

**Collect and readings for
The Seventh Sunday of Easter
The Sunday after Ascension Day**

COLLECT

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. Amen.

READINGS

1st reading, from The Acts of the Apostles chapter 1,
verses 6-14

Psalms 68, verses 1-10 & 33-36

2nd reading, from the First Letter of Peter chapter 4, verses
12-14 & chapter 5, verses 6-11

Gospel, John chapter 17: 1-11

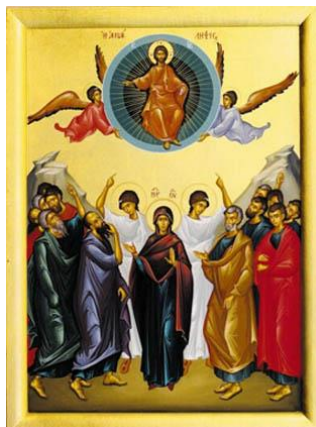
(You may have noticed last week that directions as to how to find the readings were not offered, as we hope that – having found them in several weeks previously, you will remember where they are.)

From Revd. Maureen



This Sunday has two 'titles' – the Seventh Sunday of Easter, but it is also the Sunday after Ascension Day (last Thursday). Although Ascension Day is an important Feast Day in the church's calendar, it does get somewhat lost falling as

it always does on a Thursday – between Easter Day and the Feast of Pentecost. Ascension Day is the day when Jesus' earthly life ends. Easter Day, the Day of Resurrection, is a Feast Day celebrating the triumph over sin and death and Ascension Day celebrates Jesus return to a divine life. We look forward, too, to next Sunday which is Pentecost – 50 days (Greek: Pente) after Easter Day and the day when the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and Advocate, comes upon the Apostles in Jerusalem just as Jesus has promised them.



The words of today's Collect (prayer for the day) confirm that Jesus has returned to heaven, and ask God not to

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leave us directionless and rudderless but to send the Holy Spirit to be with us for ever and that we may eventually be with Christ where he is - recalling, if you remember, the words which we heard in the Gospel a couple of weeks ago about 'I am the way, the truth and the life' and 'where I am there you shall be also.'

So in our reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear about Jesus' farewell to his disciples – a bit like us saying goodbye to our loved ones when we go away and leave them perhaps when we go on holiday, or move house. Jesus promises these close friends that God will send the Holy Spirit to give them power to become witnesses to him throughout the world. And then he was removed from their sight, perhaps like someone on a train moving away into the steam from the engine and clouding our vision. The reading then speaks of two men in white who speak words similar to those that the angel said at the empty tomb – 'Who are you looking for?' Only this time the words are 'Why do you stand looking up towards heaven?'



We learn that the twelve return to Jerusalem, and we are reminded – almost like a roll call – of their names, paying particular attention to that of Judas as it is made very clear that it was not Judas Iscariot, of course, but 'Judas son of James'. Following this taking of the register, we read that they constantly devoted themselves to prayer, and that they were joined by Jesus' mother, Mary, as well as others.

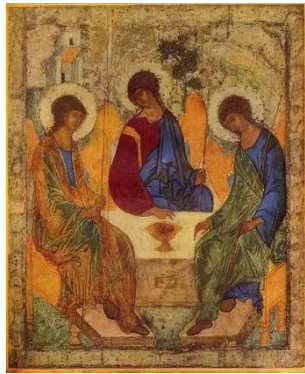
I wonder whether they were still afraid, as they were in the early days after the resurrection when they locked themselves in. Were they in lock-down on this occasion, like us? Are we devoting ourselves to prayer, with others? I think we are – with all those who read this InTouch leaflet where we share in our common situation and offer prayers for all to join in. So we are following in the footsteps of the early Church, and waiting as they did for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They probably didn't know quite what that meant or how it would manifest itself, no more than we do now. It's interesting, I think, to consider that we have two people who have asked about Confirmation in recent weeks, and also I have had an enquiry about what is involved in discerning a vocation to the ordained ministry! The Holy Spirit is out and about – stirring people up, making them think and respond and giving them courage. But more of that next week.....

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Our other readings are great shouts of praise, of belief in who God is, remembrance of God's activity in the history of Israel and of his providence and guidance. Peter's letter warns that although we may have tough times ahead, God is with us and journeys with us and again announcing total trust in God's goodness and constancy. Our Gospel is part of Jesus' great prayer to his Father before he suffered, when he commends himself and his companions to God. He reiterates several times his request to God, as though he needs to convince himself that he has done and said all that he possibly can to keep the disciples safe and that they will be thoroughly prepared for whatever lies ahead. As Christians, surely we believe that this applies to us too. We are his present-day followers, and in these days of uncertainty, anxiety about what the future may be like, when we are going to be able to worship in our churches again, and things as mundane as when can we get our hair cut again or have a holiday we recall those words of Jesus:

'And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name, that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.' May we remain united with one another and also in God through Christ and may we know that protection for which Christ prayed on our behalf. If we really think about what we are reading; if we really look at each word and imagine them being spoken to us or on our behalf, these words are mind-blowing! We are one with Christ, as Christ and God the Father are One. And the other member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is going to be sent to us to be with us for ever, until the world ends. If that isn't astonishing, I don't know what is! We are drawn into that special and intimate relationship with God the Father and Christ and the Holy Spirit and we are one with them.'

If you know the Rublev icon of the three figures sitting at a table, totally at ease and comfortable and equal in one another's presence – notice that the side of the table nearest to us as the observer is unoccupied but ready for us and the welcome is there. The three who sit there are not sitting in order of precedence; they all seem to acknowledge the presence and equality of the other and that is surely what we should be striving for. All of us equal in each other's eyes – as we are in God's sight – and welcoming and inviting others to be with us. That is what we are doing, I believe, in providing and sharing this means of communication. We are supporting one another in our various communities and reaching out to those around us and those who do not have the internet as a means to receive this. We must not be complacent, however, as we need to stay alert and imaginative about how we can take this forward when the lock-down does eventually end and normal life resumes – whenever that may be. We can pray about that, and ask for inspiration from the Holy Spirit whose arrival we shall celebrate next Sunday. Until then, God go with us all.



Having mentioned hair cutting somewhere in this text, I know of at least one parishioner who has several funny (and hair-raising!) stories about visits to hairdressers/barbers in various parts of the world where they have lived. I hope to persuade that parishioner to provide us with some of those stories for our amusement and delight, so I'm working on that one. Even though my own daughter in law is a hairdresser, I still can't get my hair cut though I do take the scissors to my husband's hair and beard from time to time!

We had a bumper issue last week, but I hope that everyone found something of interest or amusement. Perhaps reading through it has lasted you all week, which is good. Well done to everyone who contributed, but do keep items coming. I don't think we want to go beyond 10 pages, or even possibly 8, so if you send us something which doesn't appear in the next edition – worry not, it will be included as soon as possible when space is available.

We continue to wait upon instructions about opening our churches but, in the meantime, I think we have plenty of resources which many of you know about and appreciate. I think it's helpful that, once you've found something which "speaks" to you addresses your spiritual or worship needs, you stick with that rather than shop around too much. This can lead to confusion or perhaps a sense of instability which we don't need at this particular time! If you need any advice, or just a chat or a deep and meaningful theological discussion I am always available on the phone or by email or even Facebook – though Facebook is perhaps not the best medium if your need is the latter one mentioned above!

Please continue to pray for our key workers in so many walks of life; for those whose operations have been cancelled; for those who have had surgery and for whom nothing more can be done, as is the case for at least one person living in our Benefice. If you can spare just five minutes to sit still and offer them to God, that would be wonderful.

I am dealing with various pastoral situations right now which are quite tricky to switch from one to another emotionally, but which are all part of life's rich tapestry within the ordained life. I'm sure many of you have such situations anyway. Thank you to all those who have taken the trouble to contact me and to offer prayerful support, which is very much appreciated by me and by my family. My saxophone practice is going OK, and I am improving very slowly but I feel that I'm achieving something in my reading of music apart from forgetting what key I'm playing in! I'm working my way through the hymn book tunes used at St Mary's in Bishops Lydeard, as I'm familiar with what they should sound like – which is a great help. I'm thinking of selling my soprano sax and the alto sax and getting a better model of alto. So, if anyone knows of a family member, neighbour, friend or work colleague who would like to buy a saxophone ask them to get in touch with me. Both of mine are students' models, and both have a little wear and tear but would be ideal for a student or someone wishing to try the instrument to see what it's like.

By the way, for those of you who so kindly sponsored my youngest son in his runs of 4 miles every 4 hours over 48 hours – he is very, very grateful to you and he has asked me to pass on his thanks to those whose name he knows and to those who wished to remain anonymous. He has been overwhelmed and overjoyed to raise just over £1,000 including Gift Aid for his efforts on behalf of the NHS. So thank you, one and all – from Chris and from me.

Bless you.

Maureen

Rewilding and cakes by Katharine Smith



For those of us who are fans of The Archers this coming week is a big one! Up to now we've been hearing episodes recorded before the Coronavirus changed our lives and it has gone unmentioned in Ambridge. For the last three weeks we've been hearing old episodes covering significant moments in village life which has been great - I'd completely forgotten about Charlie! But on Bank Holiday Monday we will hear the first of new episodes recorded during lockdown with all the actors working in their own homes. It'll be interesting to see how they handle this strange turn of events.

If you do follow Ambridge life you will know that one story line is about a group of villagers who are undertaking a "Rewilding" project to return land to its pre-cultivated state and encourage wild flowers, birds, bees and butterflies to find homes there once more. Some twelve weeks after I had my hair permed I've decided to make the best of what's happened and create a new hairstyle called "Rewilding" and see if I can set a trend for when we can get to our hairdressers again!

Thank you to the person who sent me her recipe for Somerset Apple Cake. Knowing how good her baking is I am sure that it's an excellent recipe and I hope I can do it justice when we can get some flour! I used to love uncooked cake mixture when I was a child (still do actually!) and my mother always used to let me finish up what was left in the mixing bowl after she'd popped the cake tin in the oven. When we had a lesson on how to bake fairy cakes at school I got a bit carried away with being in control of how much cake mixture was left in the bowl for me to finish up. The result was that I had four or five fewer cakes than everyone else. My best friend very kindly gave me a couple of hers to even things up but of course her buns looked completely different to mine and I was rumbled! I thought it was worth it though.

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Sunday 24th May is our 34th Wedding Anniversary and we were going to have a long weekend in Venice to celebrate. Alas, it is not to be but this one of my favourite paintings of Venice. One of the many extraordinary things that have been happening in the world is that the water of the Venetian Lagoon has become clean and fresh again. Apparently, dolphins were seen swimming in the Grand Canal - we would have loved to see that. I do hope the authorities find some way of limiting the pollution in that most beautiful of cities and, of course, all the other places that suddenly have cleaner air and brighter skies.

I did offer to give Spike the week off by doing a bit of writing for InTouch but he said that he couldn't disappoint his fans and would be doing his column anyway for their sake! Well, I did offer!

Love to you all and virtual hugs!

Katharine

Another excellent Coronavirus song

"Islands in the Stream" for the Covid 19 era. Enjoy!

<https://www.facebook.com/pblack4/videos/10159104117328475/>



NOW WE STAY INSIDE, THERE AINT NOTHING GOING ON

From Angelika



It's nearly a week after my Yogamarathon. I'm really delighted that donations are still appearing on the 'JustGiving' page, so to date there is £1845 with £360 Gift Aid to add.

I would like to thank everyone from church and/or who reads 'InTouch' for the amazing response to raise money for 'Refuge'. I was almost overwhelmed by everyone's generosity. I have always felt concerned for those victims of domestic abuse; we have heard such horror stories particularly where children are concerned. The plight of those caught up in lockdown has brought the need for safe places back into public attention. Many of you who have given to support this sponsorship have expressed their sympathy with this cause.



It has set me wondering if anyone has contacts with anyone in Taunton Deane Council? Indeed whether publicising this might stir up more support from the council for local aid. Do contact me if you have any thoughts vis a vis this.

The Just giving page is still open so it's not too late to donate if you have only just heard about the sponsorship. This is the link:

<http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/angelika-sivyer>



With gratitude...and my very best wishes'

Angelika

A note from Georgie Slater



Hi everyone

I've just been looking again at last weekend's InTouch and thinking again what a wonderful idea it was to do it, how well it's produced and what a fantastic mixture of material goes into it.

This may be already in the plans, but I think it would be a really good idea to collate all of the issues once it's no longer necessary to produce them and keep them as part of the church archives. I think they would be a very good testimony to the faith, love and resilience of the church in these difficult times, and maybe provide inspiration and hope to any future generations who may have to go through similar situations.

Do hope and pray that you are all keeping well.

With love.

Georgie xx

From Gavin and Maureen Lord

Hello everyone

Yet another collaboration between Canon Chris Bishop and his brother in law. This week it's all about 'things we have missed'. We hope you enjoy this further offering.

<https://youtu.be/BG3Mk2w3l9U>



Best wishes

Gavin & Maureen

Penny's Mocha Mousse – Yum!

8oz plain or milk chocolate; 3 tablespoons strong black coffee;
1 tablespoon Brandy/Tia Maria (optional!); 4 eggs (separated); sugar to taste

- 1) Put chocolate, coffee and brandy in a bowl over a saucepan of boiling water (the bottom should not touch the water – i.e. a Bain-Marie).
- 2) Add sugar as it melts, stir.
- 3) Leave to cool.
- 4) Add egg yolks and beat well.
- 5) Whisk egg whites until stiff and fold into chocolate mixture.
- 6) Put into serving dish or individual dishes.
- 7) If desired, decorate with whipped cream, flavoured with almond essence.



Our Prayers

Almighty God, may our prayers ascend to you just as Jesus Christ, your son, was taken up to heaven. As we celebrate the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus let it inspire in us feelings of joy and hope rather than fear and separation as we await the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Everlasting God, we pray for our Bishops, Peter and Ruth, and all church leaders; for all clergy – especially Revd. Maureen and Revd. Mark; for our Reader, Katharine and for all who serve this Benefice. May the Lord bless them and guide them in their work as we move forward together to live the Gospel.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God, we pray for our troubled world its peoples and their leaders. We pray for those caught up in war, and violence, and hatred; especially the innocent victims of these evils and those who are abused because of Christ. May peace abound and righteousness flourish, that we may vanquish injustice and wrong and that the suffering won't last forever.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Father God, we pray for all the people that we encounter in our daily lives especially through the internet and social media in these difficult times. Help us to recognise Christ in one another however stressed and tired they may be. We ask that you help us to recognise the risen Christ in the face of someone we meet today and give us an opportunity to brighten their day with a smile or a word.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Loving God, we pray for all those in need; for those who are filled with guilt; who are broken-hearted; who are confused and afraid; or saddened because a relationship has broken down. We pray for all suffering from illness, particularly those requesting our prayers and give joyful thanks for those on the road to recovery.

Today we pray especially for: Peter (Cothelstone), John, Gwen, Joan, Bobby, Lucinda, Norma, Marissa, Roger and Wendy and for all others known to us.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God, we pray for all who have died; especially those who encouraged us in our faith by their example. As we pray for them, may they in turn continue to pray for us that we may stay true to our faith and give the same kind of example ourselves to others.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Faithful God, as we go out into the coming week make us mindful that we should constantly pray for your world and your people just as Jesus, your son, prayed for his disciples before returning to you.

Merciful Father: Accept these prayers for the sake of your son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Spike's column



Hello you lovely lot!

I hope this finds you all in good spirits. I learned this week that black and white photography is back in vogue so I thought I would show you a recent picture taken by Mrs Human.



As for that Mr Human, I'm afraid we had a little falling out. He foolishly tried to tickle my tummy. Clearly, like any self-respecting cat, I had to bite him!



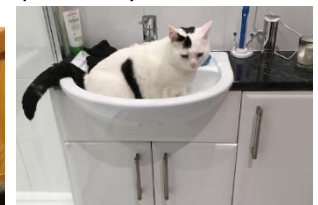
Now as Christians we are required to welcome the stranger. This chap has moved into our house recently. I've tried to be friendly, but he doesn't say much. Perhaps he is foreign? He's quite a colourful character!



Well we have had some lovely weather so I have put some pretty lights up to enjoy when it is warm enough to sit in the garden in the evenings.



And look! I have discovered a brilliant new place to hide. They'll never think of looking for me here! I also spent some time checking out the bathroom this week. I like it in here because it is always warm and I fit quite nicely in this.



Well that's it from me for now, but I'll be back next week with another update. Meanwhile, stay safe and be kind!

Love from *Spike*

xxx

Dear Spike...
(as dictated to Kath Halkyard)

Dear Spike.

How purrfectly splendid to see you reporting to humans, and your own so well trained!

I have lived many of my nine lives and it's a long time since kittengarten, but I did learn a lot about our great example --- Aslan of Narnia, so a few words of advice.

Be kind to your humans, tis best not to bite Mr H, (anyway, there is the pawsibility you may need him to open tins and pouches.)

Take a look from your fence top.....the humans going to and fro look more strange than usual, (still only two legs of course). Their fur is thicker and longer, their whiskers as well, and some have got fatter 'cos they've been lying around in the sun and eating lots. Ideas stolen from us!!



'Kernow Cat' by Brian Pollard <https://www.brianpollard.co.uk/>

No need for hissterics for apparently, there is a possible cat-astrophe they are trying to avoid.....so.....no grooming, no fur or whisker trimming, and they can't even join a clowder!!!!!!! Poor things must stay four cat lengths apart. Yeow!!!!

Paws for thought.....Pity them Spike, I do, though I shall be pleased to slink into cars and things when they start travelling to Cornwall and Bristol so I can see feline friends, feral and refined.

Take good care and watch the cat-titude.

Mui Mui.

Kernow Kat.

If you think you've
blown God's plan
for your life, rest
in this: You, my
beautiful friend,
are not that
powerful.

Lisa Bever

**Letter from the
Right Reverend Ruth Worsley,
Bishop of Taunton**

Recognise the one who stands beside you



'Stay alert' is the message as we 'ease out of lockdown'. We know that for some there is little ease as we begin to re-engage with a world that is still fearful of Covid-19 and uncertain about its future. The requirement to 'stay alert' is to encourage us to watch out for signs of the virus and protect ourselves and others as necessary.

We're just about to celebrate Pentecost, often recognised as the birthday of the Church. Jesus' message to his followers as he left them to return to his Father was that they were to 'stay alert', not to guard against something fearful to come but rather to be watchful for the Spirit that would free them from fear. It didn't mean that there weren't still physical dangers to face but rather that their spiritual lives should grow in boldness.

We have seen much courage exhibited throughout this crisis to date. Key workers who have continued to serve us day by day even whilst most of us have remained at home. The NHS has quite rightly been applauded and appreciated at this time and there are so many more.

I've been especially impressed by our schools and their teams who have largely been open throughout this period to be provide care for key worker families and vulnerable children. Even at weekends and during this past half term holiday they have been tirelessly supporting their local communities. Staying alert to the needs of our young, they have shown their commitment and care. I want to express my huge gratitude to them!

As we move into June we may be seeing more children returning to schools having been home-schooled for a time. This will not be without fear for some and a need to be especially alert to physical dangers. Whatever the situation we find ourselves to be in at this point, we are reminded that we have a Comforter, an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who strengthens and encourages our faith even at times of doubt and anxiety.

Whether still at home and isolated or beginning a return to wider community life, may you find yourself being alert for and recognising the one who stands alongside you, the Spirit, who is friend, guardian and comforter.

With every good wish

Bishop Ruth