



Reflection for Sunday 1st June – written by Rev. Andrew Down

The church is celebrating its birthday.

Did you know there are three major festivals or high points in the Christian Year? I am pretty sure most people can name two but what about the third one? People would, I am sure, name **Christmas** as the time when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem, then we have the festival of **Easter** when Christians celebrate Jesus' death on a cross and his rising to new life after three days and then.....the third...????.... is the festival of **Pentecost** when Christians celebrate that after Jesus' Ascension into heaven, the gift of the Holy Spirit was sent on his disciples marking the beginning of the church's mission. This is a story found in the Book of Acts Chapter 2 verses 1-31.

The word Pentecost is derived from the Greek word "pentekoste", in English fiftieth. It refers to the fiftieth day after Passover which, in Judaism, was a harvest festival known as the Feast of Weeks which is when the events relayed in Acts ch 2 with the coming of the Holy Spirit occurred. The festival of Pentecost is part of, and completes, the celebration of Easter each year fifty days after Easter day.

The Festival of Pentecost will be celebrated this year on Sunday **8th June**. It is very much the celebration of the birthday of the church. And there's more.... just like Lent is the season of preparation for the celebration of Easter, leading up to the festival of Pentecost there are **nine special days of prayer**, waiting on the Holy Spirit and thinking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit as we prepare and get ready to celebrate Pentecost. These run from Ascension Day (on 29th May this year) to Pentecost (on 8th June this year).

So, as we celebrate the festival of Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we also think again on the church's mission to the world that the holy spirit came and comes to inspire and equip. The **mission** of the church can be summed up by 5 words all beginning with the letter ttell, teach, tend, transform and treasure.

Tell - To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

Teach - To teach, baptise and nurture new believers

Tend - To respond to human need by loving service

Transform - To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation

Treasure - To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

In nature at this time of year we are journeying towards the summer solstice, and everything is in full bloom. It is a time of great strength and accomplishment in nature. The invitation of the story of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit coming on the disciples like a mighty wind and with tongues of fire is an invitation to learn how to inhabit our true God given power, it is a time of gifts and blossoming, a time of radiance.