

May 2018

Dear Friends,

The clocks have gone forward an hour; the sun is shining; the evenings are lighter for longer; the days are warmer; the spring flowers are blooming, and the trees are blossoming! Our spirits are lifted as a result. What more can we ask for? Many of us have had, or are contemplating, our first period away on holiday for the year and life seems to be 'on the up' again.

This was true for Jesus' disciples after the first Easter when they had experienced the discovery of the empty tomb and realised that their Lord had risen from the dead. This was confirmed to them more and more as he appeared to them on the road to Emmaus, in the upper room, and beside the sea shore. They may even have been lulled into a false sense of security and begun to feel that what Jesus had told them before his crucifixion about going to be with his Father and sending the Holy Spirit to be with them for ever had been a figment of their imagination and was not going to happen after all. It might even have seemed to them like a sort of game – a bit like hide and seek – where was Jesus going to appear next?

All of this took place over a period of 40 days after the resurrection until, finally, Jesus appeared to his disciples for the last time. He reiterated what he had said to them before his crucifixion about the gift of the Holy Spirit, telling them that when the Spirit came upon them they would receive the power they would need to become witnesses to Christ, beginning in Jerusalem (where they were based) and gradually spreading outwards until their influence reached the whole world.

Imagine how they must have felt – a small group of 12 men, feeling bereft, somewhat puzzled and unsure of themselves – being told that what they had experienced with Jesus over a short 3 year period would be used by the power of this 'Holy Spirit' working through them to influence the whole world!

If this was not enough, while they were still looking at Jesus and trying to absorb the meaning and the magnitude of what he had just told them, he was taken up out of their sight in a cloud! This meant that they could not ask him the many questions of clarification that would most likely have been on their minds. All that was left for them to do was to wait in Jerusalem – as Jesus had told them – until they had received the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to begin to carry out this commission. It seems to me that it was a bit like a pre-ordination retreat.

In the Church we call this experience of the disciples with Jesus the **Ascension**. It occurs 40 days after Easter Day and we mark it with services of Holy Communion. When I was a child we used to go to Church on the morning of Ascension Day and then have the rest of the day off. Nowadays, unless one belongs to a church where this festival is observed, Ascension Day can go past almost unnoticed.

In our Benefice we are holding a service of Holy Communion at **7am in Aldeburgh Church** followed by breakfast on **Thursday May 10th** and there is a Deanery Service on the **Village Green at Friston at 7pm** followed by refreshments in the village hall. If you intend coming to this service please bring a chair with you. If it is wet the service will be held in the church.

May I remind you that the **Rural Coffee Caravan** is again visiting our parishes with information about services that are available to the elderly and housebound and their carers. This also gives an opportunity to meet together for a cup of tea or coffee and a piece of cake. The caravan will be at **Mill Hill in Aldringham from 2pm to 4pm on the second Tuesday of the month** and at **Peace Place in Thorpeness from 10am to 12 noon on the second Wednesday of the month** throughout the summer.

Yours in Christ

Sheila
