

Parish of Central Exeter

Pentecost 23rd May 2021
Wind, fire and change

The reflections this morning are from Sheila, intercessions from Keith. Many thanks.

Welcome everyone.

Preparing for worship

In a world that can seem predictable, the Spirit sparks into being new possibilities; inspiring us to forgive ourselves for past mistakes, freeing us from our bondage to past wrong.

On that day they were all in one place,
breathing the same air,
saying the same words.
It seemed the most important thing to be doing.

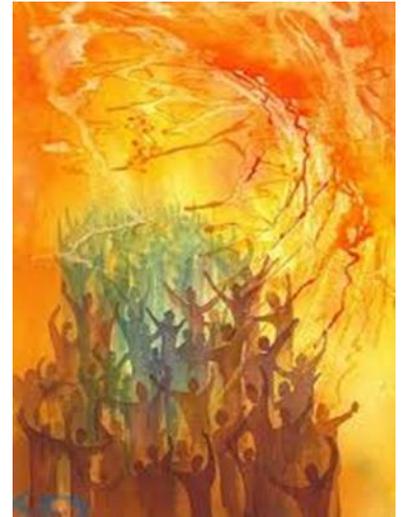
Then there was a sound- like a rush of wind...
and suddenly nothing was the same.
They received new languages, new dialects,
new understanding, new power.
Those who were gathered received the Holy Spirit in a new way.

What was important had changed.
Being in one space was not a priority.
Breathing the same air was not a priority.
Speaking in unison was not a priority.

The power of the Holy Spirit rearranged their priorities to align them with God's.
God's priority of diversity,
God's priority of widespread grace,
God's priority of neighbours and community,
God's priority of stepping out, reaching out, being out in the world.
The world that God loves.
The world that is God's priority.

Being aligned with God's priorities, it felt, it feels like being on fire.

Developed from Julia Seymour's post on Revgalblogpals.org



Worship song

'Come Down O Love Divine.'

Ralph Vaughan William's music composed in 1906 is as uplifting as the words, attributed to Bianco da Siena, a fourteenth century Italian mystic and poet. Sung by the choir of King's College, Cambridge. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbd8c6TDxN0>

We seek forgiveness

The Spirit comes with fire of justice
and we offer the extinguisher of complacency.
Lord have mercy,

The Spirit comes with the rain of love
and we offer an umbrella of reserve.
Christ have mercy,

The Spirit comes bearing fresh winds of change
and we close the windows.
Lord have mercy,

Hear the great good news of our faith:
The Spirit is alive!

Children of God,
breathe the fresh winds of the Spirit.
taste the quenching waters of God's love.
touch the heat of God's passion for justice.

Amen.

(From Liturgy Outside)

Collect for Pentecost

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
ignite in us your holy fire;
strengthen your children with the gift of faith,
revive your Church with the breath of love,
and renew the face of the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

'Wind' (2019) by Ukrainian artist Denis Sarazin.

New Testament Reading

Acts 2: 1-21

2 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 their own language being spoken. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in our 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 people 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 heavens 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.’

Pentecost Reflection

Each year when it comes to celebrating Pentecost – the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on those first followers of Jesus – our lectionary reading insists that we listen to Luke’s account of that event from Acts 2. Here we find the transformed and energised friends of Jesus preaching to the Jewish pilgrims assembled in Jerusalem for the festival from across the known world. Recently I found a collection of quotations on the Holy Spirit from a meeting point service of some years ago.

John V Taylor wrote ‘The Go-Between God’ – The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission, published in 1972, which became a classic and will be republished this year. In a passage about our awareness of the ‘otherness’ of others, and the current of communication needed for us to be aware of the other as a ‘thou’ rather than an ‘it’, he says:

“Christians find it quite natural to give a personal name to this current of communication, this invisible go-between. They call him the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. They say that this was the Spirit which possessed and dominated the man Jesus Christ, making him the most aware and sensitive and open human being who has ever lived – ceaselessly aware of God so that he called him, almost casually, Father, and fantastically aware of every person who crossed his path, especially the ones no one else noticed.

That is the Spirit which he promised to send to his friends and on the day of Pentecost that is the Spirit which came and possessed them just as he had possessed Jesus. And what was the first immediate result of his coming? – communication. Awareness. They preached and everyone in that cosmopolitan crowd heard them speaking to him in his own language.”

I am encouraged and challenged by those three adjectives to describe Jesus – aware, sensitive, open. They are ones that are practical and seem achievable as I seek to be more like Jesus. Then I remember times when I was not aware of someone – so intent on what I wanted to do that I barged past them, or when I was insensitive to someone’s feelings, or I misunderstood what was happening. I also recall other times when I have been so full of my own ideas and plans and not open to others. How much we need the gift of God’s Spirit to continually challenge and guide us!

There is also the challenge of communication – of enabling the message of God’s love for people shown in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus – to be understood and made real in the lives of the people we meet here in Exeter in 2021.

The meeting point paper had two short quotes which also challenged me. First from the nineteenth century evangelist and revivalist Dwight L Moody: *“The Spirit of God first imparts love; he next inspires hope, and then give liberty; and that is about the last thing we have in many of our churches.”* In a similar way C. T. Studd, a late Victorian to early twentieth century missionary, wrote *“How little chance the Holy Spirit has nowadays. The churches and missionary societies have so bound Him in red tape that they practically ask Him to sit in a corner while they do the work themselves.”*

Perhaps one thing the experience of the pandemic has reminded us is that we cannot control everything. Planned events were cancelled. We lost control and had to learn to live with uncertainty. This is something that many people across the world and in our own society face constantly. But God’s Spirit has continued to work. Now we need to find where God’s Spirit is leading us here in Exeter.



Pentecost (1999) by Indonesian artist, Hendarto.

The flame of the spirit comes in a very simple rural setting to a small group. The few, wherever they are, matter just as much as the many.

Worship song

Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost'

The words (1862) are by Christopher Wordsworth, nephew of the great poet, set to the tune 'Charity' by Sir John Stainer in 1868. It is sung for us here by the choir of St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham. Words are on the screen.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDy7aSN99_M

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in a loving God
whose Word sustains our lives
and the work of our hands in the universe.
God is life.

We believe in God's son among us
who brought the seed of life's renewal.
He lived with the poor to show the meaning of love.
Jesus Christ is Lord.

We believe in the Spirit of Life
who makes us one with God,
whose strength and energy renews our own.
The Spirit is Love.

Camillo Torres, Colombia, from 'Creed'.

New Testament Reading

Romans 8:22-27

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Intercessions

God of Pentecost,

We read so many stories and see so many pictures
of people weeping over the bodies of loved ones,
killed deliberately or regarded as collateral damage
in someone else's power struggle;
of people dying from disease with no hospital to take them in
and no medicine to treat them.

What words can we say, who are so far away from these events,
that will bring comfort?

Lord, may your spirit intercede with sighs too deep for words.

God of Pentecost

We read so many stories and see so many pictures
of people who are victims of prejudice and discrimination,
either as part of some national policy,
or through fear and ignorance of what is different.

What words can we say do those who suffer
but dare not share what they are going through?

Lord, may your spirit intercede with sighs too deep for words.

God of Pentecost

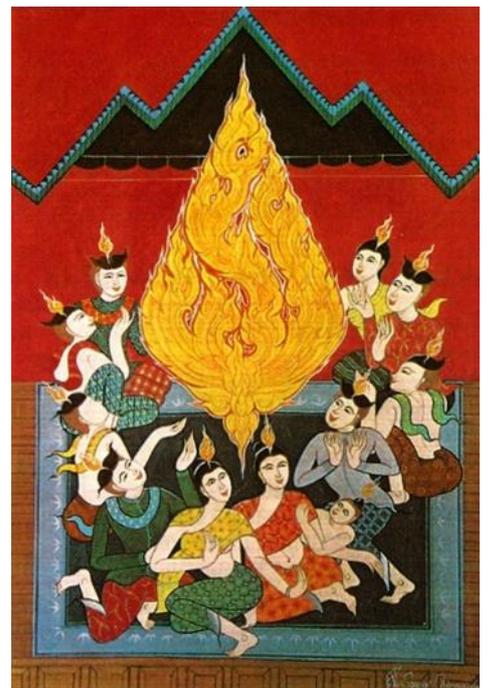
We read so many stories and see so many pictures
of people and animals whose existence is threatened
by climate change,
who are vulnerable to the pressures of the demands
of a consumer-led society
and are powerless to change their situation.

What words can we say to those whose future appears bleak,
and will be shaped by the actions of others?

Lord, may your spirit intercede with sighs too deep for words.

God of Pentecost

when we have no words to speak,
may our hearts still burn with your fire,
may we still feel the wind of your Spirit—
a mighty wind, blowing where it will.



Sawai Chinnawong, Thai artist,
Pentecost, 1997.

Worship song

'O thou who camest from above'. The words are by Charles Wesley in 1768, and the tune, 'Hereford', by his grandson, one hundred and ten years later. Sung for us here by the London Fox Choir. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ6pmSEzJ5A>

The Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, life-giver, pain-bearer, love-maker
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe.
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world.
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings.
Your kin-dom of peace and freedom sustain our hope
and come on earth.

With the bread that we need for today, feed us.
For the hurts that we inflict on one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love
now and forever. Amen

Developed in the early 1980s by the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.



O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

*Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have
only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can
find a way to use a few minutes of silence or
conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental
moment.*

*You may like to listen to: 'Come Holy Spirit' a haiku for
Pentecost by Peter Coppen, set to music by Nigel, and
sung by the Langford singers.*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3adYODI4Lg>

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

Faithful God,
who fulfilled the promises of Easter

by sending us your Holy Spirit
and opening to every race and nation
the way of life eternal:
open our lips by your Spirit,
that every tongue may tell of your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Closing prayer

Holy One,
For all of the ways you speak to us –
in rushing wind,
in dancing flames,
in words we understand,
and in all that transcends language,
we give thanks.

Give us courage to speak your love,
everywhere we go,
to everyone we meet.
Amen.

(written by Joanna Harader, and posted on Practicing Families.)

Blessing

May the advocate, God's Holy Spirit,
sent in Christ's name,
teach you and remind you of Christ's words.

Do not let your hearts be troubled.
Do not be afraid.
Christ's peace go with you
Christ peace, that the world cannot take away, be with you
Christ's peace, and the Spirit's presence,
remain with you always.

(written by Howard Carter, and posted on How in the World.)

Closing Hymn

Veni Sancti Spiritus: Come Holy Spirit

This is a Taizé chant sung by a virtual choir of 54 young people from 36 different countries.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=us-v4slsUX4>



Pentecost by Andrew Wyeth (1989)

'This shows two tattered fishing nets hanging out to dry on a grey New England day, billowing in the wind like sails.

Pentecost was painted on Allen Island, a former fishing outpost about five miles off the coast of Maine on an island originally called Pentecost Island, a name bestowed by the English explorer George Weymouth upon his first landfall in the New World on Pentecost Sunday, 1605.

Full of elemental movement, Wyeth's *Pentecost* plays upon scripture's characterization of God's Spirit as wind, breath, pneuma, visualizing this invisible energy through the animating effect it has on a pair of seining nets. The nets could be read as a reference to the profession of several of Jesus's disciples, who first encountered their rabbi while at work on a fishing boat. He fills their nets with a miraculous catch of fish—so large that the nets break!—and then calls them to be "fishers of people," who cast wide God's nets of grace, gathering others in. How the Spirit must have blown that day, compelling Simon, Andrew, James, and John into this new vocation.'

Edited comments by Victoria Emily Jones