



# Connection

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021**  
**Fifth Sunday of Easter**



## **Collect**

Almighty God,  
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ  
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:  
grant that, as by your grace going before us  
you put into our minds good desires,  
so by your continual help  
we may bring them to good effect;  
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

**Amen**

## **Reading: Acts 8: 26-end**

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.' So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He replied, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.' The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?' He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

**Reading: John 15: 1-8**

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.'

**Post Communion Prayer**

Eternal God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:  
grant us to walk in his way,  
to rejoice in his truth,  
and to share his risen life;  
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.  
**Amen**

**Reflection**

This week's reflection is by Revd Gary Crellin, Vicar of the Benefice of Powick & Guarlford & Madresfield with Newland. You can listen to the podcast at:

<https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/your-faith/prayer-worship/sermon-podcasts/easter-5.php>

Last Sunday, I baptised my first child for 14 months. I have another on the day this sermon is read or listened to. Then in July, I will be baptising twin boys of a couple married in one of my churches a couple of years ago. Baptism in my parishes is back. Today I am reflecting on baptism via today's reading from Acts - as Philip meets the Ethiopian Eunuch.

When was the last time you thought about your baptism? Did you think about it this past week? This past month? Do you remember it?

I want to talk about baptism as something more than what happens when we baptize during Sunday worship. I want us to think about baptism as something that is happening all the time.

*"Look here is water. What is to prevent me from being baptised?"*

I wonder what the eunuch was thinking? What did he want for his life? What was he hoping for? What thirst took him to those waters? I wonder if there were parts of his life that needed to go, needed to

drown and die, so that something new could arise. I wonder if there were parts of him waiting and wanting to come to life?

More than that, I wonder how you would answer those questions today.

Baptism doesn't happen just in the font at the back of the church. We've been taught and come to believe there is only one baptism in the church. And I think that is right, but I want to put the emphasis on "in the church." In the church there is only one baptism. In life we are baptised over and over and over again.

- Every time we come to those places in our life, those people, and those relationships, that open to us and invite us to be more fully ourselves, we are being baptised.
- Every time we experience something that cleanses our eyes and we see more clearly, we are being baptised.
- Every time something happens in our heart and we love more deeply, we are being baptised.
- Every time we begin to live from a new place of wisdom or gratitude, we are being baptised.

The water of baptism is not contained solely in the fonts of our churches. The world is our baptismal font and our relationships, the people in our lives, our experiences are the holy waters in which we are baptised.

So, I wonder for you today, what baptismal water is before you?

What parts of your life need to be washed, renewed, healed? What is waiting to be born and brought to fruition? What parts of you need to die and drown, to be let go of so that something new can arise?



Even as our physical body needs water to survive, grow, and remain healthy, so does our soul. We know this. There are times when we drink deeply of life and we're in the flow. Life is vibrant, fruitful, beautiful. We're swimming in the baptismal waters of this world. And there are those other times when life feels desolate and dry. We feel parched and empty. We've stepped out of the water. We've forgotten our baptism. Our soul is thirsty for meaning, purpose, direction, and it's time to return to the baptismal waters.

Baptisms always happen in community and in relationship with one another. No one gets baptized alone or in isolation. We guide and help each other into the holy waters of life. That's what I told the first fifteen family and friends of that young lad, Wilf, last week at Powick. When we baptize in the church, it is the community that surrounds the baptismal candidate and vows to support that one in his or her life in Christ. "We will," the congregation declared in support as they hugged at a socially appropriate distance manner as we all welcomed Wilf into the Light of Christ. And so, it is with our baptisms in the World.

*"As they were going along the road they came to some water."*

That is not a story about only Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. It is not exclusive to them. It's your story and my story. The road of our life is filled with watering holes. *"Look, here is water!"*

- What if we began to look at the people in our lives, our relationships, our experiences as baptismal water?
- What will you do when you come to that next pool of baptismal water?
- What does it hold for you?
- How might God be enlarging, awakening, transforming, or deepening your life?
- What is to prevent you and me from being baptized again and again and again?

Nothing. Not a thing. *"Look, here is some water!"*

## Requests for Prayers



**We pray for all those who are sick everywhere and for those who have asked for our prayers and for their carers:** Roy and Margaret Putnam, Edward Bunn, Brian Bolam, Wendy Dufty, Yvonne Seward and Andy Caddell.

**We continue to pray for:** Percy and Sharon Blizzard, Jackie Pickford, Clive Hunt.

**We pray for those who are in residential care:** Sheila Bigland-Gibbons, Barbara Milton and Rita Sheppy.

**We pray for those who have died everywhere:** For those who we know and for those whose anniversary of death falls at this time. For Margaret Sutton, Pat Hiden, Don Dufty and David Finch

## Church Services

The church services this week will be at:



St Mary's Elmley Castle 10.30am

Canon Roger Spiller

Holy Trinity, Eckington 10.30am

Bishop Michael Hooper

### May Services

Date	Church	Time	Minister
9 <sup>th</sup> May	St Faith's Overbury	10.30am	Reverend Allison Davies
	St Giles, Bredon	10.30am	Reverend Catherine Lack
16 <sup>th</sup> May	St James' Defford	10.30am	Reverend Allison Davies
	St Peter's, Little Comberton	10.30am	Canon Roger Spiller
23 <sup>rd</sup> May Pentecost	United Group Service, St Mary's, Elmley Castle	10.30am	Reverend Allison Davies
30 <sup>th</sup> May	Chapel of Ease, Bredon's Norton	9.00am	tbc
	St John the Baptist, Beckford	10.30am	Reverend Allison Davies





## News from the Diocese

Prayers and diocesan news can be found at [www.cofe-worcester.org.uk](http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk)

### **The Diocesan Spirituality Network**

Spirituality is all we Christians really have to offer the world, because the Gospel is nothing other than growing in union with Christ. We are learning how to grow our spirits, grow our souls, in Christ – and helping others to discover with us that this is the fullness of life we seek. The Diocesan Spirituality Network is a collection of all sorts of folk from across Worcestershire and Dudley who want to grow their souls and the network encourage everyone to join in. The group meet virtually or face to face two or three times a year, spending a morning together. Join them for a morning on Zoom on Thursday 6 May, from 10am. Canon Peter Kerr, well known to many in the diocese, will lead the session, reflecting on how our spirits, our souls, have fared over the past year - Signposts & Sanctuaries: Our Pilgrimage through the Pandemic. To book your place, contact Nick Wright: [revnmwright@btinternet.com](mailto:revnmwright@btinternet.com)



### **Reverend Allison Davies**

Vicar of Eckington, Defford with Besford and Associate Priest for the churches of the Bredon Hill Group

