

THE BIG LUNCH

(Acts 2.1-13)

When the date was set for an all age service to mark Pentecost Sunday the thought was to host "the Big Church Lunch" which was to give opportunity for children and adults alike to come together to share some food and tell their stories.

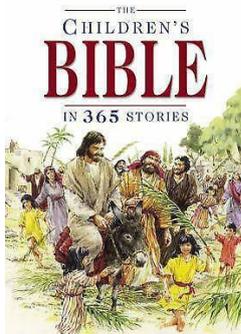


Sadly, we are not able to meet as planned but we can still read and share our stories.

Some time ago, Pam and I took part in the breakfast at the Wilson Centre in the village. Apart from a really good breakfast and service with a smile, we were joined by Tom and Audrey who arrived a few minutes after us. Breakfast became almost insignificant as we swapped our stories.

Over 40 minutes or so we learned more about Tom and Audrey and their lives together than we had discovered in the four years or more we have been a part of Saint Mary's Church.

Now that Tom has gone to be with his Lord and Saviour that breakfast is even more significant to us. Sharing our stories can be powerful, inspiring, heart-warming and life affirming to name but a few adjectives.



The Bible is full of wonderful stories that challenge and inspire.

One children's bible takes us through the important themes of the Bible in 365 stories. This might be something that you read to your children when they were small.

The passages we have just read describes the story of what happened on the Day of Pentecost 50 days after Jesus had risen from the dead, and after He had ascended into heaven to be with the Father.

Jesus had promised His disciples that when he went to be with His Father, He would send the Holy Spirit so that each one could be empowered to be witnesses of His story.



We all know that the room where they had met to wait was filled with a strong wind and tongues of fire rested on them. They spoke in different languages or tongues that they hadn't learned and glorified God.

Peter got up and spoke and told the story of Jesus to the crowd that gathered. As we read earlier, he held no punches as he stated "This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead..." (Acts 2:23 to 24a).

The Holy Spirit had produced a boldness in Peter that had previously failed him. The result of Peter's story was that three thousand people responded and believed and were baptised that day. The church was born!

The good news is that the same Holy Spirit that fell on the disciples on the day of Pentecost nearly 2,000 years ago is still very much alive in us today and is still empowering His people to be witnesses and to spread the wonderful story of Jesus throughout our world.

These days of the Covid-19 pandemic have inspired many Christian churches on to embrace modern means of communicating and churches have seen large numbers of people joining in who would not traditionally attend church.

Tees Valley Community Church at the Oakwood Centre for example have seen up to 4,000 people joining in with their online Zoom Sunday services.

God is moving by His Spirit despite the challenging situation. What about Saint Mary's Church, Long Newton? We might not all be comfortable with Zoom, Skype or Teams but maybe we can give someone we haven't spoken to for a while a call and share one of our stories with them.

It doesn't have to be long or involved but simply yours. It might be that we could even tell them about the difference Jesus has made to our stories.

Perhaps when lockdown measures are relaxed and the church doors once more open wide, we can share a lunch together and tell our stories. My hope and prayer is that this can happen soon.

The greatest story of all is of course about Jesus! May the Lord bless you richly as you reflect of your stories and bravely share with those around you, whoever they might be.