEAVES

Forsaking chariots of fire
and fanfared brass,
strangely silent as He came,
the Saviour leaves
and God, with heavens caress,

the Son receives.

He has to go, as from the grave

He had to rise:

In order to be everywhere

He must depart

to live, not in one place,

but in each heart.

So, Christ ascends; air cradles Him,

Disciples stare.

Their Easter joy, His seven weeks' stay

seem now to end.

But no! The Spirit's sending

they portend.

Let Angel harmonies resound;

let trumpets blare;

let heaven's banquet guests applaud

the welcomed Word,

and earth anticipate

her coming Lord.

From: 'Enemy of Apathy'

**Hymn: We Sing the Praise of Jesus Christ' (StF 315) (alternative tune 311
'The day of resurrection' Ellacombe)**

We sing the praise of Jesus,

Of our ascending Lord;

the triumph of our Saviour,

of Christ the Son of God.

The forty days are over,

earth sees His face no more;

but Christ the King of glory

We worship and adore.

Rejoicing in Christ's promise

we wait in prayer and praise,

the Spirit sent from heaven

to set the earth ablaze;
we pray with expectation,
we praise with one accord,
we wait for living fire,
the power of the Lord.

Therefore with saints and angels
and all the hosts above
we lift our hearts and voices
to bless the God of Love;
to sing of our Redeemer
who intercedes and prays,
that God the Holy Spirit
may guide us all our days.

With songs of alleluia
let earth and heaven ring;
and praises to the Father
let all creation sing.
All honour be to Jesus,
God's own eternal Son;
and to the Holy Spirit
let endless praise be done!

Norman Wallwork (b. 1946)

Reflection:

They had seen death, they had seen resurrection, and for the disciples of Jesus the sight of the risen Christ back among them must have seemed the most wonderful thing they could ever hope to witness. No wonder they asked the question that had been on each one's lips since His return: 'Lord, is this the time when You will restore the Kingdom to Israel?' It had to be, surely? What more could be revealed than had been revealed to them already? The answer was just a few moments away, as suddenly Jesus was taken from them, and they were left struggling to come to terms with the unexpected once again. Whatever the precise event behind the language, one thing was clear - the picture of Christ had been far too small, their understanding of His purpose much too narrow. He

came not just to restore Israel but to redeem the world, not to rule on earth but to be enthroned in heaven. They had glimpsed the man but not the face of God beneath. They believed they saw the whole picture, when they had seen just one piece off the jigsaw. Suddenly they had to think again, for Jesus was greater than they had begun to imagine.

The meaning of Ascension is very often overlooked in our worshipping life. It's always celebrated on a Thursday - 35 days after Easter Day [Sabbath days did not count.] Yet, it was a very significant event in the lives of Jesus' followers, which prompts us to ask the question: 'What is the relevance for us today?'

Before Jesus ascended into heaven He made three promises to His disciples. They were not counterfeit promises made without authority. These were promises they could stake their lives on.

The meaning of the Ascension is that Christ has been given authority over all the world. Jesus has the power to promise us all things. We never have to doubt that Christ can fulfil that which He has promised, and the three promises He made to us can be summed up in three words:

PRESENCE

POWER

PRIESTHOOD

Using three stories, let us look at how His Ascension is relevant to us now.

CHRIST'S FIRST PROMISE WAS THAT HE WOULD ALWAYS BE WITH US.

Twelve year old Mark stood patiently beside the clock counter while the assistant served all the adult customers. Finally the assistant got around to Mark who made his purchase, then hurried outside where dad was waiting impatiently in the car. "What took you so long?" Dad asked angrily. "The assistant served everyone in the shop before me", Mark replied, "but I got my own back." "How?" Dad asked. "I wound up and set all the alarm clocks while I was waiting", Mark replied laughing. "It's going to be a mighty noisy place at 8 o'clock!"

We can all probably understand Mark's feelings of frustration and disappointment. He was being ignored while everyone else's needs were being met.

Sometimes, that can feel as if it is our experience too. We may feel that nobody notices us or seems to care. But the first promise of Jesus to us is that He is always paying attention. He is as close as the air that we breathe and knows all our needs and cares with great passion. It's an important promise to remember. The critical test in life is not what happens to us, but how we deal with each situation. Christ's presence with us can make a great difference to how we respond to life and its problems. Christ promised us His presence and we need never feel we have to rely on our own strength and resources.

Secondly, **CHRIST PROMISED US HIS POWER.**

If we only rely on human power to solve human problems we are limiting our abilities to transform situations and face challenges, and that affects every aspect of our lives. Human beings can be amazing. People can be amazingly supportive, loving and kind, warm and wonderful, and that can be so often reflected in the Church. By contrast, human beings can also be flawed. The sincerest of intentions often never come to fruition. The most dedicated of us often get preoccupied with what is going on that we fail to see the wider needs of our neighbours and cruelty existing in situations around us.

John was a Vietnam veteran. When his fellow employees discovered John suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder they began making sudden loud noises to watch his fearful reactions and to watch him dive for cover. For two years his co-workers dropped tables, broke bottles, popped milk cartons and paper cups and set off fireworks in attempts to unnerve John. A bottle rocket fired at him one lunchtime was the final straw. John spent the next seven months receiving psychiatric treatment.

That may seem an extreme story but it's a heartbreaking example of how humans can be so juvenile and cruel, but it's a stark reminder that that is a side of human nature that often gets ignored. Every news broadcast and newspaper will give us endless examples. So, looking to human activity to provide ultimate solutions to human problems will leave us disheartened. If we believe Christ is alive and at work in the world, then we can go out into that world with confidence and courage knowing that His promised power is sufficient for us to accomplish every task He calls us to. Everything else we can leave in His hands.

Lastly, **CHRIST PROMISED US A PRIESTHOOD**

When He ascended to His Father, He left the work of His Kingdom in the hands of all who would follow Him. We are the people Christ has called to continue His redeeming work in the world.

Some years ago, a Minister travelled to Europe by sea. On board ship, he noticed a man who, every day, sat in the same deck chair reading his Bible. The Minister was intrigued and wondered what the story was behind it. So, one morning, he sat next to him and after a while, interrupted him and said: "Pardon me, but I have seen you come here every day and read your Bible. I'm a Christian Minister myself and would be really interested to know what led you to Christ."

"Well," the man said, laying aside his Bible, "I am Filipino, born into a Christian home in the Philippines. I came to America to study at university. I plan to become a lawyer. My first night on campus, a student came to my room. I did not know him, we'd never met. He simply said that he wanted to welcome me and say that if ever there was anything he could do to make my stay more pleasant, just to call on him. We chatted for a while and as he got up to leave, he asked me where I went to Church. When I told him, he replied that he would give me directions. It was quite a distance and difficult to find, so he drew me a map outlining the way to Church on a sheet of paper, then left. On Sunday morning, it was raining really hard and I thought I would miss Church. It was a long way off and hard to find. Surely I would be forgiven for not going on my first Sunday in a strange place in such weather. Just as I turned over to go back to sleep there came a rap on the door, and as I opened it reluctantly, there stood my new friend. He had on a raincoat and was carrying two umbrellas. He said: "I thought you might have trouble finding the way so I have come to walk along and show you." As I dressed, I felt very humble, and thought that if he was so interested in my faith, I should find out something of his. As we walked along under the umbrellas, he told me his Church was just around the corner. As it was raining so hard, I suggested we go to his that morning and mine the following week. So we went to his Church - and I have never been back to my own."

As a consequence, this man changed his study from law to theology and became a prominent religious leader in his homeland. All this occurred

because the man with two umbrellas cared enough to make his faith attractive to another human being.

Christ has promised us His presence and power - but also a priesthood. We are those on whom He is depending to make our faith attractive to others. That's how I became a Christian. How do we encourage others? Can we be like the man with two umbrellas?

Our first reading gives us a prompt - Jesus prayed: for Himself, His disciples and us, for faith and strength to fulfil God's call on their lives - and ours. The Ascension promises us that: Christ is with us, Christ empowers us and Christ has a purpose for us. **Amen.**

Prayers of Love and Concern:

CHRIST PROMISES HIS PRESENCE

Lord, there is so much unrest in our world which seems a battlefield of light and darkness. Wars and conflicts are tearing it apart.

We pray for all those displaced, having fled to safety but missing home and loved ones. We pray for the children growing up in refugee camps. Their lives are open to illness, hunger and squalor. We pray for all those unable to flee and living amid bombing - dreading the sirens and wondering where the next strike will hit. Lord, we ask for an end to all wars and unrest. Blanket the world with Your peace.

Lord, we need You.

Our world needs You, Lord.

Selfishness and greed are rife and destroying all that is good. Many are still lost, Lord, filling gaps in their lives with selfish wants and destruction with no thought for others. We pray for all victims and bystanders whose lives are touched by terrorism and criminal activity. Truly satisfy, we pray, those searching for meaning and purpose in their lives.

Lord, we need You.

Our world needs You, Lord.

CHRIST PROMISES HIS POWER

Lord, You told Your disciples they would be witnesses to the ends of the earth. We pray for all who serve in mission and ministry. We pray for all leaders and teachers of Your Word, wherever they share the gospel. We pray for Churches everywhere. May they be beacons of truth and wisdom,

shining a light into the darkness of bewildering situations. We are all called to serve You, in many different ways, each of us following the light You shine on our pathways. Unite us and help us, as Your church, to live a life of witness.

Lord, we need You.

Our world needs You, Lord.

CHRIST PROMISES US A PRIESTHOOD

We pray for all longing for someone who will reach out to them: the lonely, the hungry, those struggling to look after loved ones and have little idea of where to turn.

We pray for children robbed of their childhood because of needing to help care for siblings or parents. We pray for the neglected and abused longing for someone to talk to.

Lord, we pray for our communities. May we reach out to families struggling with broken relationships. May we offer refreshment to the weary, offer the despondent renewed hope and may You look down on us all with love and compassion.

Lord, we need You.

Our world needs You, Lord.

May we live in unity as we await Your return and as we rejoice in You.

Amen.

Hymn: Hear the Call of the Kingdom (StF 407)

Hear the call of the Kingdom

to be children of light

with the mercy of heaven,

the humility of Christ;

walking justly before Him,

loving all that is right,

that the life of Christ may shine through us.

King of heaven, we will answer the call.

We will follow, bringing hope to the world,

filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim

salvation in Jesus' Name.

Hear the call of the Kingdom
to reach out to the lost,
with the Father's compassion
In the wonder of the Cross,
Bringing peace and forgiveness,
and a hope yet to come:
let the nations put their trust in Him.

King of heaven, we will answer the call.....

Keith Getty (b. 1974), Krystyn Getty (b. 1989) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)

Blessing:

Almighty God, we have cast our burdens on You, trusting in Your promises, Your love and Your strength.

Bless us in all we do, knowing that in our witness, we are being fashioned in Your likeness. **Amen**

Some material is adapted from 'Roots For Churches'

Sunday 24th May 2026 – Pentecost

This service has been compiled by Mrs Sheila Heap

**Wherever you are, welcome to this time of worship.
May you find it to be a time of blessing.**

‘HAPPY BIRTHDAY’

Today celebrates the birth of the Christian Church

Call to Worship:

Lord, on this day of Pentecost,
we come to You in awe and anticipation,
in expectation of our hearts being strangely warmed.
We wait on You, ready to receive the gift of Your Holy Spirit.
Ready to receive your blessing, so that we, in turn, may be a blessing to
others. **Amen.**

Hymn: Come Down, O Love Divine (StF 372)

Come down, O Love divine,
seek Thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with Thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
And let Thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
True lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.
And so the yearning strong,

with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess it's grace,
till He become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling.

Bianco da Siena (d. 1434)

Translated by Richard Frederick Littledale (1833 – 1890)

Prayer of Praise and Adoration:

Almighty God, we praise You for the activity, experience and power of your Spirit, making real Your presence within our hearts.
We celebrate how, through that Spirit, You give us guidance, instruction and insight;
how You challenge and inspire, nurturing and nourishing our faith and equipping us for service.
Above all, we rejoice that the Spirit works not according to our own wishes - directed by any merit, deserving, or purpose on our part but directed by Your will, moving at Your direction and fulfilling Your purpose.
Fill us now, renew us now and use us now, in Your service and for Your glory. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness:

Lord God, we humbly confess our sins before You.

[Silence]

You are gracious to forgive us.

May we continue to live our lives serving You and rejoicing in Your complete forgiveness.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit **Amen.**

You may like to join in the words of the Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven ... Amen

Reading: Psalm 104 vs. taken from 'PSALMS NOW'

Introduction:

This beautiful psalm describes God as Creator in wisdom and Sustainer through the Spirit (vv.29,30). It foreshadows the Pentecost gift and calls for praise in response.

O Lord, how great and all-powerful You are!
And how beautiful is the world You created for our habitation!
Even before Adam was brought forth from the dust,
or Eve was brought forth from Adam's rib,
You prepared for them a place in which to live and grow.
And everything they saw around them reflected the beauty and power of
the living God.

There was clean air.
Pure water from snowcapped mountains
flowed through green valleys and gathered together in great lakes.
The skies shone with a million lights.
The land brought forth flowers and fruits
to delight the eye and palate of God's creatures.
And every part of the land and the waters that covered the land
were filled with uncountable forms of life;
the world was vibrant and alive.

Your power and Your beauty were spread throughout the universe,
But it was only upon the heart of human creatures that You imprinted
Your image.
And these creatures, in their short stay in this world,
were appointed to be Your co-workers in the ever-continuing process of
creation.
Your creative activity has never ceased.
It continues in and through their lives.

Limited and lowly as Your human creatures are, their minds and their
hands are assigned
to control Your life-giving process and to direct the maintenance and
replenishment of the earth
that life might be given and sustained throughout the world.
O Lord, how great and all-powerful You are!
And how beautiful is the world You created for our habitation!

Hymn: In the Wonder of Creation' (StF 110) (Alternate tune StF 8 'Ode to Joy')
In the wonder of creation,
when all nature shares one song,

showing God's imagination,
all may see His love goes on.
Through the Holy Story spoken,
of God's people called as one,
gathered, exiled, saved and broken,
this we learn: His love goes on.

In the Christ who died to save us;
is God's risen, living Son;
through the Spirit, whom He gave us;
this we know: His love goes on.

In the telling of the gospel
Matthew, Mark and Luke and John
join the Church in testifying
through the years: His love goes on.

From the perfect days of gladness
when the sun has brightly shone,
to the slog of working madness,
all the while His love goes on.
Through the times of harsh temptation,
seeking strength but finding none,
in our human desperation,
mercy comes: His love goes on.

In the joys of celebration,
of new birth or victory won,
in the deep peace of salvation,
tell the world His love goes on!
Through the dark days of depression,
when all sign of faith is gone,
hope may find no fresh expression,
but we trust His love goes on.

Through the hopes of our tomorrows,
and the things we've left undone –
future joys and present sorrows –
through all time, His love goes on.

In our Kingdom-shaped endeavour,
when God's glorious work is done,
to the promise of forever,
God is here: His love goes on.

Andrew T. Murphy (b. 1981)

Reading: Acts chapter 2 vs. 1-21 NSRV

Introduction:

The story of Pentecost is a milestone in our faith. The disciples' patient waiting (1:4) is rewarded by the gift of the Spirit. At Pentecost, Jews celebrate the gift of the Torah, the rule of life. For Christians, the Spirit offers the same sense of direction in line with God's purposes. The imagery of wind and fire recalls Isaiah's vision of the Lord (Isaiah 6:1-8). This was the time and place to launch a new way of believing in the one God! Estimates suggest there would have been 100,000 people in Jerusalem, from the city and surrounding countries. The tongues of fire translate into tongues of speech, communicating God's message in ways accessible to all. Is this a miracle of speaking, hearing or both? Pentecost is often presented as a reversal of the confusion of tongues at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), but it does not do so by introducing a universal language. The good news is spread in diverse languages so that each hearer can understand. Peter speaks of God's action as revealing that the last days have come. Joel's prophecy looked forward to a time when the Spirit would come on all people, whatever their social standing. This is borne out in the gift of the Spirit to the disciples, marginalised Galileans (v.7).

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13)

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² 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. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. ⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are

speaking Galileans?⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.”¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

¹³ But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Peter Addresses the Crowd (verses 14-41)

¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning.¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ ‘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.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

Hymn: The Spirit Lives to Set us Free’ (StF 397)

The Spirit lives to set us free,

Walk, walk in the light;

He binds us all in unity,

Walk, walk in the light.

Walk in the light, walk in the light,

Walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.

Jesus promised life to all,

Walk, walk in the light;

The dead were wakened by His call,

Walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
Walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*

He died in pain on Calvary;

Walk, walk in the light;

To save the lost like you and me,

Walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
Walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*

We know His death was not the end,

Walk, walk in the light;

He gave His Spirit to be our friend,

Walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
Walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*

By Jesus' love our wounds are healed.

Walk, walk in the light;

The Father's kindness is revealed,

Walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
Walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*

The Spirit lives in you and me,

Walk, walk in the light;

His light will shine for all to see,

Walk, walk in the light!

*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
Walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*

Damian Lundy (1944-1996)

Reflection:

A great luxury liner was on fire, but no one knew. Deep in the hold, near the engine room, hundreds of tonnes of coal were stored. Coal-powered ships used to carry coal in a watered-down state. But this ship was new and much bigger than any other ship ever built or sailed. So even though

the coal was watered down, the amount was vast and some was missed. A fire smouldered, undiscovered, deep in the coal supply and when it was found, a firefighting crew was sent to extinguish it. They worked for days, drifting into weeks, but they couldn't put it out. The coal stores were so huge that it was agreed it would not affect the running of the ship and there was no danger to passengers or crew. The firefighting crew were sworn to secrecy and managed the fire in shifts around the clock. The ship never reached its destination. Crossing the Atlantic with more than 2,200 people aboard, the ship sank, and 1,513 people lost their lives, making it the worst maritime disaster in history. Safety standards didn't exist then so sufficient lifeboats weren't a pre-requisite. Yet the fire played no part in the disaster. Few people even know about it. Something else grabbed the headlines - an iceberg. Have you guessed it? It was, of course, *The Titanic*. It's remembered for hitting an iceberg and sinking.

Scripture tells us that the Spirit of God is often likened to burning fire. John Wesley often spoke about that fire smouldering within us, always alight and never extinguished as we remember today in the celebration of his heart-warming experience as he felt the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. For John Wesley, it was the founding of this new movement called 'Methodism'. And that is certainly true of the disciples on the day that the promised gift of the Holy Spirit blew through every corner of the room where they were gathered - and what an effect it had.

Pentecost came on the 50th day following the Feast of the Passover and was generally a week-long festival attended by some 100,000 people. Every male was required to attend the Temple with two baked loaves, as a sin and peace offering, not just to celebrate Harvest but also to mark the renewal of their covenant with God and by the 2nd. century, almost certainly commemorated the gift of the Law. But this Pentecost was different. Jesus' followers were gathered together in the Upper Room. What they felt and seemed to recognise reminded them of familiar passages of the Old Testament. Violent winds were symbolic of God's Spirit moving over the waters in the first creation story. Smouldering fire was always seen as a manifestation of God's presence such as Moses and the burning bush. This was a new experience of God. It was the moment

of the Church's birth, which some commentators have likened to the miracle of Jesus' birth – an unrepeatable phenomenon. The first gift of the Spirit comes from the Divine to the disciples. Now, believers were to be recognised as 'the body of Christ'. In its fullest sense: in the Church in vigorous life, redeemed by the Cross of Christ, set on the path of worship and service, and what God gave on that day, He has never withdrawn. The Spirit which transformed the disciples and led them into action remains with the Church today. Jesus promised that the Spirit would be with us forever.

This new experience of God travelled far and wide as Jews who had made their way back to their spiritual home in Jerusalem for the celebrations was repeated over and over again. At this Pentecost, a new law was established – the proclamation of the Messianic age and of the Messiah, to every nation.

It often goes unrecognised, it is sometimes misunderstood – as it was on that first day of Pentecost, but it is intended to be very much alive and active in and through those who belong to 'the body of Christ' – the Church. I wonder if sometimes it's like the smouldering fire in the depths of *The Titanic*? watered down to keep it under control because it is not truly understood? It is a gift to be welcomed and cherished with enthusiasm, used to build up our faith and the way it is reflected in our lives – which will be unique. It is no less a valuable gift if it isn't 'headline catching', like the day it was given. It often goes unnoticed and only by looking back we can see that God has been working through us.

That was how it worked in the life of Barnabas, a missionary companion of Paul and cousin of John Mark. He was known in the early Church for his generosity and reconciling spirit. His name means 'Son of Encouragement', a man in whom the Holy Spirit worked through his support for the poor in the church. Even he wasn't aware of it because it was not dynamic.

Perhaps we need to remind ourselves that the Spirit works in words or small acts of kindness too and celebrate enthusiastically that every one of us has this gift and can use it to build up the faith of others and strengthen the Church – something that we need to take very much to heart at this time. So, don't give up, God needs you – and me – we each have a unique

gift that He has given to no-one else – not even a iceberg can quench it – it will keep smouldering on. **Amen.**

BARNABAS' UNEXPECTED GIFT

It wasn't much of a gift; at least I didn't think so.

In fact, I didn't feel I had a gift at all,
not like the rest of them with all their stunning signs and wonders.
I envied them sometimes, so often in the limelight,
stealing all the headlines –

prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, speakers of tongues.

They were the ones who drew the crowds, the ones who people noticed,
and all I did was plod quietly along,

Living the faith in my own simple way,
speaking and doing and caring and sharing
as I believed Christ would have me do.

And then they gave me this name – Barnabas,
'Son of Encouragement'.

It was all so unexpected, a complete surprise,
for what had I done to deserve any such honour.

But then they told me, one by one,
that of all the gifts they valued,
mine was chief among them.

A generous gesture, a word of praise, an expression of trust, an act of love
not causing gasps, not making heads turn;

yet these, they told me

[though I'd never dreamt it nor even realised they'd been done],
these had stirred their hearts and cheered their spirits
as signs and wonders could never do.

It doesn't seem much, does it - encouraging people?

Not a gift you'll find in any of the textbooks, nor one people will ever fight
over.

Yet don't let that fool you as it did me –

don't waste time thirsting for showy gifts you do not have –

for it's often when you're least aware of it, through things you count
unimportant,

that Jesus chooses to use you.

So if you are wondering, as I did, why you've been left out, if you're feeling down, or doubting your experience, or waiting for the Spirit and perplexed He hasn't come, let me offer you some simple words of encouragement: follow Jesus, faithfully, simply, and maybe, just maybe, you'll find His Spirit's been there all along.

Prayers of Love and Concern:

Holy Spirit, rain down upon us we pray. Fall upon your Church just as at that first Pentecost, when your mighty outpouring of power transformed lives and ignited the life of the church.

In this country only 16% of people profess to be Christian. Church buildings are being turned into homes rather than open as buildings of worship. But it doesn't matter where we meet as a Church so long as our hearts are Yours. We pray for a reigniting of Your fire in all who follow and worship Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Holy Spirit reignite the fire in our hearts. Fill us afresh with your Living Water. Transform your Church.

Come Holy Spirit, with Your tongues of fire,
and fall upon us in power today.

At Pentecost, your tongues of fire settled on the disciples enabling them to communicate in all languages. Holy Spirit, You impart the language of love and eternal life. You are not restricted to any race or particular group of people. Jesus' salvation is open to all.

Holy Spirit, we pray for all who communicate the gospel to the world. Give them words people can relate to and understand. Open ears and hearts to receive. Empower Christians the world over.

Come Holy Spirit, with Your tongues of fire,
and fall upon us in power today.

Fire signifies God's purifying presence. We pray for our world to be purified and rid of all the evils of:

- War
- Injustice
- Hatred
- Discrimination
- Apathy

Holy Spirit, fall afresh, cleanse and purify the world. You are more powerful than anything created by humankind. Move in all areas of life and on all continents.

Come Holy Spirit, with Your tongues of fire,
and fall upon us in power today.

We pray for wisdom, unity and truth in our government. We pray that the voices of all Christians in Parliament will be heard. And that they will be effective witnesses in the corridors of power.

Holy Spirit, Your power is above all. Transform this nation.

Come Holy Spirit, with Your tongues of fire,
and fall upon us in power today.

We pray for your mighty power, Holy Spirit on

- The sick to receive healing.
- The bereaved to be comforted.
- The lost to see a path open before them.
- The hungry to be fed.

We take a moment now, to ask You Holy Spirit to fall and move in the lives of those we know personally to be in need.

Holy Spirit, may all in need see and marvel at the touch of Your hand.

Transform lives in ways never imagined.

Come Holy Spirit, with Your tongues of fire,
and fall upon us in power today.

Holy Spirit, You are the breath of life. Come and breathe new life into our communities today. Speak into the lives of the young people who hang about the streets, easy targets for those who seek to groom, manipulate and entice our youngsters into drink, drugs, prostitution and crime. Make our streets safe places to walk.

Strengthen the vulnerable, and purify with Your living water those who seek to corrupt.

Come Holy Spirit, with Your tongues of fire,
and fall upon us in power today.

We pray that with each new dawn all creation will be refreshed. Fill us to overflowing that we may boldly speak Your powerful language of love and point the way to Jesus in a way others will understand and receive.

May the thirsty drink deeply of Your Living Water and find their lives changed by Your mighty power. Empower and reignite Your Church this day.

Come Holy Spirit, with Your tongues of fire,
and fall upon us in power today. Amen.

Hymn: O Thou Who Camest from Above (StF 564)

O Thou who camest from above
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for Thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
to work, and speak, and think for Thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me –

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death Thy endless mercies seal,
And make the sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Blessing:

Jesus, grow Your gifts in us so that we might work for the good of those around us.

Give us the courage to share our gifts with others, knowing that all good things have come from You.

And may we know that the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Your all-embracing love and the unity of Your Holy Spirit live within us and shine through us. **Amen.**

Some material is adapted from 'Roots For Churches'

Sunday 31st May 2026 – Trinity Sunday

This service has been compiled by Rev'd Joy Ventom

Call to Worship:

Mysterious God,
be with us today as we seek to know you better.
May we learn from each other as we search for you.
Teach us to ask questions as well as to expect answers.
Give us fresh understanding of yourself today.

Amen.

Hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty (StF 11)

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore Thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim, falling down before Thee,
which wert and art and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
though the sinful human eye Thy glory may not see;
only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Prayers:

Creator God,
we come to you in awe, marvelling at the mysteries of the universe,
and delighting in the world you have made.

Redeemer God,
we come to you in gratitude, wondering at your love revealed in the face
of your Son, and in his arms stretched wide to embrace us.

Sustainer God, we come to you in expectation, opening our lives, hearts
and minds to the breath of your Spirit and the flame of your love.
God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, make us holy, make us strong, and draw
us into the unity of your love, creating, redeeming and sustaining us, now
and for ever.

We bring our confession:

God, you are one, but we are divided.

We enjoy your many gifts, but in our greed we consume more than our
share, and in our thoughtlessness we contribute to the depletion of the
earth's resources.

Lord, have mercy, Lord Forgive

We are eager for your love, but in our selfishness we turn away from
those who demand our time and care, and in our fear we reject those who
would take us out of ourselves.

Lord, have mercy, Lord Forgive

We long for your truth, but in our apathy we shrink from challenge and
hard questions, and in our insecurity we confine you in familiar formulas
and take refuge in reassuring routine.

Lord, have mercy, Lord Forgive

Amen.

Hymn: Master Speak, Thy Servant Heareth (StF 666)

Master, speak! thy servant heareth,
waiting for thy gracious word,
longing for thy voice that cheereth,
Master, let it now be heard.
I am listening, Lord, for thee;
what hast thou to say to me?

Speak to me by name, O Master,
let me know it is to me;
speak, that I may follow faster,

with a step more firm and free,
where the Shepherd leads the flock,
in the shadow of the Rock!

Master, speak! though least and lowest,
let me not unheard depart;
Master, speak! for oh, thou knowest
all the yearning of my heart,
knowest all its truest need;
speak! and make me blest indeed.

Master, speak! and make me ready,
when thy voice is truly heard,
with obedience glad and steady,
still to follow every word.
I am listening, Lord, for thee:
Master, speak, oh speak to me!

Bible Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Activity:

Think about how we experience God in worship

You will need: paper and a pen

- We have five senses: sight/sound/smell/taste/touch. Divide the paper into five sections and add a suitable body-part symbol for each sense.
- Identify what Isaiah saw, heard, smelled, tasted and touched during his encounter with God. Write or draw these in each section.
- Reflect on the ways in which we use our senses in Christian worship. Can you think of different ways that smell or touch, or other senses, could be used in worship in a way that is pleasing to God?

Hymn: Come Down, O Love Divine (StF 372)

Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing:
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,

and o're its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till Love create a place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

Thought For The Day:

The words 'mystery' and 'revelation' are tantalising. Both imply that something is hidden with more to reveal. On receiving a letter or parcel, some tear it open to see the contents quickly. Others examine the handwriting and the postmark, sniff it or shake it, feel its thickness or speculate about who sent it or what it contains. And those who use the internet and social media will know about those tempting 'click to find out more' invitations that are not always what they seem.

On a journey of faith, some people like to know everything about God all at once, perhaps even believing that that is truly possible (it isn't). Others are content to discover a little at a time so that there is always more to look forward to.

Isaiah had a direct encounter with God through a vision. The image of a high and holy being had a profound effect on Isaiah. Isaiah perceived that he himself was far from holy, and this distressed him. But he also saw that God was a God of love and mercy. So, he was not left in his state of despair; in fact, it was the exact opposite: he was cleansed, healed and made fit for service. In the Gospel reading, Nicodemus had the privilege of seeing God face-to-face in the person of Jesus. Yet, even this wonderful revelation was not completely satisfying for him. He wanted to know more about who Jesus was, so plied him with questions that Jesus patiently answered. Both Isaiah and Nicodemus had wonderful experiences of God.

While we may not experience a vision like Isaiah's, and we certainly don't have the advantage of seeing Jesus face-to-face, thankfully God is still revealed to those who are seeking, who are prepared to ask questions.

The clue is in Jesus' response to Nicodemus, and the answer involves the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes today to give tantalising glimpses of God – in the Scriptures, in our worship, and also in the encounters that we have with each other. There is a story about a fictional priest called Don Camillo. In conversation with God, he suggests that ideas are like a candle in a room, lighting up the darkness for that person. Ah, says God, you are nearly right, but if more people enter the room with candles, they give more light to those near them, and eventually everything in the room is made plain. The mystery of God – and in particular, of God as Holy Trinity – is tantalising, and all is not revealed at once. Yet, God invites us into that mystery, to explore and ask questions. There is always more to discover and look forward to.

Intercessions:

Let us pray with faith to the blessed and glorious Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Preserve your Church in the true faith, to acknowledge with awe and reverence the mystery of the Holy Trinity. Fill our worship with love and adoration. Give us humility and assurance as devoted members of your Church which you have created, loved and sanctified.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Open our eyes to the wonders of the world around us, of things seen and unseen. Make all our lives richer in the hope of enjoying the blessings of our land in more ways than we can comprehend. Give clearer vision to those in positions of power and influence.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Grant to us in our lives a share of the mutual love of the Holy Trinity. May that unbroken strength and harmony be shown in our community, our families, in our work and in all our relationships.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

Have mercy on those whose lives are crippled by strain and anxiety in themselves, and hostility to others. May they see the light of the Holy Trinity to guide them to greater comfort within. May you ease their sufferings, give them inner peace and restore them to wholeness again. And in a moment of silence let us pray for those we hold most dear, known only to us and to you our God.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the departed who in this world held fast to the faith of the Holy Trinity and now adore you for ever in your Kingdom. May their example strengthen and prepare us for the coming joy made complete and love made perfect in your heavenly Kingdom.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

May our prayers be received in the unity of the Holy Trinity, three Persons and one God. **Amen**

Hymn: I the Lord of Sea and Sky (StF 663)

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have born my peoples pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,

Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? ...

I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord? ...

Blessing:

We praise you, God the Father,
life-giver and creator of all.
We praise you, God the Son,
Jesus Christ, our Lord.
We praise you, God the Holy Spirit,
guide and friend.
Surround us in your mystery,
and be with us this coming week.

Amen.

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