

intouch

NEWSLETTER

Benefice of Clothall, Rushden, Sandon,
Wallington, and Weston



*Lighting the night
with hope!*

We are still encouraging everyone to put a candle in their window at 7pm each Sunday night as a sign of hope, community and support for all those who are working for our health and safety.



A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus

*Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate
us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.*

Welcome

Sunday (31st) is Pentecost and one of the greatest festivals of the church. After the ascension, the day that Christ went back into heaven, the disciples were told to go back to Jerusalem and to wait and pray. For what they were not entirely sure – Jesus had promised to send another comforter and advocate between earth and heaven now that he was ascending to the Father to complete his task, but they were not sure what this would be. The disciples hid away in fear, the door was locked, and they let no one in. God is not stopped by doors or by fearful people when he wants to get things done and the Holy Spirit entered the room like a rushing wind, and flames of what seemed like fire (energy) appeared on each disciple giving them the strength and power to get the work done. We are also locked away and may also fear many things but we need to remember that the power of the Holy Spirit is not at the command of earthly rules or rulers – he moves where he wishes and if our hearts are open then he will be there to comfort and heal according to need. Be of good heart, be strong and remain faithful. The Lord is with us. **With blessings Fiona**

Pentecost

*Today we feel the wind beneath our wings
Today the hidden fountain flows and plays
Today the church draws breath at last and sings
As every flame becomes a Tongue of praise.
This is the feast of fire, air, and water
Poured out and breathed and kindled into earth.
The earth herself awakens to her maker
And is translated out of death to birth.
The right words come today in their right order
And every word spells freedom and release
Today the gospel crosses every border
All tongues are loosened by the Prince of Peace
Today the lost are found in His translation.
Whose mother-tongue is Love, in every nation.
Malcolm Guite*



Caption Competition

This lovely picture was taken by Margaret Armitage's grandson, Edward, who has just taken up an interest in photography.

Can you think of a good caption to go with it?

The Rectory, St James the Least of All On the perils of eating with members of your church

My dear Nephew Darren

One of the rather dubious pleasures of being rector here is to dine twice a year with Lord and Lady Shuttlingsloe. I was summoned to go along yesterday evening.

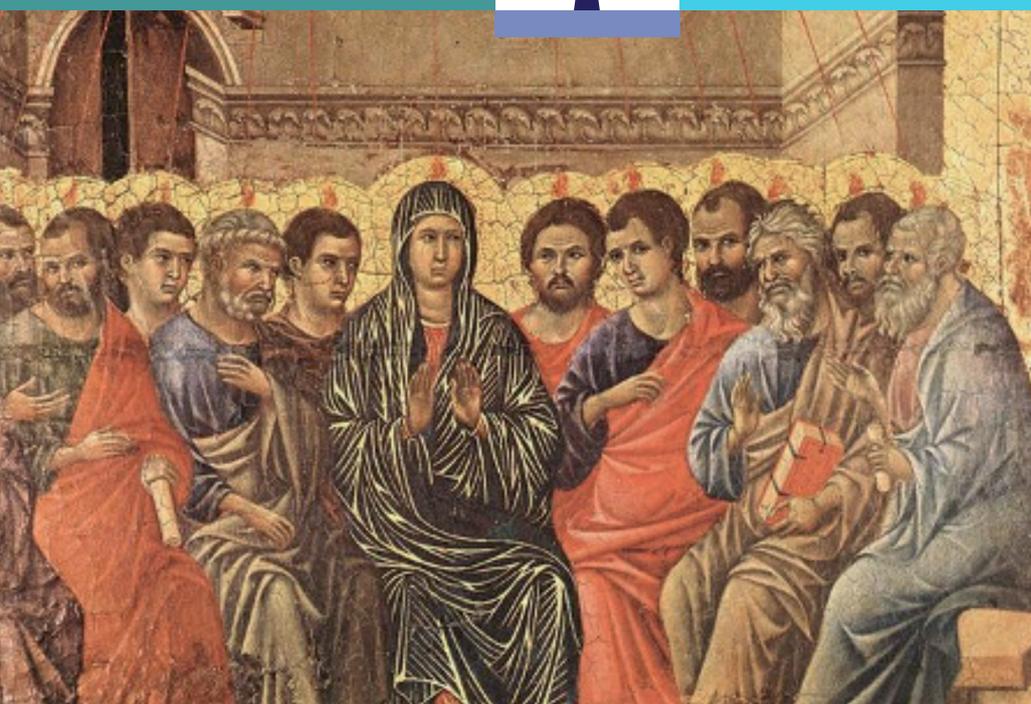
As usual, I was greeted by the footman and led into the entrance hall, where only a few weeks ago we held the parish Harvest supper for 200 people. I relinquished my coat, took a deep breath, and set off to follow him down endless corridors to the drawing room. The house is rumoured to be haunted, but I suspect any sounds of footsteps come from guests of previous years, still wandering the corridors trying to find their way out.

There were the usual guests - most of whom were merely continuing conversations they had had the previous evening at another stately, decaying pile in the county. They were standing, because all the chairs were occupied by the

Lord's dogs, and everyone agreed that the dogs looked far too comfortable to move. Since one aged golden retriever recognised me, having developed an over-familiarity with my own dog, he amicably let me squeeze beside him on a sofa - even if it left me for the rest of the evening looking as if I was wearing an Afghan coat.

When the meal was ready, the butler arrived with our overcoats, because the dining room is a cavernous chamber which is largely unheated as birds are nesting in the chimney. Lord Shuttlingsloe considers this perfectly acceptable, since his family have been eating in this way for the past 500 years, which is how long most of the present staff have worked there. Conversation at my end of the table was less than easy, since Lady S dozed throughout the meal and my companion on the other side seemed to hold me personally responsible for the Spanish Inquisition. Had I been, she would most definitely have been on my list for questioning.

As Rector, one has one's social responsibilities, but I confess, there were moments when I rather envied your own evening, with a meal on a tray in front of the television – in a warm house. **Your loving uncle, Eustace**



Duccio di Buoninsegna: Pentecost (1308-11)

On June 9th 1312 a large civic and ecclesiastical procession wound through the streets of Siena on its way to the Piazza del Campo and the city's cathedral. Carried aloft at its heart was the Maestà, the great altarpiece finally completed by Duccio's workshop after more than three years' intricate labour. Some five metres wide and of similar height, it was installed with great celebration in the cathedral that day, a symbol of the protection of the Virgin Mary, the city's patron saint. Her image, with the child Jesus on her lap, dominated its central painting.

But the Maestà consisted of some 75 separate paintings nearly 50 of which appear on its reverse, including scenes from the life of Christ and also of Mary, many rarely depicted by other artists. Finding this small depiction of the day of Pentecost would have required the viewer to walk behind the altar, then to look high and to the right.

In the Book of Acts Luke lists Mary as one of those present with the disciples in the period after the Ascension, and Duccio did not lose the opportunity to put her in the middle, although now she is slightly off-centre, the panel having been cut down at its left hand edge, removing one disciple altogether and part of another. The red ray of the Spirit aimed at the missing man is still visible.

Compared to the way Luke describes it, this image of Pentecost is a stately affair. There's no sense of a violent rushing wind and those tongues of fire are somewhat demure phenomena. But Italian art is beginning to move away from uniform 'saint-like' visages in favour of faces which show distinct character and personality. Mary is always somehow Mary, but the disciples are individuals, faces we might know and recognize. We are thus invited to see ourselves as part of the Pentecost drama, to see ourselves in the picture, to consider how the life of the Spirit comes to us and is part of our experience today.

The Maestà stayed in place for 399 years, but then fell victim to a church re-ordering scheme, broken up for display at two different altars. In the process damage was done and many of the smaller paintings sold or lost altogether. But much remains in Siena, a reminder of a day of celebration seven centuries ago, and of that overwhelming coming of the Holy Spirit which began the life of the Christian church. **Revd Mike Leverton.**

By the Revd Tony Horsfall of
Charis Training.

The wisdom of afternoon tea

My wife and I were at one time missionaries with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. We joined them in 1975 after a period of training at their headquarters in London. While we were there, we met the hostess of the Mission Home, a matronly lady who had herself served overseas. She was a formidable person, but with a soft heart, and a depth of spiritual wisdom.

I remember her offering to our group of would-be missionaries this piece of sage advice: "The missionaries who stay the longest on the field are those who have their afternoon tea." It struck me then as being very profound, and it is a life rule that I have followed ever since, with great benefits.

This practice of course is typically British, but valuable none the less. For us, a cup of tea is the answer to everything. "Let's make a cup of tea," we say in any crisis. It soothes and refreshes and helps us get things in perspective. Somehow things seem much brighter when you have had a cuppa, especially if shared with friends or colleagues.

But there is more to the custom of afternoon tea. This little ritual gives us permission to stop in the midst of a busy day and rest a while. It enables us to make contact with others, and to step back from whatever is filling our mind at the time. And over time, these little oases are the way we care for our souls as well as our bodies.

We read that Jesus, when He was tired, sat down by the well at Sychar (John 4:6). He gave Himself permission to stop and have a break. I like to think on that basis He would heartily approve of afternoon tea.

