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Dear Friends

The Lord is here - His Spirit is with us!

We are approaching the feast of Pentecost when we celebrate the Holy Spirit coming to the early disciples, empowering them to proclaim the good news about Jesus and to get stuck into the work of being the 'Body of Christ' on earth. Pentecost is sometimes called 'the birthday of the Church' reflecting the sense of it being the point at which the early disciples first began their mission. As we celebrate the annual feast of Pentecost we too pray for renewed awareness of the Spirit's work in and through us and the Church, that we might be better able to continue that same mission.

We cannot, of course, see the Spirit, though we do feel her at work. But the bible does give us several images associated with the Holy Spirit which can help us to reflect on what the Spirit is like. A couple of these are represented by the activities included with this letter:

Origami Dove - directions to make this and some square pieces of paper to use are enclosed.

The gospels tell us that at his baptism the Spirit came down upon Jesus 'like a dove' [Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22]. The image of the dove speaks of the Spirit's gentle presence with us, comforting, reassuring, speaking of God's love for us and of our status as God's children. As the Spirit descended upon Jesus the voice of God was heard 'This is my Son the beloved, in whom I am well pleased' and the Spirit began to guide Jesus in his work and ministry.



Fire colouring sheet – on reverse of origami instructions.

At the first Pentecost the bible tells us that as the Spirit came to disciples they experienced it as 'a violent rushing wind and tongues as of flames of fire' [Acts 2:1-4]. The fire and wind speak of the Spirit's power – fierce, dangerous even. As the disciples gathered they were perhaps frightened and uncertain what to do next, now that Jesus had returned to the Father. But the Spirit gave them courage, passion, a sense of unity and purpose. They were enabled to speak and act in ways they had not done before as they proclaimed the Gospel to all who would listen, and organised themselves as the Christian community, the beginnings of the Church, starting a movement that would change the world.

It's helpful to have two very different images – one gentle, one fierce – of the Holy Spirit. We all have different personalities and find ourselves in different circumstance and these will affect how we experience the Spirit at work. There will be times when we need the Spirit to bring comfort and peace and times when we need the Spirit to empower us, give us courage and stoke the flames of our faith. As we celebrate the feast of Pentecost this year, even in unusual circumstances, let us pray that we would have a powerful sense of the Spirit at work in us in the ways that we need and in ways that would best enable us to be the people of God here in Sydenham.

Enclosed you will find a simple service order for use on Pentecost Sunday (31st May). I will follow this pattern in Church 10am and I invite you to use it at home at the same time. Technology permitting, I will continue to live-stream Sunday services from St Bartholomew's and if you have the means to do so, do join us on Facebook at 10am on Sundays.

FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE INTERNET ACCESS

Streaming services via Facebook has been helpful for some people but I am aware that not everyone has access to the internet. If you would find it helpful to pray along with others, but do not have access to online services, then maybe the following might help. On **Saturday 30th May** I shall be saying Morning Prayer at 10am as usual, but you will be able to join in *over the 'phone*. Details of how to do this are on a separate sheet.

This is the first time I have used this system, so we'll see how it goes! If it works OK and is helpful then I will continue to use it each Saturday. If you *do* have access to the internet please do not use the above system – I will email details soon of something similar for those who do have internet access.

SOME UPDATES

At the present time church buildings remain closed to the public and to congregations. The main change recently is that clergy are now permitted to use the building, for example for private prayer or to stream services. This is the first, small step in what is likely to be a very long, staggered return to our buildings being used again. Discussions are ongoing amongst the Bishops, other senior church staff and the government. The most recent advice is that it *may* be possible to open churches for private prayer only, no earlier than 4th July, however this is by no means certain – we will, of course, let everyone know as soon as there is something definite to report. If you have access to the internet do visit our Facebook page and Parish website which are being kept up to date with information and resources, including live-streamed worship. From this weekend, streaming will come from inside St Bartholomew's.

One part of the building which will be used is the hall, as Lammas Green Nursery will be reopening on 1st June, albeit with reduced capacity and changed hours to allow for the safest possible management of arrival and collection of children. Do pray for all the staff as they have the difficult task of managing the situation while also trying to provide the best service for the children.

The PCC recently had a meeting by email! Some of the decisions taken were:

- Approval of the use of a photo of the organ in a book called '111 Churches you shouldn't miss in London'.
- Setting the time and date of the APCM as **12noon on Sunday 18th October** – please put the date in your diary! This would normally have taken place early in May, but the current shut down has prevented this. The Yearbook is currently being prepared – if you have a report for it, please get it Gill Daly as soon as you can.
- Approving the accounts for the year to 31st December 2019.
- Approving a donation of £1000 to Citizens Lewisham for a project helping families in need (see below for more on this).

A further meeting will take place in July, again by email if necessary.

Another thing agreed by the PCC was to make the large notice board in front of the church available for people to display their 'lock-down' art. If you happen to be passing St Bart's on your daily exercise do go ahead and put up any artwork or photographs of craft you

have created during the lock-down. Please remember though that the board is open to the public and to the weather so we cannot make any guarantees that it will be available to return later.

Citizens Lewisham are a local branch of a national organisation which works with partner community groups and organisations to build community strength and resilience and help communities to help themselves. In partnership with them and other parishes in the West Lewisham Deanery and beyond we are raising money to be used to help the most vulnerable families in our communities (primarily identified through local schools) at this challenging time and beyond. The needs are considerable - ranging from basic food supplies, to cookers needing repair, to the need for a computer to enable on-line learning during the lock down. As mentioned above the PCC has agreed to make an initial donation on behalf of St Bartholomew's, and I will be doing some fund raising at the start of June. You will not be surprised to learn that I shan't be following Rev'd Edd's (Holy Trinity) example in running a marathon! I will be inviting sponsorship to have my head and beard completely shaved. I normally cut my hair (which I really don't like doing!) once a decade, and this will be 2 years early, but it seemed like as good a reason as any. All the money will be handled by Citizens and made available to be used to meet the needs we identify.

Details of the scheme and opportunity to donate can be found online here:

<https://justgiving.com/fundraising/lewisham-citizens>

The page is currently showing details of Rev'd Edd's marathon run but details of St Bart's involvement and Jim's fund raising will be on there soon.

If you would like to sponsor Jim or make a donation but don't have internet access you can send a pledge or cheque to the vicarage and it will be passed on. The 'shave' will be live-streamed on Facebook.

I look forward to the time when we can once again gather together for worship and continue getting to know each other face to face. In the meantime I continue to hold you all, and our whole Parish in my prayers.

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Rev'd Jim