

Pentecost 2020

You may find it helpful to have a jug or glass of water close to your device/where you are sitting, as a visual aid for our Pentecost worship.

10.20am - slide with music

Mike - technical brief

Gathering hymn: StF 36 There's a quiet understanding

There's a quiet understanding
when we're gathered in the Spirit,
it's a promise that he gives us,
when we gather in his name.
There's a love we feel in Jesus,
there's a manna that he feeds us,
it's a promise that he gives us,
when we gather in his name.

And we know when we're together,
sharing love and understanding,
that our brothers and our sisters
feel the oneness that he brings.
Thank you, thank you, thank you Jesus,
for the way you love and feed us,
for the many ways you lead us;
thank you, thank you, Lord.
thank you, thank you, Lord.

Tedd Smith (b. 1927)

Steward's welcome

Opening words:

God says: I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

The Spirit has come. Alleluia!

Christ says: I will ask the Father and he will give another Counsellor to be with you for ever.

The Spirit has come. Alleluia!

Come Holy Spirit, gentle as a dove,

burning as fire, powerful as wind,

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Hymn: StF 397 The Spirit lives to set us free

The Spirit lives to set us free,
walk, walk in the light;
he binds us all in unity,
walk, walk in the light.

*Walk in the light, walk in the light
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord.*

Jesus promised life to all,
walk, walk in the light;
the dead were wakened by his call,
walk, walk in the light.

Walk in the light.....

He died in pain on Calvary,
walk, walk in the light;
to save the lost like you and me,
walk, walk in the light.

Walk in the light....

We know his death was not the end,
walk, walk in the light;
he gave his Spirit to be our friend,
walk, walk in the light.

Walk in the light.....

By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
walk, walk in the light.
The Father's kindness is revealed,
walk, walk in the light.

Walk in the light.....

The Spirit lives in you and me,
walk, walk in the light.
His light will shine for all to see,
walk, walk in the light.

Walk in the light.....

Damian Lundy (1944-1996)

Opening prayers:

Holy, sprightly Spirit of God,
We delight at your dancing among us,
filling the world with joyful possibility,
revealing the music of the Creator.
We rejoice at your daring spontaneity
and find ourselves caught off guard by your unexpected communications.

In a world that seems changed and unfamiliar,
You encourage us and spark into being new possibilities:

You gently purge our sin in the warmth of your breath,
freeing us from the bondage of our past wrongs.

Pause to offer own confession and receive assurance of forgiveness

Spirit of God, in a world that can seem without colour, you weave your ever-changing
pattern into the fabric of our beings.

In a world that can seem hostile, your mediating love builds a path from loneliness to
hospitality, from separation to co-operation.

In a world that can seem without point and purpose,
your vitality shouts out a mighty 'yes' to life and declares the source of all living to be
the One from whom you proceed,
The Father and Mother, Creator and Lover of all.

Spirit of God, on this day of Pentecost we celebrate and ask that you would renew,
revive and refresh our spirits.

We make our prayer in the name of Jesus, who promised your coming
and reigns with you in the eternal fellowship of the Creator,
one perfect Trinity of love. Amen.

All age talk

If you are able, take a look at the water you have in front of you.
I wonder how many times you have used water today?

If we were in church I would be throwing that question out to the congregation and inviting responses! Maybe you have already had a drink that needed water (hot or cold); taken a shower; flushed the toilet; cooked breakfast; cleaned teeth; washed up; watered the garden.....and the list could go on.

We take water for granted and we use it for so many different things because it is so versatile. It cleans and cleanses; it heats; it cooks and cools; it hydrates; it helps things to grow; it can be powerful and it can be gentle. Water is clever and we couldn't really live a day without it!

Today we celebrate Pentecost - 50 days since Easter Day (have you got any chocolate left? Would it surprise you if I told you that we still have the odd egg in our chocolate tray.....?!) - when God having raised Jesus and taken him up into heaven now sends down his Holy Spirit to the world. In a moment we will hear the Spirit described as coming like violent wind and tongues of fire. But first, we hear Jesus talk about the Spirit as 'living water'.

Bible readings:

John 7:37-39 Rivers of Living Water

³⁷ On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, ³⁸ and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Acts 2: 1-11 The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.

⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

Sermon

Last week I wrote about how, after the ascension of Jesus Christ, the disciples were left to wait patiently for the Holy Spirit that had been promised to them. It was the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came. Pentecost was a Jewish festival that attracted many visitors to Jerusalem. Originally it was celebrated at the reaping of the first harvest but over time it had become more of a celebration of God's gift of the Law to the people. Amidst these Pentecost celebrations Luke gives us a dramatic account of how God's Holy Spirit came as violent wind and flames of fire. I can't help thinking that for those faithfully waiting together it must have been a bit scary! Maybe it needed to be dramatic so that the disciples knew that this was the real deal and that something very significant and life-changing was happening. In this account the Spirit comes to shake things up; to literally blow the cobwebs away; to warm and empower and bring some confusion, yes, but also an understanding that had previously not been experienced about the things of God ('deeds of power' as the reading says).

It may be that violent wind and flames of fire speak to us as metaphors for God's Spirit working in us. Sometimes we need shaking up and warming up to recognise God's presence. However, John, in his gospel gives us a different image of the Spirit. Take a look again at the water in front of you. Jesus, at another festival this time (the festival of Booths, Sukkot, which celebrated the end of the harvest season and God's provision for the Israelites during their time in the wilderness), drawing on Old Testament scripture talks about 'living water'. This strikes me as a different kind of image of the Spirit for us to dwell on. Jesus says 'out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water' and John tells us 'now he said this about the (Holy) Spirit'.

The Spirit is poured into our hearts and flows out from us, from our lives, as we seek to follow Christ and be open to his presence. Interestingly, the NRSV translation of the Bible tells us by way of a footnote, that the Greek for 'believer's heart' better translates as 'out of the belly' - it's maybe a slightly less gentle and more earthy image to see the working of the Spirit in us coming out of our guts!

We might remember that this isn't the first time that John in his gospel has drawn our attention to 'living water'. In John 4, Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at the well. In a long conversation with her Jesus talks about being willing to give living water and the woman asks where she can get some from. Jesus, in reply says, '...those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life' (4:14).

So now imagine your glass/jug of water empty in front of you - drunk or used in some other way. Empty. It will need to be refilled again to be of use. Now imagine that no matter how much of that water in front of you, you drink or use, it still remains full, gushing over even, and never runs dry - it just keeps providing, always enough for you. This is the Spirit of God - God's gift to us at Pentecost. The gift given to us in faith. Always enough. God's presence in us and the world, making known his deeds of power and all the things of God that are part of God's kingdom and the life of faith.

On that Day of Pentecost God came as wind and fire, God came to meet folk right where they were to help them understand something of God's love for them and his power working in them. God came too as living water, poured out into ordinary people's lives so then it could be poured out from them into a needy world.

May we know God's powerful and life-giving Spirit working in us as we move forward into the days that lie ahead.

Hymn: StF 395 Spirit of the living God

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. (sing through twice)

Intercessions and Lord's Prayer

(these intercessions are prepared for those worshipping at home who can't access Zoom. The intercessions on Zoom may be different from the ones printed below)

We bring our ordinary selves, just as we are, inviting you to do something extraordinary in and through us, gracious God.

We have listened, we have noticed, we have paid attention to your calling. We need your love, we need your grace, we need your Holy Spirit.

Help us to understand that through you we are forgiven, that through you our hearts are stirred, that through you our ordinary becomes your extraordinary.

So gracious God, we bring the whole world before you, this Pentecost Sunday.

We bring all the concerns and doubts we carry, and lay them at your feet.
We bring all the fears of our world - a world still uncertain about how we will emerge from this pandemic. A world where there is still much injustice and suffering. A world in need of you, of your love.

Come amongst us.
Come, Gracious God.
Come, Jesus Christ.
Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: StF 398 There's a Spirit in the air

There's a Spirit in the air, telling Christians everywhere:

'Praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working in our world!'

Lose your shyness, find your tongue, tell the world what God has done:
God in Christ has come to stay. Live tomorrow's life today!

When believers break the bread, when a hungry child is fed,
praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working, in our world.

Still the Spirit gives us light, seeing wrong and setting right:
God in Christ has come to stay. Live tomorrow's life today!

When a stranger's not alone, where the homeless find a home,
praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working, in our world.

May the Spirit fill our praise, guide our thoughts and change our ways.
God in Christ has come to stay. Live tomorrow's life today.

There's a Spirit in the air, calling people everywhere:
praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working, in our world.

Brian Wren (b.1936)

Closing words:

As we begin another week, Spirit-filled,
we pledge to wander and wonder with you, Holy Spirit of God.
Unrestrained and ever-moving, passionate and gentle.
May we hear your still small voice and may we know the warmth of your presence.

Blessing

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon us, our family and
friends and all those we are called to love, now and forever more.

Closing Music: StF 338 There is a redeemer