

## **Parish Community Letter - May 2026**

We welcome members of the parish to contribute and write our Parish Community Letter. **Thank you to Kathryn Beesley for taking the time to write for this month's edition.**

### **Beyond the earthquake, wind and fire**

It's often said that God gave us one mouth and two ears for a reason, and in an ever noisier world, where the temptation is to simply shout louder, perhaps it's worth considering that reason.

Although I'm not always a patient listener, (and here my husband will nod vigorously), I do believe that attentive listening is crucial to our relationships, including our relationship with God.

Recall the prophet Elijah, fleeing for his life and desperate for God's intervention. He witnesses an earthquake, mighty wind and fire, but the biblical account makes clear that it is when Elijah hears "a gentle whisper", audible to him alone – the "still small voice of calm" in Whittier's famous hymn – that he recognises God's presence and receives the guidance he needs.

At Pentecost, (whose festival falls this month), events are also dramatic yet deeply personal. The Holy Spirit comes to the first disciples as a rushing wind and tongues of fire. However, the message brought by the Spirit is spoken by each person in a different language so that others may hear individually, in the language they understand.

Powerful forces clamour for our attention today. We are besieged by global news reports, commercial offers, emails and WhatsApp messages. Yet our almighty God does not choose to speak through a megaphone because He desires to draw us into a personal conversation, tailored to our understanding and where we are willing participants. Since God will not compel our cooperation, we must take a step towards Him by opening ourselves up to listen, and intentionally tuning out the other competing voices.

You could explore some meditative techniques to help achieve this. \* However, if you want a basic start, then begin by finding somewhere you can be still, quiet but

alert. Then focus on taking some deep, steady breaths. While acknowledging the sounds around you, keep letting go of all intrusive thoughts and simply wait with an attitude of receptivity and openness. If your mind wanders, it might help to repeat a line from a hymn or a verse from the bible. The worst that can happen is that you fall asleep, which is probably what you needed, and the best is that you become aware of a gentle voice which is not your own.

Just like the person placed in a sound insulated chamber, who was startled to realise that they were listening to the working of their internal organs, we can begin to tune in to what was previously undetected. As we create space and lay down our own agenda, the ripples of noise in our head cease and we allow deeper things to surface.

And this is how God listens to you. Without interruption or presumption. Not attempting to steer the conversation, to dismiss, curtail or pass judgement. Simply receiving, accepting, loving.

A prayer to close:

“Spirit of God, giver of good gifts,  
thank you for the gift of listening.  
Open the ears of my heart  
that I may hear you  
and that I may listen compassionately  
to all who ask to be heard.”

\*Two resources which have helped me are: Taketime meditations <https://taketime.org.uk/> and ‘A season of silence – deep listening in a noisy world’ by Joshua Rey.

---