Sunday 31 May 2020
PENTECOST

Fr David's Reflection

I've been thinking about bells this week. On Thursday as we gathered, at quite a distance, outside our homes for the final clap and noise-making for NHS staff, I listened to the church bell here in Grindleton tolling. Albeit rather briskly. Last weekend I managed to rig up something Mr W Heath Robinson would have been impressed by to allow me to toll a bell at St Thomas'. Now, before we begin one of the broadcast services from inside church, the bell will sound to let those nearby know that God's people are at work attending to their prayers and worship.

When I was a child it wasn't uncommon to hear the church bell tolling (there was only one) after someone had died. Not to alert folk to the funeral but to mark out their lives – one dong for each year the person had lived. I've done it a few times in my ministry although it's a custom that seems to have, well, died out.

Church bells have been rung for any number of occasions not to do with church. They have rung as warnings and as celebrations. Some have rung over the last few weeks as part of the cacophony of thanks for those who have worked to save lives during a time of international danger.

This week we celebrate the feast of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descends on the disciples and they receive power and authority to continue Jesus' work. They establish the Church. The power of the Holy Spirit continues to be called down on all who are baptised, confirmed, ordained and consecrated in the Church today. The rushing wind and flaming fire of Pentecost has immense power in the world. It blows apart convention and it disturbs the comfortable. It brings about change.

Bells ring for good and for bad. Our tolling church bells, it seems to me, may well be marking the passing of one age and the dawn of a new one. Both passing and coming. In the midst of life now we may be experiencing the birth of something new, vital and exciting in God's Church.

May God's Holy Spirit dwell in you, richly.