

This year it's June's turn to have Ascension, Pentecost (Whitsun) and Trinity, so these festivals should be a bit brighter than normal. A bit of light does wonders sometimes. A brighter aspect, brighter future, brighter hopes - and warmer churches!

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost brought a real enlightenment to them we regard as the original Church. Thus we think of it as the Church's birthday.

Church is the collective noun for the people who put their trust in Jesus. It is neither the building nor the organisation. Church is the collective noun of them who see their relationship with God as our heavenly Father made possible through Jesus. It is not a particular way of doing things in a particular building or reciting "magic words" in a mindless state of repetition. Church is the collective noun of them who accept the power of God's Spirit to bring about new creation in themselves.

The Church tries to listen to God so that it knows where to go. Generally, though, throughout society, listening is not something we do too well. Whether it's the Archbishop of Canterbury talking about sharia law, Ken Clark talking about rape, the Prince of Wales talking about creation, or a patient talking to a doctor - it seems pretty difficult for most people to listen to what actually has been said or trying to be said (as opposed to interpretation through our own anxieties, prejudices or other self-interest).

So what hope of hearing and understanding what God is saying? The Church in this place is trying to give God a good listening to. There is a moving of the Holy Spirit here that is bringing people together to rise above the clap-trap hoisted upon us that God is either dead or at least stuck somewhere in the 17th century; God whose Spirit is instead breathing new life - for all who want it...

This is a good place to be; the Church is here, and it is all the things I said it is, above. Listen and hear the *Good News*.

(Hark! Is that a benefice choir starting to join in?!)

I dare you all to join with me in this prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, upon us, the people of the Burnhams, and fill our hearts with love, our eyes with wonder, our mouths with kindness, and our ears with understanding. Amen.