**Pentecost Act of Worship – Sunday 31st May 2020**

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Order of Service and leader of the service: Revd Richard Bradley
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**Introduction:**

Welcome to our Pentecost Service today!

As I write this introduction it is the day after we have celebrated a birthday in the Bradley household! Our youngest child celebrated her 10th Birthday!

Today is a bit like a birthday! A birthday of the Church. When the Holy Spirit came down on the apprehensive disciples and empowered them to be the men and women God had called them to be.

So today we celebrate the church and the coming of the Holy Spirit!

We sing our first song…

**Song: Holy Spirit, we welcome you**

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| 1.. 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! | 2.. 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! |
| 3.. 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©1986 Sovereign Lifestyle Musicccli 169737Streaming Licence 595811  |

**Time of Prayer: Adoration and Confession**

Empowering God, we come on this day of celebration for the church. For we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apprehensive and fearful disciples. Hidden in that upper room the Holy Spirt came upon them in power and enabled them to go out and proclaim in word and deed your word and works.
We come today and celebrate.

We thank you that the Holy Spirit enabled Peter to preach with boldness the Good News of Jesus Christ. It drive the disciples out to preach to all nations just as Jesus had instructed them in the Great Commission of Matthew Chapter 28 verses 16 to 20.

But, the Holy Spirit also challenges us to live more fruitful and holy lives. And so often we fall short of that expectation and command. So we come and say, “sorry” for the times of weakness and frailty. Times when we have done wrong knowingly or unknowingly. So we come and seek your forgiveness for those times when we have fallen short. And we join together in saying the prayer that Jesus taught us as we say together:
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,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

**Drama by Addie and Barbara Redmond**

**[*Theme tune*]**
**Peter:**  [*Approaching the "back door", whistlingHoly Spirit we welcome you*]
**Elizabeth:**  [*Facing away from Peter addressing an offstage Martha*] That'll be the window cleaner Martha. I must pay him, see you later
**Peter:**  Hiya luv. I'm home! [*Plonks a rucksack down on the floor*]
**Elizabeth:**  Will you keep your voice down.
**Peter:**  Why?
**Elizabeth:**  Why he says? Do you have any idea what I've been through the last two days.
**Peter:**  I bet it wasn't as good as my last two days.
**Elizabeth:**  I can't believe this. You're acting like you've done nothing wrong!!
**Peter:**  I haven't. I've been in Jerusalem preaching.
**Elizabeth:**  My  mother said you wouldn't admit you've got a problem.
**Peter:**  No Elizabeth I have got a problem actually. You see the church in Jerusalem want me to be the leader but it means we'll have to move.
**Elizabeth:**  A church leader you? Don't make me laugh. Peter I've had enough. I didn't mind when you threw away a promising career in the fishing industry to follow Jesus, I accepted the fact that you were away for weeks at a time, I was proud of you when said you and Jesus had healed people, I stood by you when you were depressed after Jesus was killed and I supported you going back to Jerusalem to wait for whoever it  was Jesus was supposed to be sending.
**Peter:**  The Holy Spirit.
**Elizabeth:**  Jack Daniels more like it. Oooo the shame of it! All over the six o'clock news my husband, drunk in public at 9 in the morning. I've had Martha round here lecturing me on the evils of drink and asking if you've been an alcoholic long?
**Peter:**  I wasn't drunk. Y'see...
**Elizabeth:**  I don't know if I want to hear it.
**Peter:**  Please Elizabeth just hear me out.
**Elizabeth:**  This better be good Peter.
**Peter:**  Right. We went off to Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit. Nous sommes toute ensemble dans une maison. Quand il y a une grande vent....
**Elizabeth:**  Peter! You're talking gibberish!!!!
**Peter:**  What? Was I? Oh it can't have worn off?
**Elizabeth:**  The effects of the alcohol?
**Peter:**  No the... No I haven't got to that bit yet. Let me finish. We were all in the house when we heard this roaring wind. And tongues of fire appeared over our heads.
**Elizabeth:**  You were doing drugs as well!!!!!
**Peter:**  Don't be soft. Course not. It was the Holy Spirit coming on us. Anyway we rushed out and began talking in all sorts of different languages to everyone who would listen. Then I said Brüde, hertz vas ich euch zu sagen haber.
**Elizabeth:**  You what?
**Peter:**  Sorry did I do it again? I said Brothers - listen to what  have to say. And I told them all about Jesus. And 3000 believed! Isn't it great. Well it is but it means we've got to start a church in Jerusalem so we'll have to move down there and....
**Elizabeth:**  Peter Shut UP! That's it is it?  The best you can do?
**Peter:**  Yes. That's how it happened.
**Elizabeth:**  Look Peter, I listened when you told about seeing Jesus with Moses and Elijah, I didn't bat an eyelid when you came home soaking wet after you  thought you could walk on water, you've got friends who see angels, dead friends who come back to life. But this is the last straw. Tongues of fire hovering over your head and speaking in strange languages. The way I see it either I've been married to an alcoholic or a lunatic for the last 3 years. At this particular moment I'm sure which option I prefer.
**Peter:**  I'm not mad and I certainly haven't been drinking.  It's true Elizabeth.
**Elizabeth:**  Peter for years I've listened to all this. I've had my life upset by this Jesus of yours, put up with all the comments from the neighbours but now this.
**Peter:**  I know some of it sounds far fetched but its all true - all of it. Do you really think I could've made all this up?
**Elizabeth:**  Well I know some bits are true 'cos I've heard things from other people.
**Peter:**  There you are then. Elizabeth I'm telling you the truth. You've got to believe me, luv.
**Elizabeth:**  I want to believe you  not just about the drinking, all of it but I don't think I can....
**Peter:**  Elizabeth, you said Jesus has  upset your life. You're right he has but only because he's been transforming mine. Your only experience of him is heresay and seeing how he's affected me. You've never really got to know Him like I do.
**Elizabeth:**  No that's true. It's a bit late now though. He's gone back [l*ooks up*] up there hasn't he?
**Peter:**  No, it's never too late. Luv he transformed my life and he can change yours as well.
**Elizabeth:**  Do you really think he can?
**Peter:**  Luv. I know he can. I'll put the kettle on and tell you a bit more about this Holy Spirit......
**[*Theme tune*]**

**Song: Holy Spirit, breath of heaven**

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| 1.. Holy Spirit, breath of heaven, Holy Spirit, breathe on us.  Breathe us to a quiet stillness where we trust your love for us.  | 2.. Holy Spirit, breath of heaven, Holy Spirit, breathe on us.  Breathe us to a quiet stillness where we find your place for us.  |
| 3.. Holy Spirit, breath of heaven, Holy Spirit, breathe on us.  Breathe us to a quiet stillness where we know that you are God.  | ©2004 Thankyou Music administered by worshiptogether.com, excluding UK and Europe administered by KingswaysongsCcli 169737 Streaming Licence 595811  |

**Bible Reading: Acts 2:1-21**

***The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost***

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard the speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

***Peter addresses the Crowd***

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 " 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. 20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

**Sermon: Revd Darren Holland**

I have one of those annoying little toys on my desk -a little wooden maze with 3 small ball bearings that you have to get to the centre of the maze by tilting it at various points and guiding the balls through the right passages. Getting all three into the centre at one time is a mammoth task as the tilting impacts not only on the ones that you’re trying to navigate but the ones already there. Many times you end up having to start all over again.

After his death and resurrection Jesus appeared numerous times to his disciples. Some of them feeling bereaved lost and afraid had retuned to a safe place that was familiar. Others had scattered and even begun the process of returning to their old lives before Jesus. Through these appearances Jesus begins the process of restoring these broken and confused men and women so they are ready for the ministry he spent three years preparing them for. In what must have been for the disciples a dizzying and incredible experience Jesus tilts and guides them back into being a community centred on him and ready for mission.

Jesus gives them the opportunity to regroup and re-centre themselves on him so that he can then make way for the Holy Spirit. This Spirit who will fill them and go with them, giving them everything they need, as Jesus promised, to overcome and issues and continue the work of the kingdom of God.

Briefly this morning we’re going to think about the spirit who overcomes - overcoming limitations, overcoming lack of confidence, overcoming fear.

The Festival of Weeks or Pentecost was from an agricultural point of view the celebration of the wheat harvest. Jesus had shared parables with his friends and with the crowds several times where the idea of harvesting was an essential and visible characteristic of the kingdom of God. Not only was it characteristic but the nature of that character was that it went well beyond expectations. The parable of the sower from Luke 8 spoke both of the recklessness and abundance of the farmer in spreading seed many of which feel on unsuitable ground but the seed that feel on the good soil produced an unprecedented harvest.

In the three years the disciples have journeyed with Jesus they have seen him engage with, teach, heal and break bread with thousands of people all over the region. The seed has been well and truly sown and from the disciples perspective it must have seemed like it had all fallen on hard, thorny and vulnerable ground. Cries of hosanna replaced by crucify and now even in the aftermath of the empty tomb they are alone. But not today. Today is harvest day.

Uncertain though some were the friends have remained together and waited as Jesus asked and on harvest day the Spirit comes. The description of the event borders on chaotic – the violent wind, the tongues of fire, the gathered speaking in languages they had never learned. Though few in number, educationally ignorant and inexperienced on that day those limitations no longer mattered.

The Spirit breaks out. The limits of number and space are overcome as the Spirit does something incredible in and through the friends of Jesus. They move outside and the people passing by and round about are mesmerised by this strange phenomena. They want to know more even if only to mock. Whatever it looked like or sounded like a crowd began to gather and if we were to read on to the end of the chapter we would learn of an unprecedented and abundant harvest where at least 3000 find life in Jesus Christ.

To those who are unable to see the future because of small and declining numbers, to those who are feeling limited because of age, location, properties that are too large and costly to maintain effectively, those who are feeling that they don’t have the right kind of faith or personal resources this is a word of hope and encouragement.

Jesus sends his spirit on us in the same way as his friends received it on that harvest day of Pentecost. There may not be violent noises and tongues of fire but the same spirit can overcome our feelings of limitation and release us into the mission of God’s kingdom happening beyond the limited spaces of our traditional gatherings.

In one way that is already happening. This virus has caused untold pain, heart ache and difficulty but it has also provided opportunity. The Spirit has moved the church out of the building and we’re now on TV, radio, social media, printed pages and numerous other mediums speaking new languages in new cultures.

Moving out of the room where they gathered led to an amazing and abundant harvest of people encountering and entering into kingdom life. This time we live in right now is a time of harvest as by the Spirit of God we speak hope, encouragement and comfort into this uncertain and frightened world we are in. Let’s continue to pray that as the Spirit overcomes our limits God will ready us to be harvest-gatherers.

The Spirit overcomes limitations and the Spirit overcomes our fear.

Right from the beginning of the gospel of Luke as both Elizabeth and Mary discovered their pregnancies the message was clear ‘Do not be afraid.’ Now the same writer reveals through the Acts of the Apostles how the Spirit can overcome even our greatest fears.

The disciples had rightly been afraid for their lives following the death of Jesus. After all they lived in the mightiest and, at times, most brutal empire known to humanity at that time. They had seen that brutality first-hand as their rabbi Jesus was taken away, unjustly tried then flogged and crucified.

As those associated with him how could they not fall foul to the same fate? So understandably they had scattered or hidden. Until now.

Having been recovered by the risen Jesus which some still struggled to comprehend, they were reunited. The Spirit fills them and moves them and uninhibited they worship God and proclaim Jesus as Lord. Jesus growing popularity, the titles he was being given as Messiah, King of the Jews, Son of God were not simply a challenge to the religious-right of his generation they were an affront to Rome. The very reasons cited for the trial and death of Jesus the disciples now openly declare as the reason for their life and hope for the world.

The Spirit has overcome their fear of death.

This is significant because it is something that Christians have proclaimed and sang about since the resurrection ‘O death where is thy sting?’ But I think there is a difference between fear of death and fear of dying. We know from the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus was afraid. What lay ahead must have been terrifying. When we or loved ones are taken into hospital with Covid19 or any other illness naturally we become frightened. It is a natural and right response. Death is a part of being human. We cannot escape it. That does not mean we ignore it or trivialise the harrowing reality of dealing with suffering and dying.

The disciples experience of the Holy Spirit affirms in them that their encounters with the risen Jesus were real and that the way of his kingdom is now to be fulfilled in and through them as they preach, baptise and heal in Jesus name. Any death sentence that Rome could hold over them, as it did him, simply pales against the wonderful reality of this new resurrected life in Jesus. In short their mortality no longer holds them back.

When we are open to the Spirit we find our mortality cannot hold back the reality of life for all people in Jesus. And if we are afraid then we have the gift of Jesus, his Spirit, to comfort us, support and help us overcome. Our mortality is not a barrier to sharing and living out life in the kingdom. It is hope and blessing for the poorest, the hungry, the hated and most vulnerable, the excluded and rejected, the bereaved. Opening ourselves to and aligning ourselves with the movement of the Holy Spirit of God means we become an embodiment of those blessings and outpouring of visible love.

Finally the Spirit overcomes our lack of confidence.

In our weekly Bible study group we’ve been looking at the disciple Peter. Despite his bravado and at times headstrong nature, Peter consistently has his confidence knocked.

 When Jesus spoke of his own death Peter tried to silence him only to get rebuked; when Peter declared his unswerving loyalty to Jesus he was humbled by the news that when the chips were down he would indeed deny ever knowing Jesus; when he tried to walk on water he started of well then panicked and needed Jesus to rescue him; then after breakfast on the beach with the risen Jesus his heart is tested again ‘Do you really love me, Peter?’

Now Jesus has gone. It’s just Peter and the remaining disciples. Can we really trust that this will turn out well when Peter has such a poor track record? Yet whatever issues of faith and confidence Peter had they quickly disappear as he is filled with the Holy Spirit. The one who tripped up, blundered and denied is now the one who speaks boldly of the truth of God.

Peter declared on that day that the Spirit was being poured out just as was promised in the prophet Joel. It may look and sound different, crazy even, but this was no drunken display this was confidence in the good news that Jesus is alive and invites all who hear to receive that life. The message of repentance not only leads to forgiveness of sins but to this new life in the present kingdom of God.

Last Sunday was Aldersgate Sunday which is a day remembered by Methodists around the world as the day John Wesley’s ministry changed forever. At a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate Street, London in 1738 John Wesley, a reputable Anglican priest, felt as he described ‘his heart strangely warmed’. In that moment he experienced the Holy Spirit as he had never done so before in his life and ministry. In spite of his upbringing in a rectory and his own theological training for the first time in his life he felt the assurance that he was forgiven, loved and free. He left that room and his ministry transformed. He travelled up and down the country preaching the good news of Jesus in village centres, town and city squares, and market places. He braved rejection and his own lack of self-confidence as the Spirit helped him to communicate in ways that would give life to those who through poverty, low social status and lack of education found the church closed to them.

We may be struggling with low self esteem or lack of confidence, we may feel that we don’t have the right gifts or the right kind of education to be useful to God, we may feel that we are not good at putting into words what we believe. Well I have a degree in theology and I feel exactly the same. But I do what I do not because of what I have studied, or what I have trained in or where I have come from. I do it because having taken the risk of being open to the Holy Spirit I have found myself propelled into situations and amongst people I never believed I would have the confidence to communicate with and to. Confidence, faith, does not come from who we are but whose we are. It is not for the self-assured and self-confident that Jesus sends the gift. If you lack confidence then be encouraged because you are the very reason Jesus sent his Spirit. And how do you receive that? Simply by praying the most ancient of prayers – Come Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God is with us. To help us overcome our limitations, our fears and our lack of confidence. May God’s Spirit tilt and re-centre our lives and our church community on Jesus.

 May the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead live in each one of us and give life to our mortal bodies that we might become the visible signs of God’s kingdom on earth.

Amen

*A Prayer*

Come Holy Spirit…

God, these times may be different than anything we have experienced before but as we wait would you draw us close to you.

Warm our hearts and stir in us the fire of your Spirit that we might be ready and released in to speaking the good news of Jesus and being the blessing of Jesus.

Renew our confidence as we follow your lead and help us to share our faith wherever we have the opportunity to do so.

Refine in us that hope we have in you and that you instil in us. Use our gifts and our bodies to be an outward sign of your love and presence to those who are vulnerable and struggling with life right now.

We pray in Jesus name.

Amen

**Song: Holy Spirit come confirm us**

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| 1.. Holy Spirit, come, confirm us in the truth that Christ makes known; we have faith and understanding  through your helping gifts alone.  | 2.. Holy Spirit, come, console us, come as Advocate to plead; loving Spirit from the Father, grant in Christ the help we need.  |
| 3.. Holy Spirit, come, renew us, come yourself to make us live: holy through your loving presence, holy through the gifts you give.  | 4.. Holy Spirit, come, possess us, you the love of Three in One, Holy Spirit of the Father, Holy Spirit of the Son. |
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**Prayers for others and ourselves:**

***During our prayers there will be moment of quiet…***

Loving God, who gave His Son to be the Saviour of the World. Jesus, in turn promised the Holy Spirit who came at Pentecost. We thank you for the promises you keep and the gifts that you give to us.
We thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit that blesses, protects, calls, challenges and empowers.

So, we come today and ask for your protection and blessing on those who are vulnerable in our world today.

We pray for: those caught up in war and political conflict (we pause)
We pray for: those who are needing a touch for healing of body, mind or spirit (we pause)
We pray for: those who are hungry, thirsty and homeless (we pause)

We pray for: those who are bereaved (we pause)

We pray for: those who work for the NHS or carers for patients and those who are sick (we pause)

We pray for: those who we care for and are special to us (we pause)

We pray for: our churches that you would empower and call us to follow you more closely (we pause)

We offer all our prayers in and through the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

**Song: O breath of life**

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| 1.. O breath of life, come sweeping through us, revive your Church with life and power; O breath of life, come, cleanse renew us, and fit your Church to meet this hour.  | 2.. O wind of God, come, bend us, break us, till humbly we confess our need; then in your tenderness remake us, revive, restore; for this we plead.  |
| 3.. O breath of love, come, breathe within us, renewing thought and will and heart; come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,  revive your Church in every part.  | Elizabeth Ann Head (Bessie Porter Head)ccli 169737Streaming licence 595811  |

**Next week is communion….**

**Prayer of Blessing:**

Living God, fill us this day, with your Holy Spirit. That we can be the people you call and equip us to be.
May we radiate the love and light of Jesus as the Holy Spirit works in us and through us.

Amen.