



William Lamb
450th anniversary

ST JAMES' CHURCH, ISLINGTON N1 8PF

31st May 2020 PENTECOST 20/22

Jesus, during your ministry on earth you showed your power and caring by healing people of all ages and stations of life from physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. Be present now to people who need your loving touch because of COVID-19. May they feel your power of healing through the care of doctors and nurses. Take away the fear, anxiety and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Give them a sense of purpose in keeping healthy and protecting others from exposure to the disease. Protect their families and friends and bring peace to all who love them; for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Collect: Living Lord, you filled the disciples with heavenly gifts in tongues of flame: lend fire to our words and strength to our witness that by that same Spirit we may wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ; for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



PRAYER DOVES Each of us has different skills and ways of learning. Some like to listen, some like to look, some like to make things. After ten weeks of virtual services we thought it was time for those with practical gifts to express themselves and so as part of the prayers we are going to show you how to make an origami dove - and then encourage you to write a short prayer inside.

If we had been meeting together in Church we would then have collected all the doves together as a way of showing how the Holy Spirit came upon each of the disciples. Perhaps it is even more powerful when we are separated as the doves become a sign of our virtual unity, spread wherever we are in the country. *Spirit of the living of God: fall afresh on us!*

PENTECOST is the No3 festival in the Christian Calendar after Easter and Christmas. Why? Because this is the day on which the Church was founded. Where once there was just a bunch of slightly uncertain disciples trying to work out what was going on, now they had the guidance of the Holy Spirit that would lead to the biggest programme of mission the world had ever seen. Within fifty years the Church had formed in modern day Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, India, Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, Italy, Egypt and Morocco! A new generation of leaders had emerged including the greatest missionary of them all, St Paul.

And of course they had to bring the Good News to all those 1st century cultures and languages.

And it is the issue of 'language' that we try to look at today. How was it possible to talk about the one God - and Jesus his Son - in empires that were full of gods and goddesses? How could they share Jesus' very Jewish ways of talking in communities already steeped in Greek philosophy and Latin maxims?

Our worship and our teaching ministry face exactly the same challenges today. The words we use to pray, the words we use to describe our faith - really matter. What are the most helpful forms of words that will help us keep alive the 'greatest story ever told' in ways that will appeal and be relevant in today's fast changing world?

ZOOM PCC While the Standing Committee has met by Zoom and we are still hoping to get readers of *Luminaries* to have a zoom discussion about their favourite chapters, as yet we have fought shy of convening a PCC meeting. But on Thursday evening we took the plunge and had a full two hour meeting 'separately but together'. Adam Dickson our administrator took the Minutes for the first time from his home in Southgate; Vera Taggart in Gerrards Cross had tech. problems but was able to listen into the conversation by phone. The major items included a review of our financial situation in 2020-1 (potentially down by £50k), an update on the refurbishment of the Hall kitchen and the decision to go ahead with a quote for new Hall curtains. Rules for the opening of our premises are still work in progress but we are to invite New North Road Academy to use the Hall if they need additional space. We spent quite a lot of time reviewing our response to the coronavirus and heard from Sinead about the technical challenges of both the streamed services and the distribution of craft materials for the 40 children in our Sunday School list. We agreed, however, that however good these were, they were no substitute for the real experience of being together, praying as a community in Church. We also looked at our compliance with data protection, for example over the sending out of the Arena newsletter. We don't think that anyone wants to object to our holding their details but this quieter period is a chance to get our lists up to date.



MERRY GO ROUND: still very grateful for good quality clothes and books. Julia at www.merrygoroundUK.org

Calendar and Daily Prayer themes

Sun 31 PENTECOST	Susan and Eric Sorensen; Vera Taggart
Mon 1 DEL Week 9	Fr Stephen Taylor; Ken and Margaret Thompson
Tues 2 Feria	Sergio Villicana and Cecile Son-Vicente; Fr Victor de Waal
Wed 3 Feria	Belle Williams; Tom, Poppy, Pearl and Bow Wheatley
Thurs 4 Feria	Tim Willis; Chris Wright; Brian, Oscar Yeats, Kate Yeats
Fri 5 St Boniface	Shannon Adams, Arabella and Rocco Macdonald
Sat 6 Feria	Lisa, Darren, Max and Oscar Ahmet-Baker
Sun 7 TRINITY SUNDAY	Louise Ahmet, Vinny and Benji Payne

PRAYER BOARD/NOTICES Requests for prayer welcome

- BIRTHDAY** Many Happy Returns today Dennis Davis of the 8am Mass congregation and to Sophie Carter who will be 18; on Tuesday to Florence Maile who will be four.
- SICK** Annie Bryan, Chou Seng Joo, Nieve Goodwin (recovering from Coronavirus), Emily Grainger, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Klenan, Kingsley Lewis, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Rene, Vera Taggart, Melanie Toogood and Angela Vinnicombe.
- DEPARTED** We were very sorry to hear of the recent death of Stephen Fay and of Dave Collins. Dave had been a stalwart volunteer at Pack-Up until he became seriously ill last year. He seemed to have made an excellent recovery but was found dead at his home in Prebend Street on Tuesday. We also pray for the souls of Barbara Fox (Canalside Square) and Mark Brown (Midway House, EC1), to be laid to rest at Islington Crematorium next week.



INTERNATIONAL CHURCH LINKS US: Fr Travis and Suzanne Smith, Angleton/Alvin, Texas; Japan: Fr Sebastian and Yuki Naniwa, now serving in a new parish in Ehime near Hiroshima.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE Still no new news about **Nazanin Zaghari-Radcliffe's** license which allows her to be with her family out of Evin jail. We pray for her, and also for her husband Richard and their daughter Gabriella in London. Sadly we have still heard nothing about **Kylie Moore-Gilbert** (left), a British-Australian academic, who seems to have disappeared from view. We also pray for **Anoosheh Ashoori**, a businessman sentenced to ten years and for **Aras Amiri**, an Iranian employee of the British Council, currently studying philosophy at Kingston University.



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Greeting

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.
Grace, mercy and peace be with you all.
And also with you.

Welcome to St James', Islington for this Service of the Word for Pentecost.

Christian communities like ours, all around the world, will be celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit to God's people - the gift that made it possible for everyone - of every background and nation - to become one family: the Church of God. So let's start with the first reading that nearly all churches will be hearing today.

SERVICE OF THE WORD

for Pentecost Sunday 2020

as streamed from
St James' Church,
Islington, N1

(Atti 2: 1-11) Mentre il giorno di Pentecoste stava per finire, si trovavano tutti insieme nello stesso luogo. Venne all'improvviso dal cielo un rombo, come di vento che si abbatte gagliardo, e riempì tutta la casa dove si trovavano. Apparvero loro lingue come di fuoco che si dividevano e si posarono su ciascuno di loro; ed essi furono tutti pieni di Spirito Santo e cominciarono a parlare in altre lingue come lo Spirito dava loro il potere d'esprimersi.

Si trovavano allora in Gerusalemme Giudei osservanti di ogni nazione che è sotto il cielo. Venuto quel fragore, la folla si radunò e rimase sbigottita perché ciascuno li sentiva parlare la propria lingua. Erano stupefatti e fuori di sé per lo stupore dicevano: 'Costoro che parlano non sono forse tutti Galilei?'

(Acts 2: 1-11) 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? 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.'

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

With thanks to Luigi Falcioni for sharing this passage from Acts in a language most of us couldn't understand and then in one we could, we take as our theme today the role of language in our worship and in our walk with God - both spoken languages and the languages which the Church has also needed to use, the language of silence, of music and of shape and colour and form.

But first let us begin our celebration with the Collect for today, the Feast of Pentecost:

Living Lord, you filled the disciples with heavenly gifts in tongues of flame: lend fire to our words and strength to our witness that by that same Spirit we may wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ; for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

AM389 Spirit of God, unseen by the wind [t. Skye Boat Song]

*Spirit of God, unseen by the wind,
gentle as the dove,
teach us the truth and help us believe,
show us the Saviour's love.*

*You spoke to us long, long ago,
gave us the written word;
we read it still, needing its truth,
through it, God's voice is heard. Spirit of God...*

*Without your help we fail Our Lord,
we cannot live his way;
we need your power, we need your strength,
following Christ each day. Spirit of God...* (Words: Margaret V Old)

Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia.

(St 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.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Sermon

Acts 2 : 1-11; I Corinthians 12: 3b-13; St John 20: 19-23



I bought this graphic at the Abbey shop in Iona way back in 1974 and for many years it hung in my study. Going into a lifetime of teaching and then preaching it seemed like a helpful reminder of the power that lies in the words we use. It is words that convert 'vague feelings' into something concrete. I kind of know what this sermon is going to be about - but until I actually sit down and write it, it doesn't really exist.

So on this special day when a bunch of frightened disciples were transformed by the Holy Spirit into 'the Church' as we know it, it might be worth giving some thought to the words and the use of language in the Church today.

And to help us experience the challenge of 'language' I asked Luigi to read half of the first lesson in his own native Italian, before breaking into the English we could all understand. And if you were like me you felt at a loss to start with: even reading the Italian on the page didn't seem to approximate to what we heard!

Which makes me ask the question: how much 'Church speak' do we actually understand? How many words that fill the Bible, the hymns, and the liturgy simply wash over our heads because we have never stopped to find out what they really mean? Don't we feel 'left out' and at a disadvantage because we assume that everyone else 'gets it'? We feel we must be a bit stupid because what is the point of all those words if they don't mean anything to us as we sit there?!

Before we tackle that question, though, let's look at what Luigi actually read (but in English!): *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...*

What St Luke tells us is that, before the words, there were two other experiences in that upper room worth noting: the rush of a violent wind – and the appearance of tongues of fire. In other words, even before the disciples heard any words at all, other things caught their attention; only then did they begin to hear and speak to one another.

And I think that is true of our experience too – and the reason why being in Church is so much better than watching a screen for our services! As the PCC said on Thursday night, screens equal work: emails, reports and 'business' of whatever sort our jobs require. Week by week we are realising how the ambience and atmosphere in Church helps us to step out of the rat-race and focus on God. Which means that there is a 'language' about churches too – albeit different languages!

In very stark, generalized, terms for some churches are nothing more than meeting rooms which can be as plain and utilitarian as you like; for others churches are designed to be beautiful glimpses of heaven itself. For some, services are community events which allow the Gospel to be taught and celebrated; for others the emphasis is more on quiet reflection, silence and sacramental sharing.

In the same way the language of music in our churches will vary hugely. Some church communities will want to sing familiar hymns and songs which have stood the test of time; others will be singing new and much more contemporary material. Four-part Choirs or praise bands, organs or guitars: all have their own enthusiasts, their own character and their own repertoire. Ours isn't the only PCC that has debated long and hard about what is appropriate and 'good enough' to be sung or played in Church!

And all that before a single word has been spoken!

We are only too aware, especially in London churches, of the huge range of languages that are spoken (outside Church at least!) by the members of our congregations.

But much importantly, we are also aware of the range of the 'ways' in which we use language in our ordinary lives – our chosen vocabulary, the style of speaking and the culture which leads us to talk of one thing rather than another.

It will often be determined by age, gender, geography, our schooling and the jobs that we do. I haven't time to list all the occupations that the congregation at St James' are involved in, but Admin, Architecture, Catering, Child care, Computing, Consultancy, Education, Engineering, Food Retail, Finance, Home Care, Law, Medicine, Psychological support, Social Work and Veterinary Science would be a start at such a list – all with their own worlds and languages!

Is it any wonder then, that St Luke describes the scene at Pentecost as a cacophony – different 'languages' with all the potential for misunderstanding and irritation! We all know how frustrating it can be when we can't get a handle on what makes others think in the way that they do. And sometimes our store of 'language' just isn't big enough.

Sinead Burke was born and bred in Dublin in 1990 and was featured a week or so back on Radio 4's Desert Island Discs. She made her name after a recent TED talk on disability and fashion having already trained to be a teacher. Sinead suffers from Achondroplasia; she is just over three feet tall.

As part of her training she had to be fluent in Irish and when she was working for her finals she realised that the only word in Irish for her condition was the rather negative word 'dwarf'. What was she to do? The answer was to go straight to the Irish Dictionary review committee which took less than a month to include 'Daoine Beaga' or Little People into its pages.

Rowan Williams says that, amongst other things, one of our basic Christian 'duties' is to learn to listen to the experience of other people and to do all we can to understand them speaking 'in their own language'.

Peter Lampe, in an immensely difficult theological book *New Testament theology in a secular world* which Ken Thompson kindly lent me, says that if we want to step out beyond the experiences of the Early Church, we need to be able (and willing) to share with others what the experience of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost means for us in the here and now. Nicholas Lash's little book *Holiness and Silence* is all about finding ways to re-examine the barriers which patterns of language, music and ritual have built up over the years.

And the reason why these three heavy weights are right is because only when we are willing to get to grips with the feelings that each one of us gets when we are together in worship will we stop being distracted by the trivialisation that can so easily consume us: whether we 'like' this hymn, that prayer or that ceremonial action.

Lash says that the world is longing to find real depth of meaning in what is going on in Church and if we don't discuss and explain the significance of words, poetry, music and symbolic actions – bringing them up to date and reevaluating them as we go – then we will lose so much of the richness of what the Holy Spirit has to share. But that takes real effort - and time, courtesy, respect, patience and a reverence for those things which other people value and which supports their faith.

The zoomed PCC meeting on Thursday was indeed strange but still really rather good too. There was Alastair in his kitchen, Isabel in her study, Kerri at her home work station and Hilary encouraging Laura to put a very tired Hope to bed! But for whatever reason, we were able to discuss in a more fruitful way than for some time, just what it was that we had been missing over the last ten weeks of the shutdown. And we talked about the loss of community and how that had affected our walk with God.

The value of the Feast of Pentecost lies in the way it helps us to focus – not just on our dialogue with God (important though that is!) but also on our conversations with one another: discovering one another's insights and trying to discover a common language that will enable us to share our vulnerabilities so that we are bonded into a united people who want to affirm, as best we can, all of the ways that God speaks to us and encourages us.

If Pentecost is a celebration, a festival of unity – it is only because Spirit is still at work; inviting us to share in a 'unity in the making'.

The Confession

The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole world and knows our every word and deed. Let us therefore open ourselves to the Lord and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

We keep a moment of silence during which we recall those things we would like God to forgive. Then we say this prayer together:

**Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.**

**We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are, and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly, love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

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

Prayers of Intercession

We are so very used to our young people in Sunday School creating amazing crafts each week that I thought everyone might like to have an opportunity to make something today. If you would like to take part you may wish to pause the service now.

Instructions for this craft are available on the St James' Facebook page underneath the tab for the recorded service. You will need find a square piece of paper, a pair of scissors and a pen or some coloured pens or pencils.

Our aim today is to create a "Prayer dove" which, when gathered virtually together, will be a representation of the gifts of the Spirit that came down on the apostles at Pentecost - and continues to come down on those who pray.

When you have made your dove you may like to write a prayer inside the paper dove as we have done and leave it in some convenient place where you can see it.

Hymn: **AM721 Love divine, all love's excelling** [t. Blauenwern]

*Love Divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
pure unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.*

*Come, almighty to deliver.
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.*

**Finish then thy new creation,
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee,
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our pace,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise!** (Words: Charles Wesley)

And so to our prayers:

Come, Holy Spirit, and fill our hearts with a longing
to live like Jesus - here, now, where we are.

Holy Spirit, even in these restless days,
give us a sense of direction and purpose,
even if it means learning to be more patient as we see how events unfold.
Holy Spirit, help us to use this time of lock-down and isolation
to look again at the talents and abilities you have given us
so that we may be ready to flourish when our freedoms are restored.

Holy Spirit, when we fail to have enough energy
to retain our sense of hope that all will be well,
remind us that we are precious in your eyes.

Holy Spirit, the power within the Church,
fill all Christians with a sense of unity, one with another:
bless those exploring faith and those to be baptised.

Holy Spirit, whose will is that we should live in peace and harmony,
restore our relationships which can so easily become misshapen.
Take our wounded spirits and make them whole.

Holy Spirit, bringer of peace and reconciliation,
draw all those at war to a new place where a shared vision can grow
and the struggle for domination may give way to mutual respect.

Holy Spirit, give strength to those who are ill
and to all who care for them;
direct the skills of all working under severe pressure today
and enable us to cherish the sacrifices being made by NHS professionals.
Holy Spirit, receive the souls of all those who died,
those in the company of family and staff; those who have died alone;
may they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of Mary the Mother of God, St James, St Peter
and all the saints, we commend ourselves and all those for whom we pray
to God's unfailing love:

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

In the power of the Spirit let us pray as our Saviour 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.**

Community Notices

Blessing

May the God who sent his Holy Spirit to open to every nation
the way to eternal life,
open our hearts and our lips to the gift of that same Spirit,
that every tongue may tell of his glory;
and so may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us, now and for ever. **Amen.**