



A Pastoral Letter for Ascension and Pentecost

Dear Parishioner,

I'm writing to you in anticipation of the feast of the Ascension and Pentecost which follows soon after. These events bring Eastertide to its joyful conclusion as we celebrate the Lord's return to Heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, restrictions to daily life continue with various implications for each one of us. Some of you are still strictly isolating at home because of health conditions that make you particularly vulnerable. Others of you are anxious about the future, for your employment or your children and their return to school. While for many, there is a sense that the hardest time is over and a sense of relief that you may soon be able to see your friends and loved ones again.

Whatever your situation, Ascension and Pentecost bring with them a special hope and reassurance this year. As the Lord ascends we remember his promise – 'I am with you always' (Matthew 28.20). At Pentecost, the Church received the gift of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus called the 'Advocate' and 'Helper' (John 16.7), to renew the face of the earth and the life of the Church, both then and now. In order to give this time its proper meaning I have provided some resources for you and want to share with you a few reflections –

- **This Thursday we celebrate the Ascension with a Sung Mass at 8pm**, which can be found on the church website (www.stmichaelbarnes.org). I know that watching worship online is not the same as being present in person – there is no getting away from that – but I believe there is great value in participating as a discipline and a witness to our Christian faith in difficult times. For many of you, not being able to receive the Sacrament at the Mass is very painful, but perhaps we may use this sense of loss to increase our longing and our love for God. Every time I celebrate Mass, I hold you all in my prayers and bring you with me to the Altar.
- The nine days between Ascension and Pentecost is a traditional time to make a **Novena of Prayer** for a special intention and on the reverse of the leaflet for Ascension Day you will find some prayers and intentions for your personal use during this time. Naturally, our prayers this year focus on the pandemic and our recovery from it, particularly those people and situations most in need of our prayers. There is also a printed Holy Spirit **Prayer Card**.
- Some of you may already have read my **'View from the Vicarage'** 2019-20. In normal circumstances I would have presented this at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting which has been delayed until a later date. It was written long before the lockdown and I have chosen not to edit it because it still represents a summary of our church life over the year. At this time when we cannot be together, it is wonderful to be reminded of our life together as a parish and all that God has done among us recently so that we may be encouraged in the future.

I have also provided a blue **Gift Aid envelope** for a Pentecost offering. I realise that for some of you there is much anxiety over your finances. However, I encourage you to make a donation, no matter how small, to the ministry of Saint Michael's. Many of our normal sources of income from hiring our facilities, and collections at services have completely ceased during lockdown. St Michael's is your church and it needs your help. Envelopes can be posted directly through the Vicarage door, or you can donate by text (e.g. SAINTMICHAEL £10 to 70470) or you can make a bank transfer to our account –

St Michael & All Angels Church
Barclays Bank Acc No: 10774065
Sort Code 20-72-33

For families and children -

- In addition to the above there is also an Ascension and Pentecost **colouring picture** and a **Prayer Label** (red for the Holy Spirit!) on which I invite children to write a prayer or a Bible verse and attach this to the railings of the cloister or on the gates at the entrance to church by Pentecost. Remember that on Pentecost Sunday (31st May) as well as the 10am Sung Mass there will also be a special **Children's Pentecost Service** via Zoom at 12 Noon. The details for this will be sent out by email (make sure you have signed up to our regular news emails), but the link is also provided below:

Topic: Pentecost Children's Service

Time: May 31, 2020 12:00 PM London

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89722431995>

Meeting ID: 897 2243 1995

Like many of you, I look forward to the day when we can once more be together in church. The government has indicated that, if all goes well, places of worship may be able to hold services again sometime in early July. It has to be said that our worship may look very different for some time to come due to continuing restrictions and social-distancing advice. I am hopeful that before July it will be possible to open the church for private prayer as I know how important this is for many of you.

Pentecost is a time when we pray for the renewal of the Church and the world. It is clear that our recovery from this pandemic is going to take much longer than any of us realised to begin with, and a great deal of renewal will be needed - so it is important that we redouble our prayers and ask God for his help. There is much that we are learning about ourselves and about God through this time, and I am greatly heartened by the stories of kindness and generosity in our parish as people support one another and show what it means to love our neighbours. Very often, it is through us that God send his Holy Spirit as helper and comforter, and in this we may discern the presence of the Lord Jesus who is always with us.

With all my love and prayers,



Father Stephen, *Vicar*