



## The coming of the Holy Spirit

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a formative event in the life of the first disciples and also of the Church. The Spirit came with tongues of fire and a raging wind – in drama and in power, and energised the Church for mission in a new phase of its life. In our services we sometime use the dialogue *“The Lord is here: his Spirit is with us”* which expresses our theoretical belief in the presence of the Holy Spirit with us, but just as I have been raising the question “is Christ present?” we can ask the same question of the Spirit, alongside the further question “and how would we know?”

Well Jesus tells us that we will know by the fruit, and helpfully St Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. These nine: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are fundamental – the fruit are not independent of one another, they grow together, they are the



evidence of the Spirit's presence rather than any loud declarations or assertions or any strident or insistent claims. I am sure we can see these things around us, and in other people, and when we see them they are evidence of the Holy Spirit at work.

The Holy Spirit also brings gifts, as we see in Isaiah 11:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 12-14 as well as Romans 12. The point about a gift is not that it is begged for and desired, but that it is welcomed as a surprise. The two New Testament texts put God's gifting through the Spirit in the context of the Church as the Body of Christ, making it clear that none of us is "super-spiritual" or some kind of spiritual superhero – rather the gifts are distributed between us and it is when we join together that the whole collection of gifts becomes complete – each has a contribution to make, and where people are missing, there will be gaps.

Somehow, in this coronavirus era, it is still true that we are only complete together, and we need to be looking out for each other and for the best in each other, for the fruit of the Spirit, and for those unrecognised or under-used gifts.

We are encouraged to pray for these gifts in ourselves and others, but sometimes our prayers can seem selective. In the daily reflections I've been posting on Facebook I mentioned that I've rarely heard of people praying to be more generous – perhaps that is a gap which needs to be plugged!

### **Love will tear us apart**

Love is a recurring theme – it is the first named of the fruit, and within Paul's desperate attempt to bring order to the chaotic spiritual mess the Corinthians have made of their fellowship sits his famous passage on love in 1 Corinthians 13. Love binds together the warring factions, makes sense of misused gifts and brings rampant egos down to earth. To do this Love has to be strong, and I found myself thinking about Joy Division's song "Love will tear us apart" and wondering about the potential violence of love.



<https://harborchurches.org/fairhaven-church/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/06/PentecostHeart.jpg>

This seems like nonsense, and I couldn't make sense of it until I noticed that it might be that evil is so bound up with the good in me that it takes some violent wrenching to tear it away – like a weed with deep roots which keeps coming back, the whole of it needs to be stripped out. And in that sense the power of God's love might be seen to be violent – a rescuing love, restoring us to life.

"God is love" says John (and many others), and love (under the enlightening term perichoresis – mutual interpenetration) is one of the principles of the Trinity as the doctrine was revived in the English church in the late 20th Century (so quite recently) based on early and also Eastern Orthodox sources. The love which binds the Trinity together is quite strong enough to separate us from our sin – stronger than the love of the meek and mild Jesus we sometimes imagine – worthy of tongues of flame and a mighty wind.

### **And so into ordinary time...**

And after Trinity Sunday we enter one of the green seasons in the Church, which go under the name "Ordinary Time". There has been lots of speculation about what ordinary time will look like when this crisis

is over – for myself, I don't think we know yet. It is said "we can't go back" but I've been noticing the abundance of flowers in meadows and hedgerows, the birdsong, insects – and even roads which are safe for cyclists with so little traffic (sadly that seems to be disappearing fast) – which takes me back to the spring and early summer of my youth – my own "ordinary time" of the past. I hope some of this will stay, because it brings me into contact with a beauty I have lost – but no-one knows yet how we will regroup for the future.

So far as the Church is concerned, we don't know when we will be open again – certainly we will not be open for normal services until large mixed gatherings are allowed. It seems likely that if lockdown is eased a bit, we may be able to hold small services – for example, small weddings – in St Mary's. It may also be that we can open the church for some forms of private prayer before we can gather for services – and some people have asked whether we could have services outside: well that may be possible before we can have services inside, and we will take the opportunity, I am sure, if it arises. Nothing is certain, nothing is decided, no dates are known.

In the meantime we continue with our various online activities (find me on Facebook, let me know if you aren't getting occasional updates by email, look up Nicola's online activities via the St Barnabas website, we are hoping to do some online interviews... watch this space) and let's hope and pray that we will be back together before too long.

**Mark**



## **This months prayer...**

### *Most Loving Heavenly Father, Hear the prayers of your children.*

#### **Dear Lord,**

We hear the word "unprecedented" quite a lot these days, and it seems to have taken on a significance all of its own. It isn't new. In fact, it can be used to describe the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, who came to establish your Kingdom on Earth and because of that, 2000 years later your church is as relevant as ever. In these "uncertain" and "challenging" times, two more words that are being used more frequently, we praise and give thanks that you have in all in hand.

Help us to truly believe that when doubts arise and fear sets in, you are with us always. Give us more strength for those times and hope for the future. Sustain and encourage us and help us to trust you. Lord, we know that's not always easy to do that when we are at rock bottom and know too well that there is no quick fix either. We pray for all who despair, all who have lost loved ones from the Coronavirus, all who have lost their livelihood, all who are turning to the food bank. We pray for all in isolation who cannot get out, for the vulnerable members of our community.

We give thanks for all working to provide help and relief: All who work for the NHS, all care workers, our police and fire service. All, in fact risking their lives so save others.

We pray for the UK government as it begins to ease restrictions. Give to them wisdom and empowerment to make the right decisions.

We pray for all teachers and pupils as they start up this month in what will no doubt be different.

We pray for those things that now have reduced media coverage. The famine in Africa still exists, the war in Syria and Yemen still rages, people still have to walk miles to get safe, clean drinking water, medicines are in short supply, crops are still failing.

We pray for peace, we pray for fairness in trading, we pray for rain in drought-stricken countries, we pray that those who have absolutely nothing, that their needs would be met.

Come Lord, make all things new.

We lift up to you our clergy here in Thatcham. May they know and be assured by the comfort and presence of your Holy Spirit. Give to all wisdom, insight and discernment as they fulfil their God-given mission to share your love and support those in their charge.

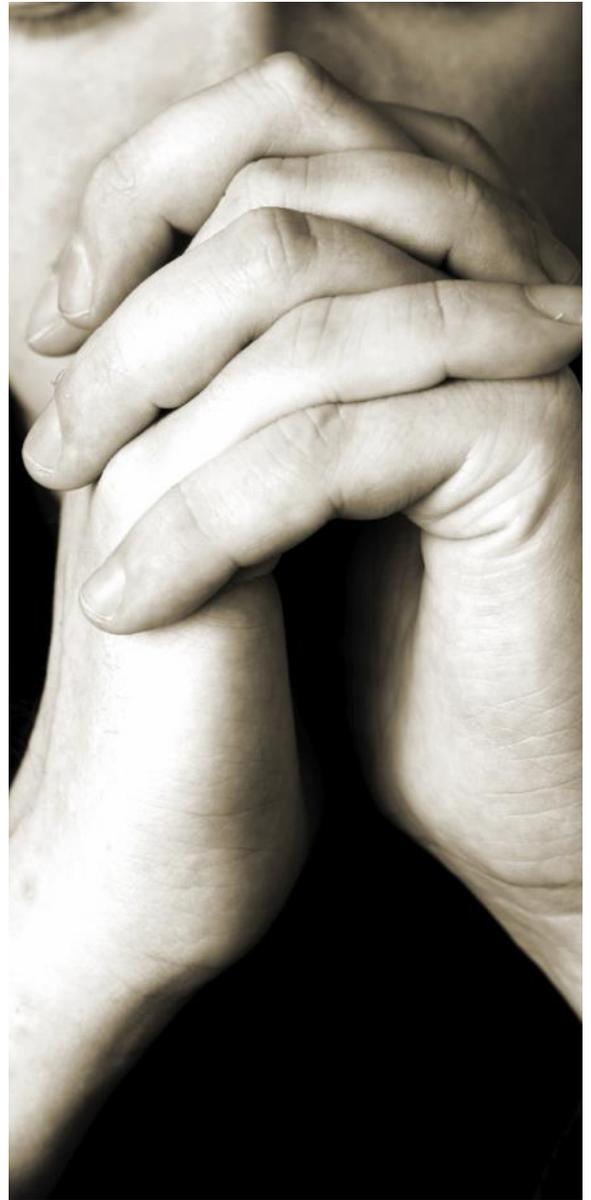
We pray for those in WBCH, nursing home or hospice. Give healing and comfort to all we know and for those at the end of their earthly live, may they depart with dignity and peace.

Lord, as we've prayed before, so we say again. This pandemic won't last forever and thing will change, perhaps they won't go back to what they were, but we pray that out of bad comes good and relationships will be renewed and strengthened.

We ask for your grace to sustain us, your mercy to forgive us, your love to keep us.

And may we continue to serve to you by serving our community as we are able to.

**Amen**



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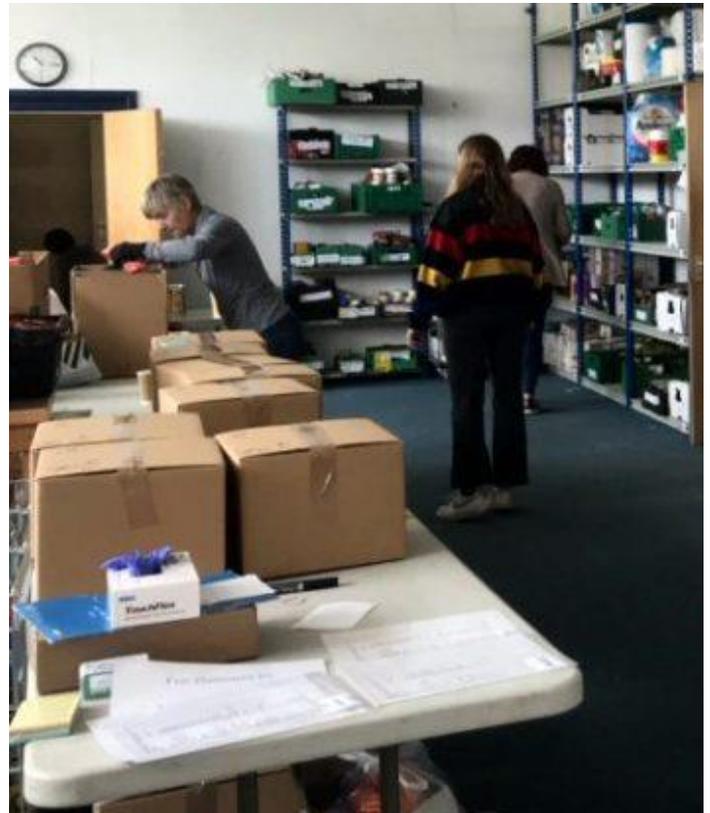
## West Berks Foodbank – Activity during Lockdown



As I write this update (during mid-May) the Foodbank has just experienced its busiest week so far during these extraordinary times, checking in nearly 4 tonnes of stock and sending out almost the same amount of stock in food parcels. We have fed over 1100 people since March 31st.

During the first week of lockdown the Foodbank closed the 5 Foodbank Centres in line with government guidance so that we could keep our volunteers and clients safe, changing the way we operated from 'come to a Foodbank Centre' to a 'we'll deliver to your doorstep' model. A Herculean effort was required to move all the existing stock from 2 small warehouse units on Greenham Business Park to a much larger facility nearby where all our activity is now centred. It has 2 distinct and separate areas, one for receiving donations and the other for making up the food parcels and is open 5 days a week. These well organised domains are overseen by the Warehouse Manager, Peter Collins and the Project Manager, Fran Chamings working with their respective teams.

Many of the existing volunteers had to step back from front line work but a new and enthusiastic army of volunteers have come forward to help; there's even a list of people waiting in the wings. Such is the generosity of spirit and willingness to



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Or contact me: Tracey Taylor on Tel: 01635 826848/07767 838323  
E-mail: [sewtaylored4@gmail.com](mailto:sewtaylored4@gmail.com)



### Coronavirus Emergency Appeal

Support our work around the world during this outbreak.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/coronavirus-emergency-appeal>

## Who's Who in the Thatcham Team Ministry

### Team Rector

Mark Bennet 867342

### Team Vicar - St. Barnabas

Nicola Hulks 864916

### Associate Clergy:

Marion Fontaine 861742

Brenda Harland 865064

Leonard Onugha 07415042442

### Parish Administrator

Ann Watts 862277

The Parish office is open Monday and Friday mornings, 9.30am to 1.00pm, answer phone at other times.

**Email:** admin.stmarysthatcham@ntlbusiness.com

### Churchwardens

Viv Druce 820718

Chris Watts 864567

Glenn Peters 869409

### Future copies

**Connect** is published ten times a year and is available from St. Mary's and St. Barnabas Churches, Thatcham, or by post from the Parish Office, tel. 862277.

### Article Deadline

Please give articles for the **June** edition to Steve Rice (860431) or any of the clergy or churchwardens or email [julie@dunwell.org](mailto:julie@dunwell.org) by **15th May**.



## Services at St. Mary's Church

### Sunday Services

#### Morning Services

8.00 am **Holy Communion**

10.00 am **Parish Communion**

Children's groups on 2nd, 4th and 5th Sundays at 10 am, workshop on 3rd Sundays.  
The Parish Communion services on the 1st Sunday of the month is for people of all ages, especially the young, (includes Baptism Welcome).

#### 6.30 pm Evening Services

1st Sunday **Sung Evensong**

2nd Sunday **No service**

3rd Sunday **Healing Service**

### Weekday Services

#### Wednesdays

9.45 am **Holy Communion**

10.30 am **'ABC'** (Adults, Babies, Children)

#### Every Weekday

9.00 am **Morning Prayer** (In the chapel)



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## Services at St. Barnabas Church

(meeting in Thatcham Park School)

### 10.00 am Sunday Services

1st Sunday **Worship Service**

2nd Sunday **Communion**

3rd Sunday **Worship Service**

4th Sunday **Communion**

5th Sunday **Worship Service**

More details from Revd. Brenda Harland 01635 865064

[www.stbarnabasthatcham.weebly.com](http://www.stbarnabasthatcham.weebly.com)  
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## Dates for your diary

Sun 31 May	<b>Pentecost</b> - 10 am via zoom
Sun 7 Jun	<b>Trinity Sunday</b> - 10 am (contact Mark for details)
Sunday services...	<b>Church at Home</b> - 10 am Diocesan Live Stream
	<b>St Barnabas PodCast</b> - 10 am reflections, prayers, support for these extraordinary times and, being St B's, no doubt a few laughs too!

For The Church of England services <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/church-online>

For the Diocesan live stream <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/coronavirus-covid-19/livestream/>

For St. Bs PodCast

<https://www.messy.fm/stbarnabasthatcham>

## For the Record...

### Baptism

None

### Weddings

None

### Funerals

4 May	Geoffrey Glasspool	89
4 May	Colin Foster	76
5 May	Mark Phillips	68
6 May	Sandra Fenwick	65
6 May	Patricia Mitchell	87
12 May	June Wickens	85
21 May	Margaret Collins	98
22 May	Barbara Laughton	79
26 May	Monica Glanfield	95



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help the Foodbank continue supporting people in need.

Similarly people are continuing to donate food and toiletries in the supermarket collection boxes and community groups have formed in villages and outlying areas via WhatsApp or Facebook to organise donations which are then delivered to the Warehouse or are collected by one of the Foodbank team. British Gas engineers have been delivering huge amounts of food donated by Tesco to Foodbanks up and down the country, including WBFB.

Our Crisis FoodLine team have been exceptionally busy taking calls from people needing Foodbank support, noting the individual circumstances and then making arrangements for a food parcel to be delivered to their doorstep. The contents are in plain boxes and delivered in unmarked vehicles maintaining our client's dignity. Supported by a local supermarket we are also able to include a bag of fresh produce, fruit, veg and bread to accompany the long life goods.

We have also been setting up our listening teams. So those who would have normally listened to clients in a Foodbank Centre are calling existing clients in their areas and checking on their welfare, signposting where necessary. This is particularly valued by clients living on their own and isolated from family and friends.

Do share the **Crisis FoodLine telephone number** if you come across anyone needing a food parcel, **01635 760560**. We are getting lot of first time users to the Foodbank and there's probably more to come.

**Sue**

## Letters to an anxious church

There is a privileged phenomenon experienced by my clergy colleagues with the very elderly, at their bedsides. I witnessed it recently when I visited a parishioner receiving palliative care. It is that even when they have lost much memory from dementia, for instance, or are slipping in and out of consciousness from heavy pain medication, they tend to join in and often follow through with the words of the Lord's Prayer. This particular parishioner barely recognised me during that visit. They stayed silent, almost comatose, through much of my praying with them, except once to quip "don't write me off yet" in their typically plucky manner. However, as I began the words of the Lord's Prayer, they gave my hand a gentle yet firm squeeze as they joined in, mumbling the words unambiguously all the way through. They then again fell silent. The experience was humbling as it was surprising. A marvellous, a truly marvellous moment. Yet, I know that

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Newbury \* Tesco, Pinchington Lane, Newbury \*  
Waitrose, Newbury \* Waitrose, Thatcham \*  
Dream Doors, 86-88 Chapel St, Thatcham

We always welcome donations and promise to  
use them to provide help to people in crisis.

Thank you

[www.westberks.foodbank.org.uk](http://www.westberks.foodbank.org.uk)

our parishioners' deep memory recall was something built up over time and with patient practice.

### 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.'

With change comes uncertainty and anxiety. The apostle Paul wrote the words, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,' to one of his congregations. We know that at least one of Paul's letters was written from prison, possibly as he prepared to face execution at the hands of the Romans. So, I feel he wrote intimately, as one person who understood the effects of uncertainty and anxiety to another. He wrote because he understood that we are what we eat.

One daughter recently recommended Joe Wickes' workout to me having just (generously) described me as 'rotund.' Ouch! I could hardly complain as I have a predilection for Chinese food and chicken burgers. We are what we eat. I am not the first person to wonder aloud what words mine and younger generations recite in times of crisis, or what words we will remember and recite in old age. What hymns, psalms, and prayers, what words of scripture are currently imprinted on our memories? Or are we already surrendered to the strident vagaries of the daily news?

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Three of the apostle Paul's letters were written to anxious congregations. Each letter appears to address the effects of the anxiety born of uncertainty: disillusionment, despair, disharmony, and even infighting. A people surrendered to anxiety find courage and compassion difficult, never mind contemplation. They will act to confirm their fears rather than their hopes. I have come to recognize that anxiety, in its myriad forms, is a life-long condition. Like asthma, anxiety is a condition to be managed, not least because there are triggers everywhere. Incurable belief in God as the one who is in control of history has never permanently rid a person of anxiety. I know that in bad times as well as good, all that happens is dependent on God, yet I remain susceptible to onsets of anxiety.

With that in mind, I sometimes grasp scriptural advice like my asthma treatments. Severe attacks require a nebulizer, administered in hospital by specialists. The rest of the time asthma is self-managed by a combination of preventers, relievers, or preventer-relievers.

*(Continued on page 10)*

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### St B's Kids

This week we think all about the story of Pentecost! We think about how God is with us in our hearts and make a very special

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## Letters to an anxious church

To apply what Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, resembles taking a preventer, a daily underlying treatment (Ephesians 3.14-21). They were a community needing to focus on the enormity of God who can do '...immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.' He encouraged them to reflect on God's glorious works in history as a counter to the confusion, born of the anxiety of disillusionment, that drains away confidence. One could almost hear him telling them to prayerfully celebrate the God whose purpose was (conceived before the world was made, and) realized through his Son.

To the Church in Philippi, Paul's counsel is like a reliever, for a present onset (Philippians 4.4-9). It is for when the situation feels acute, the 'walls' are caving in. For the anxiety of despair, loss of hope, that comes from direct pressure. 'Be anxious for nothing' — replace anxious words with those of supplication, prayer. Possibly facing death himself, Paul exhorts that dying is but the gateway to a better life than we can presently know. It brings us closer to Christ. Even if, as in Paul's case, we are partaking in Christ's sufferings through persecution we can look forward to sharing in Christ's resurrection.

However, my favourite texts of scripture are like preventer-relievers, with a two-in-one action; effective underlayers that can also be called on in emergencies. Paul's advice to the Colossians strikes me as such; 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly' (see Colossians 3.12-17). It is for the anxiety that threatens faith, at times through intellectual counter-arguments, needing a prophylactic as well as a cure. Paul wants us to centre on the words that emphasize God's superiority, as expressed in Christ, to all other powers. Words that underline God's majesty revealed in Christ, because he shared in creation, and exercises divine power throughout the universe. Words that stress that God in Christ will restore the universe to peace. Preventer-Relievers. They occur throughout scripture — often in the Psalms, but also in the words of our hymns, and in our liturgical prayers.

## Like honey from a rock

The Jewish concept of indwelling words (for Paul was a Jewish scholar) implies a process of meditation. By this they meant working the words repeatedly, muttering under the breath, sometimes whilst rocking gently back and forth in place. When Paul encourages his readers to be richly indwelled by the word of Christ he means that we read, recite, and reflect on the words habitually: As we rise in the morning; as we settle for sleep at night; as we go about the chores of the day and as we pause for our meals; as we work, play, and rest. Slowly, patiently, determinedly — as is in the manner of a baby with a teething ring, biltong for South Africans (tough and chewy dried lean beef), or like a dog works a bone to get to the juicy marrow — until the words come to 'dwell', to live in us (not passively but) vivaciously. Such that they come out of our subconscious on demand, in crisis, in old age, and eventually on our death bed. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Two of my favourite texts 'to chew on' occur in the prophecies of Isaiah. Isaiah 3.10 contains words I use so often that I now append a version of it to email greetings, 'it is well.' Yet, it is Isaiah 43 (specifically vv1-2) that my mind has settled on in recent days. The passage is challenging in places (especially verses like 3, 4,

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and 17), but the words communicate a depth of love and of God's passionate intent towards us in Christ. These words of the prophet's have been a tremendous help in managing anxiety. They have been read and recited often — in times of uncertainty, in times of distress, with a body racked with pain; in times of confusion, in times of paralyzing fear, and at times with a face full of tears. The 'word(s) of Christ' remind us that God is with us, never apart from us. They tell us that God cares for us. That in Christ, God is for us, never against us.

As we all continue to wrestle uncertainty and anxiety in the days ahead choose your 'chew,' and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, now and always...

God cares for you. He is for you.

**Leonard**

Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy9nwe9\\_xzw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy9nwe9_xzw)

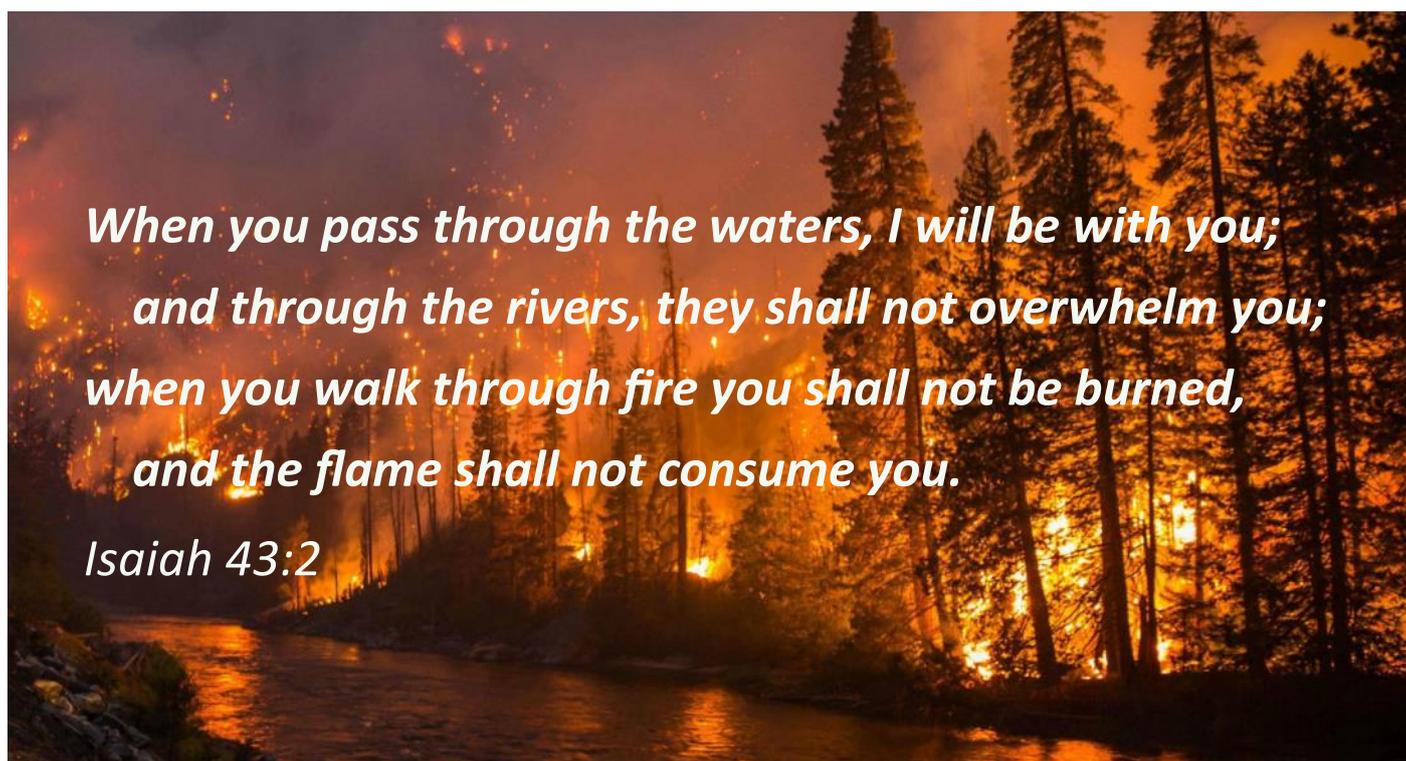
What A Beautiful Name - Hillsong Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5L6QIAH3L4>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUtlI3mNj5U>

(based mainly on Number 6.24-26)



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## Welcoming Angela – a new addition to the team in Thatcham

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A lot has happened in the last few months and I've begun to wonder where the time has gone! The days are long but the weeks are short as they say! One of the most exciting developments has been discussions with our local DDO (Diocesan Director of Ordinands, or as we might know him - the person who looks after those applying for and training for ministry!) about the possibility of a new part time curate for our team in Thatcham. These discussions have come to fruition and Angela Brennan will now be coming to join Mark, Brenda, Leonard and I as part of the Thatcham Team Ministry.

I will be supervising Angela and she will spend time at both St Barnabas and St Mary's benefitting from the diversity of what is on offer here in our community life, worship and outreach to Thatcham. As a part time curate Angela will be with us for the next 4 to 6 years. In normal times we would do our usual introductions in person and I know that you would all seek to make her really welcome as you did for me. In these strange times things will have to be a little different so perhaps there might be a few 'get to know you' Zoom conversations and phone calls coming up!

Angela will be officially starting with us on 4<sup>th</sup> July and her ordination will be in September. In the mean time here is some information from Angela about herself and her family. If you'd like to send your good wishes to Angela then here email address is [revangelabrennan@gmail.com](mailto:revangelabrennan@gmail.com).

### Reverend Nicola

*I'm really chuffed to be joining St Barnabas and St Mary's Church in Thatcham. I'm delighted to be working with Nicola and I can't wait to meet you all. I hope that, by the time July comes around, we'll be able to meet in person, but whether its face to face or on the phone, or by Zoom, I'm looking forward to getting to know you. I live in Wash Common with my husband, James and our two children, and I'll be commuting between home and Thatcham for my curacy. When I'm not working, studying or looking after the children, I play netball and bake cakes (but not at the same time).*

*July is fast approaching and I am looking forward to all that God has up his (or her!) sleeves for us, but in the mean time, you are in my prayers, keep well, and take good care.*

**Angela**

