

# THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D  
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## IS IT STILL EASTER?

Although the supermarkets have put away their foil-covered Easter eggs for another year, it is still Eastertide in the Christian calendar, the period of fifty days starting on Easter Sunday and ending at Pentecost. *'Christ has risen – hallelujah'*.

The days of Eastertide include a number of celebrations that are key to Christian belief. On 9<sup>th</sup> May, Christians celebrate the Feast of the Ascension, the commemoration of Jesus' bodily ascension into heaven. Traditionally on the fortieth day of Easter, the feast is one of the earliest in church history. St Augustine, living in the fourth century, speaks of the Feast as if it were a universal observance before his time and probably an event of Apostolic origin.

By 19<sup>th</sup> May, we are on the fiftieth day of Easter, hence the name, Pentecost, also called Whit Sunday. That name seems to be an abbreviation of White Sunday and there are a number of different and conflicting explanations for calling the Sunday 'White'. One is that it brings to mind the white clothes worn by those to be baptised on that day. However, an alternative explanation is that Whit derives from the Early English word 'wyt' or 'wytte', because that is the day when God sent His Holy Spirit to bring (wit and) wisdom. Whichever explanation you prefer, it is said that the first Pentecost took place in the Upper Room, the same room where Christ ate with his disciples prior to His crucifixion. Jesus' followers would have been

celebrating the Jewish feast of Shavuot, marking the giving of the Law on Sinai. There are, of course, other explanations. However, what is clear and central to Christian belief, is that the prayer of the Apostles, of Mary – Jesus' mother, and of the other women, was interrupted by a *'sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind'*. That mighty rushing wind marked the arrival of the Holy Spirit which is one reason why Pentecost is called the Church Birthday and so bringing Eastertide to a climactic ending.

However, this year and before the end of May, we celebrate Trinity Sunday, the great festival that recalls a key aspect of Christian belief. That doctrine defines God as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each distinct yet comprising a unity – co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial. Although the doctrine of the Trinity was not formulated until early in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, nor does the New Testament ever use the word, 'Trinity', the idea derives from New Testament writing. Matthew records Jesus' instructions to the disciples, *'Go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'* (Matt. 28:19). Paul's second letter to the Church in Corinth ends with the blessing that we still use, *'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen'* (2 Cor. 13:13) Amen indeed! And a Happy Eastertide to you all! **Paul Martin**

## PAST MONTH'S NEWS

The Discoverers enjoyed an unexpected outing to the Hop Pocket Craft & Farm Centre near Hereford because their planned excursion was closed. All enjoyed a pleasant day browsing the well-stocked craft shop together with a fine luncheon in the farm restaurant.

During Holy Week various services were held at Old Church, St Matthews' and Holy Trinity enabling all to reflect upon the final days of Jesus' earthly life. The Archdeacon of Birmingham, the Venerable Hayward Osborne, led the worship at Old Church on Palm Sunday and again on Maundy Thursday where Jesus' washing of His disciples' feet was commemorated. Good Friday

followed with a Walk of Witness at Holy Trinity, Stations of the Cross at Old Church and the Veneration of the Cross at St Matthews'. The Easter vigil began in darkness on Easter Eve when the Paschal candle was lit and the light of Christ welcomed into the church. Easter Day dawned with the Eucharist led by the Archdeacon who also preached during this most important festival where the resurrection of Christ was celebrated.

The second Sunday in April saw Amin and Hossin welcomed into the church family during their Baptism service. During the morning service they spoke movingly about their faith and their reasons for coming for Baptism.

## SPECIAL NUMBERS

Thinking about the forty days of Lent and the fifty days of Eastertide, it struck me how important numbers have been to religious beliefs. Numbers had deep, fascinating meanings in ways that we have probably forgotten. Here are some numbers to start with; there are many more and many more explanations.

- 1 One Church, one faith, one God
- 2 Christ's divine and human nature
- 3 The Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- 4 The four evangelists
- 5 The wounds of Christ crucified
- 6 The days of creation  
Perfection – the day God rested. Paul's gifts of the Spirit. Jesus' utterances from the cross. And much used in the Book of Revelation.
- 7 Resurrection or regeneration – perhaps because of circumcision on the eighth day, or that this was the day that Thomas met the risen Christ
- 8 Mystery or angels – there are nine choirs of angels
- 9 Completion – there are Ten Commandments
- 10 The whole church – there were twelve tribes of Israel and twelve Apostles
- 12 Betrayal – there were thirteen people at the Last Supper including Judas
- 13 Trial or testing – Noah's flood, the wandering of Israel in the wilderness, Moses' stay on Mount Sinai, and Jesus' days of temptation in the wilderness
- 40 Completeness – ten times ten
- 1000 A very large number – infinity or eternity

A new priest was visiting the homes of his parishioners but at one house, though it was obvious someone was at home, there was no answer. So he took out a card, wrote 'Revelation 3:20' on the back of it and pushed it through the letterbox. The next Sunday, he found that his card had been returned with the added cryptic message 'Genesis 3:10'. Checking his bible, he broke into gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins "Behold I stand at the door and knock" Genesis 3:10 reads "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked"



## MAY

- 4th **Thrifty's** outing to 'Fusion' at Quinborne Community Centre. Tickets (£7.00) from Rosie Eynon
- 5th **Baptism:** baby Aiden and his brother Ethan, also baby Amelia-Jayde
- 9th **Ascension Day** 7.00 pm Eucharist
- 16th **Discoverers** outing to Brockhampton
- 16h 12 noon **Wedding** of Nicholas and Ashton
- 18th 3.30 pm **Wedding** of Trevor and Paula
- 19th 5.00 pm Service of readings and hymns for **Pentecost/Whitsunday**
- 26th **Trinity Sunday: Baptism** of baby Zacharia
- 30th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rose Guest for details)
- 30th 7.00 pm **Compline** in The Old Church (further details from Wendy Fullerton)

## THE ABUNDANT WAY

God's way is the abundant way! There's no rationing in heaven, no skimping from the throne, no shortage of supply from the treasures of His mercies. His life gushes forth from the well of salvation; His spiritual refreshing flows from rivers of living water; His constant and consistent goodness is poured out through downpours of blessings.

He is the God of

- abundant mercy Numbers 14:18
- abundant kindness Nehemiah 9:17
- abundant justice Job 37:23
- abundant truth Psalms 86:15
- abundant redemption Psalms 130:7
- abundant loving kindness Jonah 4:2
- abundant grace 1 Timothy 1:14
- abundant satisfaction Psalms 36:8
- abundant blessing Psalms 132:15
- abundant pardon Isaiah 55:7
- abundant life John 10:10
- abundant joy 2 Corinthians 8:2
- abundant power Ephesians 3:20
- abundant outpouring Titus 3:6
- abundant revelation Hebrews 6:17
- abundant provision Psalms 65:11
- abundant peace Psalms 37:11