



## ***Revd Rich Duncan writes...***

During my recent sabbatical, I had the chance to worship at 10 different churches in a variety of places: London, Bath, Carlisle, Cambridge, Winchester, Newcastle, Durham and South Africa. It was a unique opportunity to be spiritually fed and refreshed, as well as to learn from what others do well.

There are so many things I could highlight, but here are just some of the things that struck me as a 'punter in the pews' visiting churches for the first time.

### **1) Welcome really matters**

When attending a new church, you have so many questions. Where can I sit? How long will this last? What's the service like? Where are the loos? What ages are the kids groups for? And I'm a vicar! Imagine how much more uncertainty there is for non-churchgoers. First impressions count and having a warm, hospitable, proactive welcome on the door makes all the difference.

I love the true story of two teenage boys trying to find a seat at a Christian gathering in 1934. Seeing the venue was full, they walked away. But an usher on the welcome team, whose name no one knows to this day, ran after these fourteen-year-old boys and promised he could find them seats. That day, both boys became Christians. One of them was Billy Graham, who went on to preach the good news of Jesus to more people than anyone else in history. The other, Grady Wilson, organised Billy Graham's rallies that helped millions of people into the Kingdom of God. That unknown usher changed the world.



Welcome really matters.

## **2) Christian unity is profound**

Wherever we worshipped, I found it really quite emotional at times thinking just how much I had in common with complete strangers. Singing alongside them, chatting after the service, being prayed for, there was an unspoken bond, a level of understanding, a depth of feeling and a sense of belonging that was incredibly moving.

I think it is easy for Christians to take for granted how blessed we are to have a global family. We could go anywhere in the country tomorrow, indeed the world, and find brothers and sisters who would be willing to pray for us, sacrifice for us, provide for us and care for us.

Christian unity is profound.

## **3) Jesus is Saviour of the world**

The reason for our worldwide family is of course that we all worship the same Saviour. It was wonderful to hear the same gospel being preached wherever we went, regardless of social context, nation or denomination.

Jesus Christ is the one person that every human being on this planet needs in their lives. He is the only one whose healing crosses all cultural boundaries. He is the answer to all the world's problems. He is the Saviour of the world.

Which brings us back to Brackley.

Visiting other churches was incredibly special, but it also made us appreciate what we have here at St Peter's. We missed you all and the warm welcome home that we've received has been overwhelming. Thank you so much and thank you to all those who enabled the sabbatical in the first place, with many working extra hard in my absence.

If Jesus Christ is the one that every human soul needs, then there are many thousands who still need him in Brackley. Please join me in praying for our town and the other churches here, come along to our Annual Meetings (Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May) as we discuss our vision for the future, and let's continue to grow in loving God, loving each other and loving Brackley.

## **All things bright and beautiful.....and sustainable**



On February 12<sup>th</sup> the General Synod backed a motion to encourage and guide churches and cathedrals to explore ways of arranging flowers that are both beautiful and environmentally responsible.

This means that the motion does not introduce rules - it encourages wherever possible to consider ways to use seasonal local flowers and foliage and to phase out the use of non-biodegradable foam that cannot be recycled or composted.

Through discussion with Rich, it was agreed that the flower team will do our best to support this sustainability whenever possible. We will use different mechanics and containers for flower arranging e.g. jugs, chicken wire and tape. If we need to, we will use biodegradable blocks for larger arrangements. We already use locally sourced flowers and foliage as I grow so many in my garden but of course this is for a limited time only. We will be seeking the help of the congregation in this. If you or any friends have an abundance of flowers in your garden or allotment that you would like to share and have displayed in church, please contact me on 01280 700778. We already have many artificial flowers in church so we will use these to supplement our flower arranging, particularly during the winter and spring months when local flowers are less available.

Both Rich and I agreed that the flower team will continue to buy some flowers at festival times for large arrangements at Christmas, Easter and Harvest.

We will continue with the dedication of flowers as this proved to be so popular in 2025. If members of the congregation wish to celebrate a person or a special event by donating towards the cost of flowers for the special arrangements, please see me or contact me on the telephone number above.

We are a very small flower team of only three supported by a small team of helpers at Christmas, Easter and Harvest. None of us are florists but flower arranging is something we all love doing. Together, we will do our best to continue to provide beautiful arrangements and work towards greater sustainability in flower arranging at St Peters Church.

If you are interested in joining our team, please contact me on the above telephone number.

Sally Hughes – flower team co-ordinator

## What's in a name?

It will soon be Pentecost... or should that be Whitsunday?

Does it matter? No, it doesn't matter, it's the same, but the name helps us to think a little deeper.

Pentecost, from the Greek word for 50, is 50 days after Easter and a Jewish festival (much in common with our Harvest Festival). In Acts, the disciples (women and men) were preparing to celebrate Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended like 'tongues of fire', there was the sound of a great wind, Peter preached and thousands became Christians that day.

The small number of women and men, hiding away and afraid, became a large number of women and men, speaking about Jesus' death and resurrection.

So why did it used to be Whitsunday?

Maybe from the Old English 'White Sunday', people were often baptised then wearing white robes. Or maybe Whitsunday comes from 'Wisdom Sunday' – I love this explanation because it draws us back to the heart of the biblical account. Wisdom Sunday because the Holy Spirit is viewed as the wisdom of God who gives wisdom to Christians.

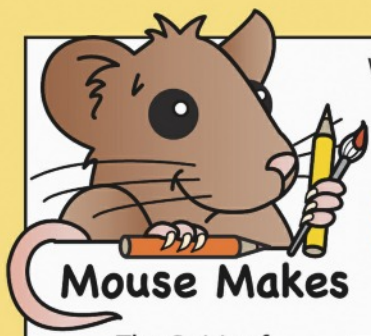
Whatever we call it, Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. We focus on God who gives wisdom and enables the church to serve their community.

My prayer this Pentecost is that we also continue that tradition of care for those who need it most and focus on becoming ever more a place of welcome for all.



The Venerable Alison Booker  
Archdeacon of Oakham





# Mouse Makes

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Spirit of \_\_\_\_\_  
Genesis 1:2

The \_\_\_\_\_  
of the Father.  
Acts 1:4

The Spirit of \_\_\_\_\_  
A \_\_\_\_\_  
Romans 8:15

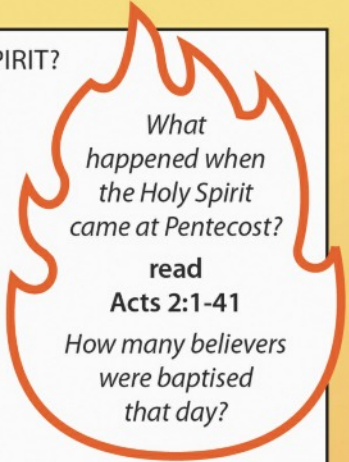
H \_\_\_\_\_  
John 14:26

The Spirit of \_\_\_\_\_  
John 16:13

The Spirit of \_\_\_\_\_  
Acts 16:7

The Fruit of the Spirit  
Galatians 5:22-23

\_\_\_\_O\_\_\_\_  
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What happened when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost?  
read Acts 2:1-41  
How many believers were baptised that day?

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K	E	O	N	P	P	E	A	C	E	G	O	D
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N	T	N	A	T	L	O	V	E	O	A	D	H
D	L	S	I	I	O	H	O	L	Y	C	D	L
N	E	E	T	E	A	I	C	P	L	E	E	G
E	N	L	H	N	D	E	A	E	D	E	B	L
S	E	L	F	C	O	N	T	R	O	L	J	O
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J	S	R	J	O	T	R	U	T	H	F	S	Y
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K	P	P	R	O	M	I	S	E	R	S	R	
I	D	W	I	N	D	D	O	V	E	W		

Look up the Bible verses and fill in the missing words. Look for them in the word search then look for these words below.

- HOLY • SPIRIT • COUNSELLOR • COMFORTER
- ADVOCATE • TEACHER • LORD • PROMISE
- GLORY • GRACE • FAITH • DOVE • FIRE • WIND

## An Introduction to Books of the New Testament: Philippians



This letter was written to Christians in the Macedonian city of Philippi when Paul was in prison, probably in Rome (60-62 AD). His primary purpose in writing was to thank them for the gift they had sent him upon learning of his imprisonment. However, he also uses the letter as an opportunity to report on his situation; to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances; to exhort the church to live in humility, fellowship, and unity; to commend Epaphroditus and Timothy to them; and to warn them about false teaching. This included Judaizers who were persuading the Philippians to submit to circumcision.

The central message of Philippians focuses on joy (the word occurs some 16 times!). For Paul, joy isn't simply an emotional response to favourable circumstances. True joy is to be found through a relationship with the resurrected and glorified Christ. Death ceases to be an enemy, because through it we can more fully enjoy the presence of Jesus. This joy is also rooted in an expectation of the return of Jesus, which gives urgency to the task of sharing the gospel. So, Paul begins his letter by thanking the Philippians for their partnership together in the work of the gospel through the offerings they have sent.

Paul also powerfully appeals to the Philippians to be of *'one mind'* in pursuing humility and unity. He gives the example of Jesus himself *'who made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant'* (2:7) to the point of dying the death of a common criminal. *'Therefore'*, say Paul, *'God exalted him to the highest place'* (2:9). This *'Jesus attitude'* is the one that all believers should share.

## National Biscuit Day – 29<sup>th</sup> May

Did you know that Britain is the country with the highest biscuit consumption in the world?

According to industry research, we each eat about 500 biscuits a year. And the great biscuit dunking debate - over which biscuit holds up best when dipped in tea – can spark surprisingly passionate discussion.

Biscuits have been part of our daily lives for centuries. Their dose of sweet, tasty comfort is loved by 2-year-olds and 90-year-olds, and every age in between.

And so National Biscuit Day is held each year to honour this beloved snack. Our national favourite seems to be the chocolate digestive, followed by shortbread and chocolate fingers. But don't underestimate the appeal of custard creams, hobnobs, chocolate chip and oatmeal cookies!

The McVitie's Digestive, first produced in 1892, is one of the most iconic biscuits in British history. Today, it remains a bestseller alongside other classics like the Rich Tea, the Bourbon, and the Jammie Dodger.



The word 'biscuit' comes from the Latin *panis biscotus*, meaning 'twice-cooked bread'. In Roman times, flour-based provisions were baked twice, to remove moisture, making them durable enough for long journeys. Ancient Egyptian sailors and Roman soldiers relied on these early biscuits as a portable, long-lasting food source.

The transformation from practical sustenance to sweet treat began around the seventh century, when Persian bakers added eggs, butter, cream, and eventually sugar and honey to their recipes, creating some of the earliest cookies in history. By the Middle Ages, biscuits had spread across Europe, with each region developing its own favourite.

The Industrial Revolution brought mass production to the biscuit world. British firms like McVitie's, Huntley and Palmers, and Carr's produced biscuits on an unprecedented scale. In 1831, Huntley and Palmers even invented the decorative biscuit tin, which not only kept biscuits fresh but also made them an attractive gift item.

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