

Good Morning Church - 24th May 2026 - Pentecost

Happy Birthday, Church!

Pentecost Sunday is often called the birthday of the Christian Church — the day when the frightened followers of Jesus were transformed into courageous people of hope, justice, and love through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The word "Pentecost" comes from a Greek word meaning "fiftieth," because it falls fifty days after Easter. Long before Christians celebrated it, it was already a Jewish festival celebrating harvest and thanksgiving, drawing pilgrims from many nations into Jerusalem. That's why, in Acts 2, the crowd is amazed to hear the disciples speaking in so many different languages.

The symbols of Pentecost are wonderfully dramatic:

- 🔥 Fire — representing God's presence, passion, and transformation
- 🌬️ Wind — the breath and Spirit of God moving freely among people
- 🗣️ Language — showing that the good news is for everyone, not just a select few

Pentecost reminds us that the Church was never meant to be closed, fearful, or exclusive. From the very beginning, the Spirit pushed people outwards — across barriers of language, culture, class, and difference.

And perhaps that's still the Spirit's work today:

turning fear into courage,

silence into good news,

and strangers into community.

So however you celebrate this Pentecost, may the Spirit surprise you, encourage you, and set your heart alight once again.

Happy Birthday, Church!

With every blessing,

Phillip

Where is Phil?

Phil has some holiday this week, starting Wednesday 21st through to Bank Holiday Tuesday, returning to circuit duties on Wednesday 27th. No sooner is he back, but has to go off again to the Superintendent's Conference in Blackpool, on 1st June. Slightly frustrated that all these times away come on top of each other, but sometimes that's the way the cookie crumbles or diary dates come together.

Sunday Services - Pentecost

This Sunday, our services are:

Bromyard - **Bromyard Public Hall - 3pm:** United Service

Ledbury - **St Michael and All Angels Church - 10:30am:** United Service

St John's - 10:30am: Deacon Angie Allport - Church Anniversary (Stream Source) followed by bring-and-share lunch

[Lectionary readings](#)

The streaming this Sunday will be from St John's.

[Watch the live stream live on YouTube](#)

[Sunday Worship Page on the Circuit Website](#)

Please pray for our preachers and worship leaders as they prepare to lead worship.

Next Sunday – 31st May 2026 – Trinity Sunday

Next Sunday, our services are:

Bromyard - 10:30am: Rev'd Kath Baldwin

Ledbury - 10:30am: Rev'd Mary Jolly

St John's - 10:30am: Rev'd Roy Crew - Holy Communion (Stream Source)

[Lectionary readings](#)

Action of the Week - Something to Read and Ponder

Zacchaeus – Sinner or Saint?

By Theology Everywhere on May 18, 2026 by Angie Allport.

"If I broke the window, you can ground me for a year!" These aren't the words of a child offering a suggested punishment for once you've been able to prove they broke the window; they're the words of a child offering a completely disproportionate punishment, confident that you can't prove they broke the window because they really didn't. Leaving behind all we may have been taught in the past about Zacchaeus being a sinner, this is the scenario I think we're looking at in the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). So, how does this perspective change the story?

Zacchaeus is described as a sinner in the text, but that is the label given to him by the people. Because he was a tax-collector, they saw him as a collaborator with the occupying Roman regime. This, however, would be a distortion of the Jewish understanding of sin (deviation from Gods' will). The other reason for thinking that being a tax-collector was sinful could be due to the parable of the pharisee and the tax-collector in the preceding chapter (Luke 18:9-14), in which the tax-collector described himself as a sinner, but we are not told what his sin is and we have conflated it to mean his job. Yet this parable might also offer some insight. We are told that Jesus addressed the parable to those who considered themselves righteous and treated others with contempt.

When Zacchaeus says he will give half his possessions to the poor, the text could equally be translated in the present tense, that he *gives* half of his possessions to the poor. In other words, although maybe blurted out in frustration at his treatment, he is giving testimony to his generosity. Whilst Jesus elsewhere talks about giving to the poor in secret rather than publicly (Matthew 6:1-4), that was addressed to those who practised piety to be seen and praised by others. Here we see the flipside of that; Jesus needed Zacchaeus to make this declaration to those who were unfairly oppressing him. It is when Zacchaeus says that if he has defrauded anyone of anything, he will pay back four times as much, that I think he's doing what the innocent child is doing in my opening example. When Jesus says, 'salvation has come to this house' (verse 9), is he addressing the liberated Zacchaeus or the onlookers who have had their eyes opened?

The Zacchaeus account can also be seen in contrast to Jesus' encounter with the rich young man in the previous chapter (Luke 18:18-28). Although Jesus was probably using hyperbole, as was his tendency, rather than speaking literally when he told the young man to sell all he owned, the young man was clearly unhealthily attached to his wealth. In Zacchaeus, we see a rich man who took the commandments seriously.

It is interesting that Jesus goes on to tell a parable to those who had witnessed his encounter with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:11-27). The parable, generally known as the parable of the talents, has traditionally been interpreted as being about using our God-given gifts well. Arguably, Zacchaeus was doing that. However, this parable can also be flipped, with the nobleman being seen as the wicked person described rather than as representative of God. When read this way, the parable can be a lesson for

all Christians not only as to how to behave in the workplace, but also how we (mis)judge those who hold certain offices, like those who misjudged Zacchaeus because he was a tax-collector.

We live in times when it seems as though the ultra-wealthy want to rule the world (and some of them perhaps do), but not all rich people are 'bad'. Yes, some people do play fast and loose with other people's money and get fat on profits whilst their employees are treated abominably, but some care about their employees and, like Zacchaeus, quietly give away a significant proportion of their income. Yes, many have made greed a way of life, but many others do their best to make the system more humane. One example is *Patriotic Millionaires*, who support taxation and the redistribution of wealth.

When I took a service which included the Zacchaeus story, I forewarned the person who was going to be leading prayers that I was bringing a new take on him as I didn't want the prayers to reference Zacchaeus as a sinner, which was a strong possibility given traditional teaching about him. It's time his saintliness was recognised.

*Theology Everywhere is in a transitional period at present, so we are posting articles occasionally rather than weekly. See the moderator's message at the end of this article for more information – [**The church may close, but Christ is Risen!*](#)

Coming Up This Week

Monday 25th:

Tuesday 26th:

Wednesday 27th:

Bromyard - 10am - 2pm - Place of Welcome

St John's - 12:15pm for 12:30pm - 2pm - Lunch Club

Ledbury - 2pm - Wellbeing Art Group

Thursday 28th:

Friday 29th:

St John's - 10am - Away Day

Saturday 30th:

Bromyard - 9:30am - 12pm - Safeguarding Foundation Training

St John's - 10am - 12pm - Place of Welcome

Sunday 31st:

Services as listed above

The Vine at Home Pentecost

[The Vine at Home for Sunday 24th May 2026](#)

Ledbury Methodist Notices

[Ledbury Methodist Notices 20/5/26](#)

Methodist Connexional Weekly Newsletter

[Newsletter for 21/5/26](#)

Bloom

The West Midlands District is delighted to introduce Bloom, a brand new one-day festival bringing people together from across the District.

Taking place on **Saturday 4 July 2026, 10am–4pm** at **Trinity Methodist Church, Codsall (WV8 2ER)**, the day is open to all ages and will include a range of workshops, worship, creative activities and opportunities to connect.

This year's theme, **Rooted & Growing**, invites people to reflect on Methodist roots and explore how we are growing together in Christ.

Visit wmmethodists.org.uk/bloomfestival.html to find out more and to book tickets:

A Million Acts of Hope

At a time when the voices of those who spread hate and seek to divide communities can feel loud, the Methodist Church has joined an initiative to celebrate the acts of kindness, care and connection that happen every day. From 13-20 May, A Million Acts of Hope will bring together all these every

day acts of hope and shine a light on the people and communities making them happen. During this week of action, congregations, community groups and projects are invited to focus on hope, and share photos or videos capturing some of the many acts of hope that they are involved with in their neighbourhoods.

Find out more about [how your church can get involved](#).

As one of this Sunday's lectionary readings says: "In your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that is in you, and do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15)

LEAF - Wellspring events

Please see these links for information about events being held at The Wellspring just outside Ledbury:

Guided Retreat - [Grace: from inside out](#) - 27th June

Quiet Day - [The Gift at Bethany](#) - 3rd July

Art Retreat Day - [Seeking the Face of Jesus](#) - 24th July

Guided Retreat - [My Weakness. His Strength](#) - 25th September

Moving Prayer - [Entering his Rest](#) - 9th October

Teaching and Ministry Day - [Hope and Healing A Day of Support for the Bereaved](#) - 4th December

WhatsApp Groups

Each of our churches now have a WhatsApp group, if you'd like to join please ask and we will add you.

Vacancies

We have the following vacancies in our circuit and churches:-

Circuit Archivist - [Role Description](#) - [More Details](#)

If you would like to know more about any of these vacancies, please speak to Phil.

Circuit Admin & Ledbury Admin

Lynne will be generally working her 14 hours across Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings.

She can be contacted at admin@herefordshiremethodists.org.uk

Circuit Administrator - Herefordshire (South & East) Methodist Circuit

Tel 01432 356023

Church Administrator - Ledbury Methodist Church

Tel 01531 598007

Links

The links below are to websites or adobe cloud documents (all underlined in blue) A mouse click on the link will open the relevant documents for you or direct you to the websites referred to. These have all been checked and are safe links to click.

[Watch the live stream live on YouTube at 10:30am](#)

[Sunday Worship Page on the Circuit Website](#)

[Click to watch any of our services again, or refer your friends and families to our services](#)

[May InTouch Magazine](#)

[Preaching Plan](#)

[Our website](#)

[Sign Up for Methodist News](#)

[Joint Public Issues Team Newsletter](#)

[Gallery - Ledbury Methodist Art Project](#)