

grace church joondalup



**DIOCESE OF PERTH
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA**

**The Day of Pentecost
23 May 2010**

My dear Friends

Pentecost (literally 'fiftieth' in the Greek) takes its name from the fiftieth day of the Jewish Feast of Weeks (Shavuot), a pilgrim festival stretching fifty days from Passover. Whereas John the evangelist has the crucified and raised Christ bestowing his Spirit on the church at Easter, Luke deliberately chooses the Day of Pentecost seven weeks on from Easter. Why, I wonder, does Luke do this? Perhaps because Shavuot celebrates the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mt Sinai. It came therefore to be regarded by the Rabbis as the concluding festival to Passover. As such, it is a reminder that the deliverance from Egypt is not an end in itself, but the prelude to Israel's acceptance of its vocation to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation through whose life and witness the world is to be brought to knowledge of the divine will and purpose for humankind. One tradition associated with Pentecost is of particular interest to us, namely its emphasis on the universalist implications of God's self-disclosure at Sinai. The Rabbis say that the Torah (teaching, instruction, law of the Lord) was offered to Israel only after all other nations had declined a similar offer. The Rabbis also claim that the offer was made in a desert place, belonging neither to Israel nor to any other nation, so that no nation or people should ever be able to regard the Torah as its own private possession. Hearing Luke's story with all this in mind inspires God's Easter people, animated by the Pentecostal Spirit, in freely sharing all that is given to us with others. As Christ's redeeming light is divided among us and the great Paschal Candle solemnly extinguished, there is a palpable sense of 'over to you!'

*with my love
David*