



**“God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.”**

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 PENTECOST Sunday

Rev. Danny & Deacon Sally Wheadon.

*This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.*

## Opening Prayer & Lighting of a Candle

Jesus breathed on them and said  
“Receive the Holy Spirit.”

On this day of Pentecost, the  
birthday of the Church, we shout  
with gladness, the Lord is here,  
his Spirit with us! **Amen.**

*Holy Spirit, prepare our hearts to  
know your peace afresh and to  
celebrate the Good News of  
God’s Kingdom.*

**StF 372** Come down O love Divine

Tune: Down Ampney -

Vaughan Williams 1872 -1958)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flv](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flvKDgktuti)

[KDgktuti](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flvKDgktuti) BBC Songs of Praise,

Dunblane Cathedral, June 2013

1 Come down, O Love divine,  
Seek thou this soul of mine,  
And visit it with thine  
own ardour glowing;  
O comforter, draw near,  
Within my heart appear,  
And kindle it,  
thy holy flame bestowing.

2 O let it freely burn,  
Till earthly passions turn  
To dust and ashes,  
in its heat consuming;  
And let thy glorious light  
Shine ever on my sight,  
And clothe me round,  
the while my path illuming.

3 And so the yearning strong,  
With which the soul will long,  
Shall far outpass the  
power of human telling;  
For none can guess its grace,  
Till he become the place  
Wherein the Holy Spirit  
makes his dwelling.

*Discendi, amor santo Bianco da Siena  
(died 1434) translated Richard Frederick  
Littledale (1833-1890) Used By Permission.  
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## Let us pray together

led by *Willard Mbengegwi*

Gracious God, in all places and at all times you are loving, generous, kind and compassionate. From the beginning of time, your Spirit has hovered on the surface of the deep and in that Spirit you have formed us; cherished and valued us. Let this be my song of praise; I love because you first loved me.

Generous God, give me a heart of gratitude for all those things that speak of your love. For friends and family, for the gifts of your creation, and for all the places I have witnessed something of heaven.

*(call to mind those things for which we are grateful this week)*  
**Amen.**

Living and loving Lord, have mercy on me. Pardon and deliver me from all my sins, strengthen and renew me for your service, that I might live and work to your praise and glory, and the coming of your Kingdom on earth.

**Amen.**

Christ tells us that we are saved not condemned by God. God is love; we are forgiven, and forgiven to the full. Amen.

## Today's Reading from the Acts of the Apostles Acts 2:1-21:

**Read by Jo Egre**

Dramatized by the children of Bethesda Chapel led by *Naomi Bidmead*.

## Time to Reflect:

*Deacon Sally Wheadon*

Today is a very special today for Christians, it's the day of Pentecost. Pentecost is a Greek word meaning fiftieth and it's celebrated 50 days after Easter Sunday. The Bible tells us that after rising from the dead, Jesus appeared to his disciples for forty days and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. Then he was taken up to heaven. But before he left, he instructed his disciples not to leave Jerusalem and to wait for the gift that God had promised and that he, himself, had spoken about. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit who God would send in his name, would teach his disciples all things and remind them of everything he had said to them. And sure enough on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and that's what we read about just now and what we celebrate today. On the day of Pentecost, Jesus's disciples experienced being dramatically filled with God's Holy Spirit which empowered them to do amazing things.

So the day of Pentecost is important to Christians but it also an important date in the Jewish calendar. It's the time when Jewish people celebrate their spring harvest festival known as Shavuot and that's why, in the

Bible reading, there were so many people staying in Jerusalem at the time when the Holy Spirit came. In fact, there would have been people from every part of the known world of that time and yet each heard the disciples speaking in their own language; a clear sign of the Holy Spirit's unifying power which brings together people from different backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities. And although women had no status in those days and were regarded as possessions, the Spirit was also poured out upon them and we're told later in the story that about 3000 people were added to the disciples' number that day. Hence why Christians often refer to Pentecost as being the birthday of the Church.

As I look at this story, I can't help but see some parallels between what was happening then and what is happening now. We often speak of the Holy Spirit falling afresh; we sing Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. I don't believe for one moment that God caused this pandemic to happen but I do believe God has the power to bring good out of the most appalling tragedies and I sense a great moving of the Holy Spirit at this time. And as I think of the parallels between the first disciples' circumstance and our own, initially I thought of us all

staying in our homes just as the disciples were told to stay in Jerusalem. But actually, the disciples were all in one place and so, is the parallel more about Christians today, who have mainly been in the church building, now being empowered to reach out into the world? If anyone had told me at Christmas that by Easter we would be producing services that people would access directly in their own homes, I couldn't have imagined it. And yet, a survey commissioned by the Christian Charity Tearfund indicates that record numbers of people have begun attending church online since the lockdown began.

Generally, around 5-7% of people in the UK attend church at least once a month but in the last couple of months that figure has skyrocketed to 24% of the British population. The survey also indicates that some three million new people have turned to prayer in the UK since the lockdown began and a well-known online Christian book seller has reported a 55% increase in the sales of Bibles in the month of April. How amazing is that?

And when I think of the disciples all suddenly speaking together, I thought of the national blessing song, pulled together by worship leader Tim Hughes and featuring singers from over 60 churches

across the UK. Within a week of being released, it was watched over two million times. I actually heard about it myself because it was sent to me by a couple who are not regular church attenders but who were deeply moved by it. And when I went to look at the song again on the internet, there isn't just the UK blessing but the South African blessing, the Hawaii blessing, the Zimbabwe blessing, the Canada blessing, the Malaysia blessing and another recording entitled 'The blessing around the Globe.' And so we see the unifying power of the Holy Spirit at work a fresh in our time. Peter Greig, who is the pastor of the Emmaus Road church in the UK, wrote recently on Face Book that he was talking to a BBC journalist who commented on the song's extraordinary display of unity. And the British prime minister wrote to Tim Hughes saying *'the UK Blessing is truly uplifting and has touched millions around the world with its message of hope and its beauty.'*

When I think about our Bible story this morning, it speaks of young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams. How many video clips have we seen since this lockdown began envisioning a new and better world; a world where there is care and respect for our planet and a new and better way of being and relating

to one another. You may have seen the Archbishop of Canterbury on the news a couple of week ago. He said *"Just because we're in the middle of a crisis, it doesn't mean that we can't have a vision for a future where justice and righteousness are the key stones of our common life."*

Justice and righteousness, along with mercy and compassion are common themes that run throughout the Bible. I'm sorry if people have somehow got the impression that being a Christian involves wearing the right clothes, saying the right words and performing the right rituals. That's not what it's about. Worshiping God on a Sunday morning is a good thing to do but only if it's done with the right heart and what we say on a Sundays matches what we do in the rest of the week. Listen to what God had to say to the people of Israel through the prophet Amos some 700 years before Jesus was born, when they performed the rituals of worship and made offerings to God without care and concern for the vulnerable in their society. Through Amos, God says: *"I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise*

*of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!*

Maybe some of those verses surprise you but Jesus too, prioritised justice, righteousness, mercy and compassion. Up until recently, I think it would be fair to say that, on the whole, our society had become somewhat individualistic. And within Christianity, we tend to focus mainly on a personal relationship with Jesus. And yes, that is a big part of what it means to be a Christian but there is more to the gospel than that. Jesus reached out to the vulnerable and the marginalised in the society of his day; he, himself, tells us that he came to bring good news to the poor and to set the oppressed free. That was his mission on earth. And we are invited, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be a part of that mission and to play our part in bringing about God's Kingdom on earth; a Kingdom where justice and righteousness reign.

I know that we, as people who have come to take safety and comfort for granted, have experienced terrible tragedy in recent times and I wouldn't want to make light of that. However, I also can't help feeling excited that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God

on earth is coming ever closer and that a new era is dawning. So, let's be encouraged and let us open our hearts and minds, that the Holy Spirit might fall afresh upon us and work through us in these extraordinary times in which we live.

**StF 385 Holy Spirit we welcome**

Holy Spirit, we welcome You,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!  
Move among us with holy fire  
as we lay aside  
all earthly desire,  
hands reach out and  
our hearts aspire.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!  
Let the breeze  
of Your presence blow  
that Your children  
here might truly know  
how to move in  
the Spirit's flow.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!  
Please accomplish in us today  
some new work of  
loving grace, we pray -  
unreservedly - have Your way.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

*Chris Bowater (born 1947)*

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*The New Hymn Makers - Behold the Lord*

*(feat. Noel & Tricia Richards and Chris*

*Bowater) 2007 CD*

## **A Time of Prayer**

*led by Revd Debbie Poole*

*(In the silence between each prayer, please feel free to reflect or add the names of those you know.)*

Loving God, on this special day we ask for the gift of your Spirit for all in need. We think of the fear and anxiety of those early disciples, who were waiting - and remember all those who feel the same today. We pray for the strength of your Spirit to keep them going.

*Silence*

We pray of those who are sick, in hospital, at home, or in care homes and ask for the touch of your spirit to heal and revive. We remember those who are far away but are close to us; in hearts and minds. As the dove of your spirit flies across the distance, fill the space between us and hold us in the unbroken circle of your love.

*Silence*

We remember those who are working tirelessly and selflessly to care for others and provide what we need. We think of the doctors, nurses, midwives, community nurses, porters,

cleaners, and auxiliary carers. May the wind of your spirit encourage and support them in their daily tasks.

*Silence*

We pray for those who are grieving and feel lost or alone. May the comfort of your Spirit fill them with peace and blessing as they sense your presence. We think of the funeral directors, and all those who are involved in related work. May they hear your still small voice of calm enabling and holding them.

*Silence*

We think of those who have difficult decisions and choices to make, especially those whose authority and roles affect others. For those in Government and in business and for those who have lost their jobs. Give them the wisdom of your spirit to guide, lead and counsel in positive and generous ways.

*Silence*

We remember those who feel lost, abandoned, or unloved, especially the forgotten refugees and those who are held captive in abusive situations. We pray for the breath of your spirit to speak through those who can bring change and new life. And we pray for the inner and outer transformation that your spirit brings to all who need it.

*Silence*

We pray for families, children and those who teach and nurture them. We ask for the inspiration and creativity of your spirit to offer hope, security and life lessons which will grow into the fruits of your spirit. Strengthen the bonds of love between them and protect them from harm.

*Silence*

We think of the ordinary people who are finding extraordinary talent, resources, courage, and motivation that is making a big difference. For the pharmacists, supermarket workers, delivery drivers, shoppers, administrators, and those who work behind the scenes. Blow the wind of your spirit over them and revive them as they work.

*Silence*

And we pray for ourselves, as we face uncertainty and change. May we see positive opportunities and embrace them with open hearts. May the flame of kindness ignite the fire of love in us and all whom we share our lives with. May we feel the freedom that your Spirit brings, the peace that passes all understanding and the warmth of your joy, now and always, **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

*A project by Revd Jenny from friends around the world in different languages:*

Our Father,

*Sarah (USA, American English)*

who art in Heaven,

*Carmel (Irish Gaelic)*

hallowed be thy name;

*Pat (British Sign Language)*

thy kingdom come;

*Mark (Welsh)*

thy will be done;

*Fred (Italian)*

on earth as it is in heaven.

*Joanne (Botswana, Ndebele)*

Give us this day our daily bread.

*Alethea (Mandin)*

And forgive us our trespasses

*Vincent (Zimbabwe, Shona)*

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

*Sandra (Spanish)*

And lead us not into temptation;

*Mere (Fijian)*

but deliver us from evil.

*Sajeewa (Sri Lanka, Sinhalese)*

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,

*Fred (German)*

for ever and ever.

*June (Jerrias)*

Amen.



All over the world  
the spirit is moving,  
All over the world  
as the prophet said it would be;  
All over the world  
there's a mighty revelation  
Of the glory of the Lord,  
as the waters cover the sea.

All over His church  
God's Spirit is moving,  
All over His church  
as the prophet said it would be;  
All over His church  
there's a mighty revelation  
Of the glory of the Lord,  
as the waters cover the sea.

Right here in this place  
the Spirit is moving,  
Right here in this place  
as the prophet said it would be;  
Right here in this place  
there's a mighty revelation  
Of the glory of the Lord,  
as the waters cover the sea.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vF9h9n19yz0>

'All Over the World' composed by Roy Turner. (b.1940) © 1984 Thankyou Music  
BBC television 'Songs of Praise' Edinburgh Festival 12th July 2011

## A prayer of blessing

May God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, go with us now.  
May God's Spirit be on us,  
on those we love, and on those for who we should pray,  
this Pentecost day and always.  
Amen.

*Original materials by Rev. Ian Pruden;*

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