

Church of St Mary Magdalene, Madingley

**Morning Prayer, Sunday 31 May 2020**  
**Pentecost - Whit Sunday**

WELCOME

Here is an order of service following our usual pattern for our Sunday Morning Prayer. I hope we will be able to say this service in our own homes on Sunday at our usual time of 10.30 am. If you are praying it on your own, I suggest that you still say the text which asks for a response, and imagine yourself saying it in company with the rest of the congregation. It will take about 35 minutes or so, depending on your own pauses for reflection and additional prayer, and the number of suggested hymns you choose to sing or say. The psalm and readings are included in the text. The hymns are from 'BBC Songs of Praise' as usual. (Susan)

OPENING HYMN: Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost (164)

THE GREETING

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.  
And also with you.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. We have come together in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand'. So let us turn away from our sin and turn to Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.

Grant we beseech you, merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve you with a quiet mind through Jesus Christ our Lord who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE PRAYERS

Blessed is the Lord. For he has heard the voice of our prayer.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, creator and redeemer of all; to you be glory and praise for ever. From the waters of chaos you drew forth the world and in your great love fashioned us in your image. Now, through the deep waters of death, you have brought your people to new birth by

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raising your Son to life in triumph. May Christ your light ever dawn in our hearts as we offer you our sacrifice of thanks and praise. Blessed be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Blessed be God for ever.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind. As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN: The Church's one foundation (176)

PSALM 104: 25 to end

Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there,  
living things both small and great.  
There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

These all look to you to give them their food in due season;  
when you give to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.  
When you hide your face, they are dismayed;  
when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.  
When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;  
may the Lord rejoice in his works— who looks on the earth and it trembles,  
who touches the mountains and they smoke.  
I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;  
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.  
May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.  
Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit  
As it was in the beginning is now and shall be forever. Amen

THE READINGS

Acts of the Apostles, 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?"

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Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

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

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

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

### THE BENEDICTUS (the song of Zechariah)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel  
Who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,  
Born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets God promised of old  
To save us from our enemies, From the hands of those that hate us.

To show mercy to our ancestors,  
And to remember his holy covenant.

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This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
To set us free from the hands of our enemies.

Free to worship him without fear,  
Holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,  
For you will go before the Lord to prepare his way.

To give the people knowledge of salvation,  
By the forgiveness of all their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God  
The dawn from on high will break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
And to guide our feet into the way of peace.

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.

### THE GOSPEL READING

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to [John, 20:19-23](#)

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

At the end of the reading:  
This is the Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you O Christ.

### REFLECTION

The city of Corinth in antiquity was big, bold and successful. It was a crossing point for trade routes between east and west, north and south, and a meeting point for different cultures and customs. It was situated on the narrow isthmus which links northern and southern Greece. In the present day, the Corinth canal has been cut through this narrow strip of land so that smaller ships can pass through straight to Athens, the Aegean Sea and on to Turkey without having to circumnavigate the southern coast of the Peloponnese. The site of Corinth today is still impressive. You can see the spot from which Paul addressed the Corinthians, the towering acropolis beyond the city, the amazing drainage system in the agora and the public conveniences which must have been quite companionable, and the remains of an imposing temple to Apollo.

So it is perhaps not surprising that Paul's Corinthian converts to Christianity seem to have been big and bold and successful too, ready to take on the challenges of their new faith, to get their new church sorted out, pretty confident even in the early days of the establishment of the church. But as yet there was no 'rule book' to deal with the practice of Christianity and the New Testament was yet to be compiled. The implications of their faith, of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, were still being thought through. So it was natural enough that questions and difficulties would arise among these energetic Corinthian converts, once Paul had left them. And some of these difficulties could threaten the existence of the new Christian community. So they sent Paul a letter about their concerns, asking for his help. We haven't got the letter, but Paul's reply gives us a fair idea of what was on their minds.

The question was, how were groups and individuals converted to Christianity? What was the evidence that they really were the followers of Jesus? Looking at the reading we've just had from Acts about the day of Pentecost, it was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which established the Church and set in motion the spread of the Gospel throughout the known world as the followers of Jesus took to the road. The ability to speak in tongues which was given to all those who were there on this pivotal day was one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. So the Corinthians began to think that this gift which came at the founding of the Church was so important that those who possessed it had a higher status than the other converts to Christianity. And they asked Paul what was the proper place in their assemblies for speaking in tongues. In other words, the idea was creeping in that there was a hierarchy of gifts from the Holy Spirit and that therefore there was a hierarchy of importance in the Church - a hierarchy of gifts and therefore of people and their value. Naturally this led to difficulties within the church in Corinth. It was a text book case of how to distress and alienate the faithful.

Paul's response was to remind the Corinthians that the gifts of the Holy Spirit were many, not limited to speaking in tongues. And he mentions such gifts as the utterance of knowledge and wisdom, healing, working of miracles. No doubt we could add any number of abilities and understandings we have been given, the skill of peacemaking, how to interpret the natural world, how to teach, and so on. None of these things can we give ourselves. But Paul says the Corinthians are to remember that the gifts of the Spirit are just that, gifts, not our own achievements. The first gift we receive is that of faith. Paul says "No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (Cor. 1:12,3). His argument is that faith is a sufficient sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. That is the gift which gains us admission to the believing community - not the speaking in tongues or prophesying or healing or any other of the gifts we may have. We belong through faith. Then Paul goes on to list the wonderful variety of gifts which people receive through the Spirit. God grants the gifts and it is the Spirit which allots the gifts and no one is given every gift.

The other striking point which Paul makes about the gifts of the Spirit is that they are not meant for the private benefit of the individual: "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (12:7). Paul's view is that spiritual gifts exist for the benefit of the whole community and should be used especially for the nurturing and building up of the Christian community. He then explains this through the analogy of the human body. The church is like a body, consisting of many different members with different functions, but still united as one single body. No function or part of the body is more important than another because, though different from one another, they all have their unique function but are still all interdependent. Paul is urging the Corinthians to accept the equality of what every member of

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the Church can offer, whatever it may be, and to let it be used for the common good of the Church.

And this is where the real difficulty comes in, not just for the Corinthians, but for ourselves too. Unity in diversity sounds a splendid idea, but it is an extraordinarily difficult one to realise. If we call for unity we have to recognise that diversity is a fact. If we celebrate diversity without seeking unity we will still be in difficulties. Is difference good or bad? Can or should differences be reconciled? If they are, does that mean difference is wiped out and we are left with uniformity? Or that difference means simply everyone for themselves? The tension between unity and diversity, within the Church and society more generally, and highlighted by the church in Corinth, is not new. But how to accommodate it and hold the two ideas in balance is still crucial to the well-being of our community.

### THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

THIRD HYMN: O worship the King (15)

### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

As the body of Christ, in the power of the Spirit, let us pray.

We pray, Lord, that the Holy Spirit will continue to pour the gifts of your grace on your people in all parts of the world. Grant us a willingness to give in return, in thanksgiving for what we have been given, and to turn to good use the gifts with which we have been entrusted. Lord, hear us. Lord graciously hear us.

We continue our prayers for the world still coping the corona virus pandemic and coming to terms with so much loss of life. We grieve with all those who have lost loved ones and pray, Lord, that you will be with all those making the slow journey back to health to bring hope and encouragement to them and their loved ones. And we pray that you will stand by all those helping to heal, and give them the strength and skills they need. Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

We ask, Lord, for the grace and power to live out our faith in the real and challenging world of which we are part, among those we meet and eat with, whose lives we share, our workmates, our friends and family. May we live that calling to be the body of Christ with integrity, forgiveness and love. Lord, hear us. Lord graciously hear us.

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We commend to your care, Lord, our families and loved ones, whom we may not have not seen for many weeks, and we pray for the patience and courage to sustain our present difficulties and to help one another and those in particular need.

Lord, hear us. Lord graciously hear us.

Giving thanks the fellowship of St Mary Magdalene, which holds us together, and for all the saints, we commend ourselves and all people to your unfailing love.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

### THE COLLECT FOR PENTECOST

God, who as at this time taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit; grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us: 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 BLESSING

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with us, and remain with us always. Amen.

FINAL HYMN: Thou whose almighty word (177)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ. Amen.

