

United Parish@Home

Sunday Services



May 2026

**The United Parish of Chinnor, Sydenham,  
Aston Rowant and Crowell**

**The ministry team offer you these services, particularly if you find you are unable to attend church.**

**Our prayer is that these services will help you still feel connected to, and loved by, your church family.**

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**Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May page 22**

**Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup>**  
**Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**An Opening Prayer**

Loving God, you have chosen us to be your people.  
Each one of us is precious and loved by you.  
As we worship you now, join us together  
and build us into a house where everyone can belong. Amen

**Psalm 31 v1-5**

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge;  
do not let me ever be put to shame;  
in your righteousness deliver me.  
Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily.  
Be a rock and refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me.  
You are indeed my rock and my fortress;  
for your name's sake lead me and guide me;  
take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge.  
Into your hand I commit my spirit;  
you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

**A Prayer of Confession**

Loving God,  
we are sorry for the times we have failed to live as your people;  
Putting our own needs before the needs of others;  
Forgive us, restore us, support and strengthen us  
that we may live holy lives,  
and together be built into your holy house  
where everyone can belong;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Gospel Reading – St. John 14 v 1-14**

Do not let your hearts be troubled.  
Believe in God, believe also in me.  
In my Father's house there are many dwelling places.  
If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And  
if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so  
that where I am, there you may be also.  
And you know the way to the place where I am going. Thomas said to him,

“Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Then truly I tell you, those who believe in me will also do the works that I do, in fact will do greater works than these because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask for anything I will do it.”

### **A Reflection** *(by Joan)*

These words were spoken to the disciples to re-assure them in their distress at Jesus telling them he is to be separated from them and Peter would deny even knowing him, three times. They are urged to believe and trust God in the same way that they believe and trust in him. To know Jesus is all they need to know and they will learn that his departure is for their own good. In truth he is not going away from them but with the coming of the Paraclete, will be in them. No longer tied to space and time Jesus will always be there and available to hear and answer their prayer.

Jesus said. “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.”

It’s not always easy to put our faith in other people but we all have to do it. We cannot live in isolation. Wherever we are we have to trust somebody – the bus driver – the doctor – the neighbour – someone. One of the hardest things I find in growing older, as the body begins to close down, is having to depend on others to do what I used to be able to do myself. We will find life’s anxieties are lessened as we find meaning and security for our lives in Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life. We need not be afraid for we walk where he has trod.

### **Take time to Pray**

Faithful God, you know our questions and our doubts. Lead us into a deeper understanding of who you are and where you are leading us.

Bring comfort and healing to those who have lost hope and your compassion and mercy on all who suffer. Amen

## **A Hymn to sing or say as a prayer**

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair.  
Lord in the suffering, this is our prayer,  
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,  
sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.

God of the poor, friend of the weak,  
give us compassion we pray  
melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.

Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,  
work for the craftsmen, trade for their skills;  
land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak  
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.

Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,  
cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.  
Peace to the killing fields, scorched earth to green.  
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams,  
plundered and poisoned our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed:  
make us content with the things that we need.

Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame,  
until your justice burns brightly again;  
until the nations learn of your ways  
seek your salvation and bring you their praise.

## **A Blessing**

The Lord bless us and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. Amen.

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**

Alleluia! Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed. Alleluia!

**Opening prayer**

The Father teaches us the true meaning of parenthood and care.

Jesus shows us what it is to love and to forgive.

The life changing Spirit breathes life into us, so we can be children of God.

Let us come now to worship God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

**Psalm 66 vs 7 to end**

He rules for ever by his power, his eyes watch the nations-

let not the rebellious rise up against him.

Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard;

he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.

For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver.

You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs.

You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water,

but you brought us to the place of abundance.

I will come to your temple with burnt offerings

and fulfil my vows to you-

vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke

when I was in trouble.

I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams;

I will offer bulls and goats.

Come and listen, all you who fear God;

let me tell you what he has done for me.

I cried out to him with my mouth; his praise was on my tongue.

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.

Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer

Or withheld his love for me!

**Prayer of confession**

Father God, we have not loved you with our whole heart, we have not loved our

neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and humbly repent for the sake of

your Son Jesus Christ. Have mercy on us; that we might delight in your will and

walk your ways to the glory of your name. Amen

## **Collect - The 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**

God our redeemer;  
you have delivered us from the power of darkness  
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:  
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,  
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us  
to eternal joy;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen

## **Bible Reading John 14 vs 15-21** *(Jesus promises the Holy Spirit)*

If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counsellor to be with you for ever- the Spirit of the truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by the Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

## **Reflection** *(by Margaret)*

*(If you love me, you will keep my commandments)*

Many of us will have studied hard those pictures that have an image within an image. Sometimes we can pick out the picture very quickly while others prove to be more difficult. However, once we see, it, once it falls into place, we wonder how we didn't see it in the first place! Then more often than not, it is difficult to make out the original image.

The early followers of Jesus faced a similar problem, with regard to the rest of the world.

Everyone knew that Jesus had been crucified and had died, for they had witnessed it. But they knew that this was not the full story, because there was much more to come.

Though the world could not see Jesus, his followers believed that he was with them still – that he had not left them alone- because he had promised to send his Spirit to help them, to guide them, to comfort them and to remind them of his teachings. He helped them to believe, and he helped them to work out their belief through their love for others.

It must have been so frustrating for them because the world could not see what they saw and understand the experiences they were going through. They saw the same picture but interpreted it in a very different way.

And so, it can be the same for us today. We live in a world that is either hostile or simply indifferent to the Gospel message that we read, hear and try to live by.

Many people, even people of obvious goodwill, fail to see the importance of Christ for humanity, and are ready to dismiss as wishful thinking any claims of having a spiritual life or an experience of God. For many their lives are a meaningless span of years, filled with everyday things that have no depth, and then life catches up with them, and death finally puts an end to it all.

As Christian today how do we live our lives differently? Jesus, told his disciples ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments.’ He summed up the Commandments by saying that the most important thing is, to love God with your whole heart and to love your neighbour as yourself.

As worshipping Christians today, we concentrate our thoughts on these two central commandments. We are called, even commanded, to love – but you cannot love what you don’t know. As we daily draw nearer to God and get to know him personally, we open our hearts to his will and what he wants for our lives. By doing this we learn to love others in the way that God loves us, it all becomes so natural.

Loving as Jesus loved means asserting the value of every single individual, working to build up the community, and leading a life of loving service, even though it may be very personally costly. When we do this, we offer the world an alternative and more enduring vision of what life can be for those willing to accept the Spirit of truth and to allow Jesus into their hearts.

Of course we cannot force people to do this. The old proverb says, “You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink” – not until the horse understands what water is and understands and acknowledges that he is thirsty.

But if we love in the way that Jesus commands, then we demonstrate the reality of Christ we believe in, and our world will be continually confronted by Christ and his Gospel.

Maybe then some will see a different picture of Jesus and accept him into their lives through to eternity. They will come to know and understand the true meaning of being a Christian through a loving relationship with God.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you have promised to be with us forever;  
teach us to rejoice in your presence, free us from all anxiety,  
help us to know you are always close by and that we may work with you and to your glory.

Lord, in you we live and move and have our being, for we are your children, and you are not far from any one of us.

We pray for all who are struggling in lonely or difficult places, for all who feel forsaken, for all who are longing to know your love.

Lord, we pray for countries and nations where people are in danger of destroying themselves or others.

We pray for all those who seek to live in simplicity, gentleness and reverence, but who are suffering at this time because of other's actions.

Lord, by your presence make our hearts and our homes places of peace.

We pray for peace in communities for peace in our relationships and that others may be touched by the peace we share with them.

Lord, we bring before you those that we hold in our hearts who are sick at this time, those who are caring for loved ones, and those who are mourning the loss of a loved one. May they all know the peace that you can bring them, at this time.

Amen

**A time for personal prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
For ever and ever. Amen

**Hymn** Come down, O love divine

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 out pass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace,  
till he become the place  
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

### **Final Prayer and Blessing**

May God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,  
Strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life;  
And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be  
among us and remain with us always. Amen

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

He is Risen indeed, Alleluia, Alleluia

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**Sunday after Ascension Day.**

### **Introduction**

Today is the Sunday after Ascension Day which was on Thursday last. The reading is in three parts, firstly, Jesus prays for himself and for the disciples. Then the ascension itself and thirdly what the disciples did immediately afterwards.

### **Collect for Sunday After Ascension Day**

O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

### **Psalm for Sunday after Ascension, Psalm 68 vs 1-5**

- 1** May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee.
- 2** May you blow them away like smoke, as wax melts before the fire, may the wicked perish before God.
- 3** But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful.
- 4** Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him, his name is the Lord.
- 5** A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.

### **Reading 1 John 17 vs 1-7**

Jesus prays for himself and then for his disciples as he moves on to his  
ascension

**1** After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. **2** For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. **3** Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. **4** I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. **5** And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

**6** “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. **7** Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you.

**Reading 2** Acts 16 vs 1-14.

Jesus ascends and the disciples return to Jerusalem.

**1** In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach **2** until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. **3** After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

**4** On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. **5** For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” **6** Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” **7** He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

**9** After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. **10** They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. **11** “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

**12** Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. **13** When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. **14** They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

## **Reflection** *(by Brian)*

Not surprisingly, the theme running through the ascension account is looking upwards.

In our gospel reading, Jesus addresses the Father in prayer for himself and for his disciples as he looks up [see John 17:1]. Looking up implies they were outside, most likely en-route to his eventual Ascension site of the Mount of Olives. Our epistle reading of the ascension finds the disciples looking up, gazing at the ascending Jesus until the angels nudge them home [Acts 3:10 & 11].

Looking upwards to pray is a common attitude in posture in Jewish society. However, although we as Christians, recognise that God is all around us, looking up is where our minds imagine heaven to be. So as we look up we sense heaven is just a glance away above us, where Jesus reigns, hence 'our Father who art in heaven'.

The phrase 'mountain top experiences' comes from the Ascension in that it is exactly what the disciples experienced. The Celtic Christian Church used another metaphor to explain mountain top experiences. They called the places where they occurred 'thin places'. A thin place is where we somehow sense the separation between us and God has narrowed and has become more permeable. God feels closer and we are a little nearer to heaven. I'm sure that for the disciples that the Mount of Olives [see Acts 1:12] was from then onwards a thin place.

I guess that each one of us has some sort of thin place. This begs the question where is your thin place? Perhaps for you it is outside, perhaps it is looking upwards, perhaps it is a bench in a churchyard, perhaps it is in your church, or a place of pilgrimage or a spiritual retreat.

For me it is my Church in St Albans where I had my formation as a young Christian, where I attended Sunday School and where I was baptised, confirmed and married. There is something timeless about a thin place. Our sense of closeness to God blurs time and even existence, merging our past, present and future. Surely the disciples went home rejoicing? No wonder they were constantly at prayer in that upper room?

## **Personal prayer**

Following on from the above why not look upwards as you pray, thanking and praising God for your thin place or places. You could then go onto pray for what is on your mind at the moment and pray for those you know who would value your prayers.

Amongst other things, why not pray for:

- for Church leaders, elders, pastors, councils and congregations who seek to minister in the multitude of churches, chapels and fellowships across the world. Especially pray for our United Parish and for Jacky, our Rector, the ministry team and the PCC.
- for your family and friends, for your neighbours, for local, national and international leaders and governments.
- for shopkeepers, carers and wardens; for hospitals, doctors and nurses and others in the front line, the NHS.
- for what you have seen on the news lately; the trouble spots of the world and those places and peoples in need.
- for peace and justice to reign in those parts of the world where evil exists in terms of war, oppression and hate.
- for those you know who would love you to pray for them at this time, for the lonely, the ill, the stressed, the bereaved.
- finally, pray for yourself and your situation/s.

Why not finish with the Lord's Prayer?

**Hymn** Why not say or indeed sing the following hymn:

Hail, Thou once despised Jesus! Hail, Thou still rejected King!  
Thou didst suffer to release us, Thou didst free salvation bring;  
Through Thy death and resurrection, Bearer of our sin and shame!  
We enjoy divine protection, Life and glory through Thy name.

Paschal Lamb, by God appointed, All our sins on Thee were laid;  
By our Father's love anointed, Thou redemption's price hast paid.  
All who trust Thee are forgiven Through the virtue of Thy blood;  
Opened are the things of heaven, Grace shines forth to man from God.

Savior, hail! enthroned in glory, Where for us Thou dost abide;  
We, by faith, do now adore Thee, Seated at Thy Father's side.  
There, for us Thou now art pleading, There Thou dost our sorrows share,  
Ever for us interceding, Till in glory we appear.

## **Closing Prayer**

Lord, as we celebrate your Ascension, draw your Church together into one great company of disciples together following our Lord Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving Him in His mission to the world and together witnessing to His love and forgiveness.

## **The Grace**

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

SUNDAY 24<sup>th</sup> May 2026

## PENTECOST

### THE INTRODUCTION

The Day of Pentecost marks fifty days since Easter Day and brings the Easter season to an end. It is a major feast of the Church's year when Christians recall how God's Holy Spirit was given to the disciples after Jesus' ascension, empowering them to begin the work of making disciples of all nations. Jesus had promised his followers that, although they would not see him after his Ascension, they would receive the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire them. The Acts of the Apostles describes how the crowds gathered in Jerusalem – representing many nationalities and speaking many languages – were able to hear the disciples preaching in their own language:

***'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.'*** Acts 2, Chapter 2

**"Alleluia! Christ is risen!"**

**"He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"**

### THE COLLECT

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,  
ignite in us your holy fire;  
strengthen your children with the gift of faith,  
revive your Church with the breath of love,  
and renew the face of the earth,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

### A PSALM SET FOR THIS SUNDAY Psalm 67

- 1 God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,
- 2 That your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.
- 3 Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.
- 4 O let the nations rejoice and be glad, for you will judge the peoples Righteously and govern the nations upon earth.
- 5 Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.
- 6 Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, and God, our own God, will bless us.

7 God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

### **CONFESSION**

What God has prepared for those who love him, he has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything. Therefore, let us in penitence open our hearts to the Lord, who has prepared good things for those who love him:

Lord God,

we have sinned against you, we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and repent. Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin. Renew a right spirit within us and restore us to the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**ABSOLUTION** May the Father forgive *us* by the death of his Son and strengthen *us* to live in the power of the Spirit all *our* days. **Amen.**

### **GOSPEL READING Acts 2 vs 1-21**

### **The Coming of the Holy Spirit**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' <sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' <sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

## **Peter Addresses the Crowd**

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. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.

<sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> "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.

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

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

<sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

<sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

### **REFLECTION** *(By Tony)*

Pentecost marks a significant turning point in the collective lives of the Disciples – they were all together – a tongue rested on each of them – all of them were filled by God's Holy Spirit and all spoke in other languages.

The immediate response from the gathered crowd was either one of amazement, bewilderment and astonishment, or, sneering and allegations that the Disciples were drunk.

On this Pentecost Sunday in 2026, how does the 'crowd' respond to Christ's Church now? There is probably more indifference than sneering now, but also quite some anger that arises from too many cases of failings by the Church, Clergy and Laity, and the perception by particular groups that they are not 'welcome' in God's Church.

**BUT**, there is also still amazement, bewilderment and astonishment, where people experience Christians 'talking their language', sacrificially caring for their needs, speaking truth to power and advocating justice for individuals and communities. This is where authentic belief and relationship with 'The Risen Christ' is experienced and felt, and God's Kingdom is upon earth through the Power of The Holy Spirit released into the Church, collectively and individually.

Jesus offers the whole Church this Pentecost a fresh opportunity to reset our relationship with Him and God His Father, and to be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit:

***"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"***

*Matthew 7: 7*



## **INTERCESSIONS**

Loving God we ask for the gift of your Holy Spirit to help us pray as we ought.

Come Holy Spirit, direct the rulers of the world. Fill our leaders with talents and discernment to seek the common good. We ask for your energy and vision for those who are tiring in the battle against injustice and oppression, those exhausted by the struggle with poverty and hunger.

Spirit of God, show us all how to bring peace and justice and unity to the nations.

**Lord, Your Spirit is with us                      Hear our prayer**

Holy Spirit, fill our homes, and set our hearts on fire with the warmth of your love. Inspire us to new beginnings. Help us as part of your universal church to reach out to others with the good news of Christ, to bring hope to those in distress.

**Lord, Your Spirit is with us                      Hear our prayer**

Holy Spirit, we come to you for those who are weak, who are ill, who cannot cope on their own, those known to us in particular need or trouble who ask for our prayers.

Spirit of God, may they know your hope and comfort, your power and assurance.

**Lord, Your Spirit is with us                      Hear our prayer**

Holy Spirit we pray for those who have died, those whose lives are darkened by sorrow and mourning.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can quench. We commend to your everlasting love those who have died.

**You turn our darkness into light; in your light shall we see light.**

Holy Spirit, create new life in your people, and renew and refresh us, as we turn in obedience and faith to You. **Amen**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **HYMN:**

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 its grace,  
till he become the place  
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

## **CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING**

May the Spirit, who hovered over the face of the waters when the world was created, breathe into you the life he gives. Amen.

May the Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin when the eternal Son came among us, may you joyful in the service of the Lord. Amen.

May the Spirit, who set the Church on fire upon the Day of Pentecost, bring the world alive with the love of the risen Christ. Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

Filled with the Spirit's power, Go in the light and peace of Christ. **Alleluia,**  
Thanks be to God. **Alleluia.**

## **Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2026**

*For those of you who won't be able to join us, here is a flavour of the Rogationtide service taking place this morning at Manor Farm, kindly hosted by Derek and Elizabeth Nixey.*

### **Opening Prayer**

We come before you our God and Sustainer, remembering that you are our Creator and the source of all being. Out of your love the universe was born. From primordial darkness you put in place all that is needed for growth and saw that it was good. You have put this world into our hands: may we recognise your Spirit within it, disturbing and challenging us to care for creation, for the weak and the deprived. Lord we remember that we are called by you to nourish the earth and its diversity of life, to share the gifts you have given, with one another and with the poor of the world. Amen.

### **Confession**

Let us ask God to have mercy on our tired land, and to prosper the work of our soiled hands. Let us ask God to forgive our delusion of self-sufficiency so that we may praise him for his provision and goodness.

Lord, you give us this good earth, yet we take your generous gift for granted.  
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, you give us this good earth, but we squander its rich resources.  
Christ, have mercy.

Lord, you give us this good earth, but we fail to share your bounty with all of your children. Lord, have mercy.

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal us and strengthen us by his Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

## **Asking For God's Blessing**

### **Upon the Land**

We give thanks for the good earth, its richness, its structure, its strength.

We pray for wisdom to tend it well and ask God's blessing on our land.

Bless, O Lord, the fields and pastures.

Grant strength and skill to those who work them. May the land yield its increase, and may we be faithful stewards. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Upon the Crops**

We give thanks for the growing corn, wheat and barley, and all sown fields.

We ask for a good harvest and God's blessing on the crops.

Bless, O Lord, the grain and seed. Protect them from storm and disease.

May our harvest feed the hungry, and our hearts be generous.

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

### **Upon the Livestock**

We give thanks for our cattle, sheep, pigs and horses, and for all animals in our care. We ask God's blessing on our livestock. Bless, O Lord, our flocks and herds.

Give compassion to those who tend them. May they flourish in health, and may we honour their life. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

### **Upon Our Communities**

We give thanks for the life of our parish and all who share in its work and worship. We ask God's blessing on our community. Bless, O Lord, our homes and families. Bring peace to the sorrowful and joy to the lonely. May we grow in love and kindness, rooted in your grace. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Gospel Reading: Mark 4 vs 26-32**

He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.' He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it?'

It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

**Reflection** *by Jacky*

I offer you three short poems to reflect on alongside the Gospel reading.

**The Mustard Seed (traditional devotional poem)**

A little seed lay hidden in the ground,  
So small that none would mark it where it lay;  
Yet warmed by sun and watered by the rain  
It grew and spread its branches day by day.

So grows the kingdom, quietly and sure,  
In hearts made ready for the life of God.

***A Grain of Wheat (short devotional verse)***

A grain of wheat falls in the earth and dies,  
Yet in the dark new life begins to rise;  
The hidden seed, by grace made strong and sure,  
Bears fruit beyond what any hand could sow.

***God's Grandeur (extract) — Gerard Manley Hopkins***

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil...

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.



**The Sower (Le semeur) - James Tissot  
(1836-1902)**

### **Prayers**

Let us pray to God our creator, who has given us the earth's goodness for our delight, and entrusted it to our care and tenderness.

For all who live in captivity to debt, whose lives are cramped by fear from which there is no turning except through abundant harvest;  
Lord, we pray: may those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

For all who depend on the earth for their daily food and fuel,  
whose forests are destroyed for the profit of a few;  
Lord, we pray: may those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

For those who labour in poverty, are oppressed by unjust laws,  
are prevented from speaking the truth, and long for a harvest of justice; Lord,  
we pray: may those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

For all who are captive to greed and waste and boredom,  
whose harvest joy is choked with things they do not need;  
Lord, we pray: may those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Save us from all that holds us captive, restore our vision, that our mouth may be filled with laughter and our tongue with songs of joy. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

### **The Collect for Rogationtide**

Almighty God, whose will it is that the earth and the seas should bear fruit in due season: bless the labours of those who work on land and sea, grant us a good harvest and the grace always to rejoice in your fatherly care; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **Blessing**

God the Father, who created the world, give us grace to be wise stewards of his creation.

God the Son, who redeemed the world, inspire us to go out as labourers into his harvest.

God the Holy Spirit, whose breath fills the whole of creation, help us to bear his fruits of love, joy and peace. Amen

### **Hymn**

For the beauty of the earth,  
For the beauty of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For the beauty of each hour  
Of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
Sun and moon and stars of light,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For the joy of human love,  
Brother, sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth, and friends above,  
Pleasures pure and undefiled,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For each perfect gift of thine,  
To our race so freely given,  
Graces human and divine,  
Flowers of earth and buds of heaven,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.

For thy Church which evermore  
Lifteth holy hands above,  
Offering up on every shore  
Her pure sacrifice of love,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our grateful hymn of praise.