

**The Diocese of Chester  
Cycle of Prayer  
Sunday, 23 May to Saturday, 19 June 2021**



Sunday, 23 May 2021

## Pentecost

It's the exam season again; except, of course, it isn't. Public exams have been replaced by other assessments in these pandemic times, but according to the youngsters interviewed on the news, the anxiety of it all remains. I get that! I was 30 years old before I stopped having a recurrent seasonal nightmare of sleeping-in and missing a vital exam paper. Perhaps that's one of the reasons why failure comes so hard to me – I find it almost impossible to contend with not succeeding. That's why board games are so troublesome in our family – I can't bear to lose!

They do say a fear of failure is a malaise that particularly applies to people in jobs where a person controls his or her own time and workload. Those who are really fearful chose occupations where they can really push themselves. For so many people life has too many failures and too many fears of failing further. Too many people struggle to find a sense of their own worth, and too many are haunted by failure:

- the young woman who thought she couldn't cope with her job (no one had complained). She walked out. A week later she was feeling more rational and realized she'd been foolish, but she couldn't shake off the sense of failure the episode stirred in her.
- the aged parent talking of his child who has 'gone off the rails.' With every insistent 'I did my best,' you know he is really saying, to himself at least, 'I failed.'
- the man who feels trapped, hemmed in, by what he describes as one long series of failures – college course abandoned, job ended, marriage in tatters – 'I can't cope with anything, I'm such a failure.'
- a woman suddenly made redundant – years of doing a job well, years of finding fulfilment in it, years of being acknowledged as being really good at it – gone. 'I feel such a failure,' she said. She just couldn't hear that its ending was nothing to do with her capabilities or efforts.

These are all real pictures of real people who in a world devoted to success feel failures. And to these people – US – Pentecost brings hope and healing.

On that first day of the week the disciples were locked in, for **fear** of their neighbours. Had it been worthwhile leaving so much to follow Jesus? The crowds' adulation as he rode into Jerusalem had so soon turned sour. They had run away. Peter had tried not to, but at a crucial point **he failed** to stand up for Jesus too. The women's stories of Jesus risen seem too good to be true. Surely it wasn't only Thomas who doubted? What were they supposed to do now? Locked in for **fear**. It's possible to read the story of the first church as one of unrelenting triumph – and in a sense it is – but it is triumph that is born out of defeat, failure, weakness and anxiety. And I really do mean 'born' out of.

*The Anglican Church of Melanesia*

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Monday, 24 May 2021

**1101 Bredbury St Barnabas**

C: Sue Shrine. LM: Daryl Beaumont.

*Caledonia, The Anglican Church of Canada*

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Tuesday, 25 May 2021

**1102 Bredbury St Mark**

C: Andy Bull, Martin Makin. LM: Ruth Bull.  
Bredbury St Mark's CofE School.

*Calgary, The Anglican Church of Canada*

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Wednesday, 26 May 2021

**1103 Romiley**

C: Richard Pennystan, Will Drain. LM: Alan Bancroft, Alan Murch, Audrey Murch, Molly Dow, Elle Bird.

*California, The Episcopal Church, USA*

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Thursday, 27 May 2021

**1104 Disley**

C: Stuart Cornes. LM: Rob Stoba, Jack Fuller, Mike Hobart, Jenny Kidd, Wendy Luxon.  
Please pray for us as we continue the process of restarting services and ministries, that we may find the right pace to do this and through them connect and bless our wider parish.  
Pray also for wisdom as we start to look at setting the direction for ministry as we move forward into the future.

*Northern California, The Episcopal Church, USA*

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Friday, 28 May 2021

**1105 High Lane**

C: Hannah Hupfield. LM: Tony Berry, John Wilson.  
Please pray for our community and congregation as we adjust to life with fewer Covid-19 restrictions. We pray for guidance and wisdom as we start new projects and begin fundraising.

*Cameroon, The Church of the Province of West Africa*

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Saturday, 29 May 2021

### **1106 Low Marple**

C: Timothy Hupfield. LM: Geoff Brammall, Tony Doust, Debbie Moores.

Pray for the groups that are now able to meet together in person, and give thanks for new ideas for the ways we can grow together and serve our local community.

*El Camino Real, The Episcopal Church, USA*

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Sunday, 30 May 2021

### **Trinity Sunday**

Nicodemus struggles with the thought of his being created anew. Can he step outside his own definitions of himself and his relationship to this creative God? He seems to be a person wrestling with who Jesus is and what that identity might mean for his life, and his people's life. Some have said he was a secret believer in Jesus. Something of a hypocrite because he can't bring himself to be open about it – after all he comes to Jesus under cover of night. And yet we are told he argued with others on the Jewish council against Jesus being arrested and he also brought spices to prepare the body of Jesus for burial – so not really so secret about his attraction to Jesus and his teachings. Nicodemus is a complex character who is trying to find a way forward but doesn't seem to know how to go about it. He yearns to do something different but doesn't know what.

We believe that God's creating and creative involvement in this world is most plainly seen when his creative Word became flesh in the person of Jesus – 'in him was life, and the life was the light of **all** people' (John 1.4). We are not automatons forever condemned simply to take what comes our way without any response-ability. We are addressed directly by God in the person of the man Jesus. We are spoken with, person to person. We are engaged and encouraged, person to person. We are asked to be people in relationships – making our lives, quite literally, out of our mutual encounters, efforts, failures, and successes. We are because God is. We have the chance to become, because Jesus shows us how. God's creativeness marks us, makes us what we are – human beings – and without that creativeness we are less than human.

To be creative is essential to us. 'Nicodemus listen to the wind of the Spirit, be born into a new way of living' – but the creative Spirit eludes him. He can't fit a new picture of himself and God into his understanding of the world. He curbs the urge to be creative; he can't answer the Spirit's promptings. Let that not be said of us.

*La Iglesia Anglicana de Mexico*

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Monday, 31 May 2021

**The Visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth**

**1107 Marple**

C: Daniel Currie, Lesley Currie, Jeb Beatty. LM: Keith Frost, Martin Palmer, Dennis Watson.  
Marple All Saints' CofE School.

*Canberra & Goulburn, The Anglican Church of Australia*

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Tuesday, 1 June 2021

**1109 Compstall (or Werneth)**

C: Lynn Boyle, Wendy Atkinson. LM: Mick Boyle.

Please pray for the future mission and ministry of the church within the parish and also the wider outreach work of St Paul's.

*Canterbury, The Church of England*

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Wednesday, 2 June 2021

**1110 Whaley Bridge**

C: Frances Eccleston. LM: Beryl Axcell, Michael Connell, Sue Mellor.  
Kettleshulme St James' CofE School; Taxal and Fernilee CofE School.

*Cape Coast, The Church of the Province of West Africa*

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Thursday, 3 June 2021

**Day of Thanksgiving for Holy Communion**

**1111 Mellor**

C: Tracy Ward. LM: Dave Shercliff.

Thank you Lord for for inspiring us to try new ways of gathering together to worship you over the last year, for giving us space to be creative and boldness to try something new. Also for the blessing of welcoming new people to worship with us. Help us to listen to your guidance as to where you would like us to focus our time and resources as we begin to hold services in our church building again.

*Cape Town, The Anglican Church of Southern Africa*

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Friday, 4 June 2021

**Frodsham Deanery**

*North Eastern Caribbean & Aruba, The Church in the Province of the West Indies*

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Saturday, 5 June 2021

**0301 Alvanley and Manley**

We pray for unity, vision and growth in faith as we seek to love and serve our Lord and each other in word and deed.

C: Ron Iveson.

*Carlisle, The Church of England*

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Sunday, 6 June 2021

**First Sunday after Trinity**

Notice in this incident that Jesus with the disciples and the crowd are inside the house, whilst Jesus' mother and relatives are outside. Things appear the wrong way about – in a world where kinship bonds are all important, Jesus is in the house and his family are outside. They had gone out to restrain him, but far from achieving that, they end up outside shouting in. Even his enemies and critics are inside! What's going on?

House here is a symbol that stands for a variety of things. Yes, this is 'our house' in that Jesus seems at home, but he goes on to redefine what being 'at home' means in terms of the relationship within a family. His family want to restrain him, for his own protection no doubt, but that isn't their sole concern. They also want to protect the reputation and standing of the family. In a world in which clan and kinship are the determining factors in social standing, identity and control, Jesus' actions are casting a troubling shadow over the whole family. They want to curb his words and his actions to protect themselves. He's in dispute with powerful forces in society – and that is bringing trouble for them.

And his response is to redefine relationships entirely. It isn't clan and family – loyalties and position determined by birth – that counts, but relationships determined by actions. It's not about to whom you were born that counts, says Jesus. It's what you do that counts. 'Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother,' says Jesus. This house is defined by what you choose to do, not by what you cannot do anything about. No one can choose the family into which they are born – but we can all choose what we do with this life we are given. This isn't about weakening family relationships, but rather the strengthening of them through a loving and deepened choice.

*The Church of the Province of Myanmar (Burma)*

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Monday, 7 June 2021

**0303 Dunham-on-the-Hill**

C: Graham Green.

*East Carolina, The Episcopal Church, USA*



Tuesday, 8 June 2021

**0304 Frodsham**

C: Elaine Attack. LM: Gail Fullbrook, Gill Newcombe, Andrew Rudd, Mavis Thompson.  
Frodsham CofE School.

*North Carolina, The Episcopal Church, USA*

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Wednesday, 9 June 2021

**0305 Grange**

C: Emma Speake, Deborah Dalby. LM: Ian Abram.

*South Carolina, The Episcopal Church, USA*

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Thursday, 10 June 2021

**0306 Hallwood Ecumenical Parish**

C: Lisa MacInnes. LM: Barbara Brighton, Penny Hennessey, Ann-Marie Jones, Elizabeth Stokes, Alan Ventham, Ian MacInnes, Lynne Percival, Colin Roberts.

We would like to thank God for the opportunity he has given us for a brand new church and community building at Bethesda at no cost to us, and pray that the negotiations and planning between various parties continues to go well. Also, as restrictions ease can we have prayer regarding wisdom to have the right mix of our new ministries developed online and our traditional onsite worship.

*Upper South Carolina, The Episcopal Church, USA*

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Friday, 11 June 2021

**St Barnabas**

**0307 Halton**

C: Tony Mitchell. LM: Allan McGuire.  
St Mary's Halton CofE School.

*Western North Carolina, The Episcopal Church, USA*

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Saturday, 12 June 2021

**0308 Helsby**

C: Graham Green.

*Cashel Ferns & Ossory, The Church of Ireland*

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Sunday, 13 June 2021

Second Sunday after Trinity

Saint John Chrysostom (c.344-407) insisted that Jesus never laughed. And he is certainly correct in so far as there is no mention anywhere in the Gospels of Jesus laughing. But I can't believe that someone so obviously full of life as Our Lord could have lived out his thirty or so years on earth without a guffaw or even a giggle now and then. Indeed, today's gospel convinces me of that.

For a kick-off a mustard seed isn't the smallest of seeds. Sure, it is tiny in comparison to a broad bean, but have you ever sown onion seed? And there is no way that a full-grown mustard plant could be reckoned to be the greatest of shrubs. Wouldn't a great shrub grow to 10 or 15 feet or more? Mustard might grow a few feet if you left it, but that really is all. And as to birds nesting in it and enjoying the shade? No way! What is going on in this story? This is no mustard plant any of us have seen. Was Jesus a failure at GCSE biology? Had the sun addled his brain that day? Of course not.

I think Jesus is being deliberately OTT. This is the joker's exaggeration, the satirist's hyperbole, the teacher's amplification. If he'd said, 'A mighty oak from a single acorn grows,' we'd all say, 'So what?' Nests in oak trees are no surprise. Who hasn't looked for a big leafy tree to shelter under on a scorching hot day? And that's maybe the point. We all know what big, strong trees can stand for. Or we think we do.

Centuries before Ezekiel had used a tree to tell a parable. He said, yes God could take a tiny cutting, a slip of a twig from the top of a cedar tree, plant it on Israel's mountain heights, and it would grow great boughs and become a mighty noble tree with all kinds of birds living in its shade and protection. But, said the prophet, just as God makes a great thing grow from a tiny slip, so too he can dry up the life in the greatest of trees and make them topple. What that seems to be about is little Israel making alliances with Egypt in order to get out from under the power of the Babylonian empire. Hiding under the shade of one force, they hoped they'd see the end of their oppressor. 'Fools,' said Ezekiel, you've got no idea what's growing or what's dying – the cutting or the mighty tree.

Hear Jesus' parable in the light of Ezekiel's. All too easy to shelter under the wrong thing – to rely on power, privilege, prestige, money or whatever. That is to sit on the branch of someone else's authority and think yourself safe from the ravaging wolves of personal responsibility and action. But watch out the branch is about to crack, and you don't know it!

*The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)*

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Monday, 14 June 2021

**0309 Kinglsey**

C: Ron Iveson, Hilary Merrington. LM: Audrey Griffiths.

We pray for unity, vision and growth in faith as we seek to love and serve our Lord and each other in word and deed.

Kingsley St John's CofE School.

*Chandigarh, The (united) Church of North India*

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Tuesday, 15 June 2021

**0310 Norley**

C: Ron Iveson, Hilary Merrington. LM: Audrey Griffiths.

We pray for unity, vision and growth in faith as we seek to love and serve our Lord and each other in word and deed.

Norley CofE School.

*Chelmsford, The Church of England*

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Wednesday, 16 June 2021

**0311 Norton**

C: Vacant. LM: Christine Greeve.

Norton St Berteline's CofE School.

*Today this diocese is the Anglican Communion's prayer intention: Chester, The Church of England*

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Thursday, 17 June 2021

**0312 Runcorn All Saints**

C: Derek Guest. LM: Emma Jones.

Runcorn All Saints' CofE School.

*Chhattisgarh, The (united) Church of North India*

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Friday, 18 June 2021

**0313 Runcorn Holy Trinity**

C: Derek Guest.

*Chicago, The Episcopal Church, USA*

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Saturday, 19 June 2021

**0314 Runcorn Weston St John**

C: Vivien Gisby. LM: Terry Hawes, Marney Hearn.

We ask for confidence and boldness as we hold out the light of Christ to those who do not believe; strength and enthusiasm as we resume our previous ministries; and wisdom and imagination as we discern the way forward.

*Chichester, The Church of England*

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