

# Service of the Word for Pentecost Sunday 31 May 2020

Orchestral intro

Acts Reading

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## Reflection - Based on the Acts of the Apostles 2:1-9

*there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force . Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks,*

*imagine **you** are in the upper room with the followers of Jesus.. imagine how this place looks...what scents are you getting....what are you hearing?...while you sit there... ..who else is there with you? ...are they... sad...anxious...frightened... worried for the future and what will become of them?... do you recognise some of these same feelings in yourself during this time of pandemic?*

*did these followers of Jesus feel that they had let Him down?... do you feel lost and uncertain, as they did, now that we are emerging into a new world . . Not a post pandemic world but rather a post lockdown world which still carries the same fears.*

*Did these followers listen to what the people around them were saying or did they feel alone with their thoughts..*

*As we celebrate this great feast of Pentecost in our own new and different world let us join together in spirit if not in physical presence. Let us pray,*

## Intercessions

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### Collect

Lord God, who on the day of Pentecost

enlightened the hearts of your people  
by the fire of the Holy Spirit;  
give us wisdom and understanding,  
and lead us into all truth,  
that your Church may be kept in the unity of the Spirit  
and the bond of peace;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the same Spirit,  
one God, world without end. Amen

### Lord's Prayer

Our Father,  
who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we  
forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen

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### **Prayer of penitence for all we have done wrong, in assurance of God's forgiveness.**

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit.  
Lord, have mercy.

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart. Christ, have mercy.

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided.  
Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, all we long for is before you;  
and our deep sighing is not hidden from you.  
But we acknowledge our wickedness;  
we are filled with sorrow at our sin.  
Be pleased O Lord, to deliver us;  
O Lord, make haste to help us.  
May the Lord forgive what we have been,  
help us to amend what we are  
and direct what we shall be,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## **Gospel**

### **John 20:19-23 The Message (MSG)**

Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together, but, fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, "Peace to you." Then he showed them his hands and side. The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were exuberant. Jesus repeated his greeting: "Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you."

Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," he said. "If you forgive someone's sins, they're gone for good. If you don't forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?"

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## **Reflection**

Much writing and preaching about Pentecost is about what happened in that Upper Room on that particular day. Ministers and youth leaders out do themselves with devising new and challenging images for the Holy Spirit. In St Paul's we have, in the past flown a kite while singing along with Mary Poppins and company. There are urban legends about clergy setting churches on fire or blowing the congregation away with wind machines! But the focus is still very much on that one particular day. What I am curious about is what happened when the first disciple opened the door to that Upper Room, opened the door and walked out into the world. I know Peter and some of the others preached to the crowds later that day, were accused

of being drunk but what happened before that, before the crowd gathered. What happened when the first brave soul opened the door and ventured outside. What happened when the women went out shopping later that day what did they feel like, the same or new and different somehow? As they gathered at the well to draw water or joined friends and neighbours at the local for a drink; what did they feel like, the same or new and different somehow?

As we emerge from the strictly imposed restrictions of lockdown; what do we feel like, the same or new and different somehow? I ponder this because some of us will be meeting up with family or friends, one household at a time, in the coming days. I went shopping in the supermarket for the first time in 12 weeks on Friday. I felt the same but somehow different. As we look further ahead to one day gathering together either in St Paul's or in the churchyard for worship will we feel the same as we did the last Sunday we were in Church, or somehow different?

For the followers of Jesus the world did I imagine look and feel very different post Pentecost but I doubt they could find the words to describe that difference. They were changed but not yet sure how to share that change with each other or with those outside their circle. Reborn, refreshed, energised, alive; all good descriptive words but they don't quite catch the full importance of the gift which the Holy Spirit bestowed on them. In essence I suspect that they were no longer fearful, no longer afraid of the world. They were empowered by the Holy Spirit to go out and get on with living, preaching and teaching the truth about God's presence in the world.

Can we imagine, I wonder, a time when we will feel the same, no longer fearful of our world? It doesn't feel like that right now for most of us. Our emergence into a new way of living still feels tentative and cautionary. For the followers of Jesus their world remained much the same. It was each of them who was changed by their encounter with the Holy Spirit. For us it feels different because it is our very world that has changed and we venture out I suspect needing the Holy Spirit in new and different ways. Gentler ways I hope because there has been enough excitement these last months to keep us going for a while and it looks from the news this week there is more to come for some countries.

I believe we will first need the Holy Spirit of lament. We will need the chance to cry and wail out our anger and frustration at the circumstances that got us

to this place of pandemic. We will need the Holy Spirit of grief to mourn our lost loved ones and lost ways of life. We will need the Holy Spirit of renewal to help us find new, better ways of being. The ability to reclaim some of what has been lost and to embrace that which has changed. I am not sure we are ready for any of these manifestations of the Holy Spirit just yet. What we need first is the Holy Spirit of hope. The ability to simply stick our heads outside the door and without being fearful. Everyday for a long time will need to be a Pentecost for us as we experience our brave new world. Amen

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### **Prayer as we move into our new future together**

***Living Spirit help us to hold on to our Pentecost moments as we walk into the storm.***

May we know the value of story, dream and poetry that tell us of mystery and wonder, joy and pain, hopes and visions. May we see that narrow horizons limit compassion and kindness from our lives.

May we not be afraid

to imagine life as it is meant to be for all people;

to live as if the world we long for were already here.

***Living Spirit help us to hold on to our Pentecost moments as we walk into the storm.***

May we long for that understanding of prosperity that is about sharing the good things of life equally and to realise that growth must be for all and not reserved for just a few.

Lead us to ways that hallow all life

and honour compassion and kindness,

ways that ask questions about what we value

ways that do not dismiss or devalue other people's dreams.

***Living Spirit help us to hold on to our Pentecost moments as we walk into the storm.***

May we understand what repentance is essential

to the restructuring our lives.

May we appreciate that lament

is part of living, a place to express that depth of sorrow

out of which hope will come.

Give us a spirituality of resistance and struggle that refuses to let injustice have the last word.

***Living Spirit help us to hold on to our Pentecost moments as we walk into the storm.***

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## CONCLUSION

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \*  
you renew the face of the earth.

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \*  
you renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;  
may the Lord rejoice in all his works.

You renew the face of the earth.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

You send forth your Spirit, O Lord; \* you renew the face of the earth.

### **Blessing**

May the Holy Spirit stream within you.

May the Holy Spirit renew you.

May the Holy Spirit invigorate you to

Walk with confidence into this day.

And the blessing of God almighty, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer be  
with you and all those for whom you have a care this day and always.

Amen