

**St Peter's Church Peebles**

**St Andrew's Church Innerleithen**

**Pentecost – Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020**



As Pentecost is celebrated around the world, we hope that the prayer, reflection and responses in this service sheet are helpful in your personal devotions. Regardless of whether we can meet over the internet on a 'Zoom' call or just pray, read the bible and reflect on our own, we are joining with the Holy Spirit and the church worldwide as the family of God.

If you are able, please join our Zoom call at 11am. The meeting ID and passcode are emailed to our congregation.

**Welcome and Opening Prayer:**

The Lord is here: **His Spirit is with us.**

Faithful God, you fulfilled the promises of Easter,  
by sending us your Holy Spirit,  
that your love may be known throughout the world.  
Be with us as we join together this morning,  
encourage us, teach us and inspire us  
to show your love to the world. **Amen**

**Song: Come, now is the time for worship**

Come, now is the time to worship  
Come, now is the time, to give your heart  
Come, just as you are to worship  
Come, just as you are before your God  
Come

One day every tongue will confess you are God  
One day every knee will bow  
Still the greatest treasure  
Remains for those who gladly choose You now ... Come

**Confession:**

We ask for your forgiveness, Lord,  
when we forget to rely on you and trust instead upon our human strength.  
Remind us of that glorious day when your Spirit  
transformed the lives of those who hid in fear, into people of power.  
Renew these hearts which have grown cold

with flames of fire, as on that Pentecost,  
that this might be the church that you desire.

**God of power,**  
**may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,**  
**may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,**  
**may the gifts of your Spirit be our goal and our strength,**  
**now and always. Amen.**

### **New Testament Reading: Acts 2 (The Message)**

#### **Reader 1:**

When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, "Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?"

Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; Visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene; Immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; Even Cretans and Arabs!

"They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!"

Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: "What's going on here?"

Others joked, "They're drunk on cheap wine."

#### **Reader 2:**

That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: "Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk—it's only nine o'clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen:

"In the Last Days," God says "I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people:

Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters;

Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams.

When the time comes, I'll pour out my Spirit

On those who serve me, men and women both, and they'll prophesy.  
I'll set wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below,  
Blood and fire and billowing smoke, the sun turning black and the moon blood-red,  
Before the Day of the Lord arrives, the Day tremendous and marvellous;  
And whoever calls out for help to me, God, will be saved."

"Fellow Israelites, listen carefully to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man thoroughly accredited by God to you—the miracles and wonders and signs that God did through him are common knowledge—this Jesus, following the deliberate and well-thought-out plan of God, was betrayed by men who took the law into their own hands, and was handed over to you. And you pinned him to a cross and killed him. But God untied the death ropes and raised him up. Death was no match for him.

"All Israel, then, know this: There's no longer room for doubt—God made him Master and Messiah, this Jesus whom you killed on a cross."

### **Reader 3:**

Cut to the quick, those who were there listening asked Peter and the other apostles,  
"Brothers! Brothers! So now what do we do?"

Peter said, "Change your life. Turn to God and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, so your sins are forgiven. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is targeted to you and your children, but also to all who are far away—whomever, in fact, our Master God invites."

He went on in this vein for a long time, urging them over and over, "Get out while you can; get out of this sick and stupid culture!"

That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.

### **Reflection**

Today's bible reading is the reminder of the start of the church - and it gives us some lovely imagery to try and understand what God's spirit is like, what it does and how it can transform us.

Like wind, the Holy Spirit is not necessarily seen, but you can see the effects of its force - like trees blowing, wind turbines turning or washing flapping dry on the line.

Like fire, the Holy Spirit brings heat and warmth to a situation, like the encouragement you feel when you sit down in front of a friend's fire with a cup of tea, the Holy Spirit can bring

energy and passion too, and just as fire can purify metals, the Holy Spirit can help us to see the truth and to focus on what is important, what is pure and strip away other distractions and impurities.

Both wind and fire can be unpredictable, and I would say the Holy Spirit is also unpredictable - or certainly not constrained by how we think God should act 'He's not a tame Lion' - was said of Aslan in CS Lewis's Narnia stories.

And the image of the disciples speaking in all the different languages of the known world at that time - what greater way was there to convey the global mission of the church, the need to reach every individual, no matter what language they spoke.

So that's some of what the Holy Spirit is like, how we can describe The Holy Spirit.

But I want to focus on **what the Holy Spirit does in each of us, in all of us together and in the world.**

**In each of us**, the Holy Spirit is the channelling of God through us - inspiration, confidence, emotion, empathy. Like a whistle. A whistle is just a whistle, however well it's made. It's made for a purpose. But without someone blowing through that whistle, it may as well be thrown away. It can't make a whistling sound by itself. That's like us. God has made us, God has made us for a purpose and throughout our lives he moulds and helps us to become the person we are meant to be. But without the Spirit, that moulding and shaping is useless. We need the strength and power that comes through the Spirit from God, we need the inspiration that comes from God's spirit. We can't be God's people on earth without God blowing through our lives, like wind, being the energy, like fire and giving us the confidence to reach out to others and show God's love to the world.

Peter and the other disciples, who a few weeks ago had been hiding in an upper room, with the door locked, were given the confidence, the words to say and the inspiration from the dramatic coming of the Holy Spirit in the passage we read. That's what the Holy Spirit did and that's what it still does.

**For all of us together**, the Holy Spirit is the glue that binds us together, that makes us the family of God, that marks us each out as being part of the 'tribe' - it's not an exclusive club - anyone can join, as we saw in the passage, when Peter urged people listening to repent of their sins, to turn to God and that day 3,000 people were added to their number. That's why, although we miss it, it doesn't matter that we can't physically meet together in our church buildings at the moment, because being the family of God, the church, is not about a place or a time, but it is about joining in with the Holy Spirit with those who have gone before us, and with others all over the world, and knowing that we have a common cause and are united in the

freedom that Christ's death on the cross brings. Knowing that we share the same hope of being co-heirs with Christ in heaven. God's spirit is with all of us and in all of us and that unites us.

And what does the Holy Spirit do **in the world around us**? That's a hard one to talk through, especially in the midst of a global pandemic, but the passage tries to describe what the Spirit does in the world using the words from Joel "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, they will prophesy, they will see wonders ..."

The Spirit weaves through the world abundantly - there is nothing half-hearted about things here - the wind is violent, not just a small breeze, the fire is like wildfire, not just a small candle flame, and the spirit is poured out - think of a tropical downpour, not Scottish drizzle. If you look for it, the actions of God, of God's spirit in the world, are everywhere. We talk about the spirit inspiring us and others - to work for the good of others - Steve and Catriona Bennett, missionary doctors who we support, would talk about their ability, passion, knowledge and clinical judgement being inspired by the Spirit. We have friends Matt and Donna who are great linguists. Again, they would talk of the Spirit being their inspiration and they use this to help with bible translation for the Raja people in India who have never read the bible in their own language. The Holy Spirit gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world.

## **Response**

As we think about what the Holy Spirit does in each of us, in all of us together and in the world, if you have a candle and matches, I'd invite you to light your candle and if possible, let others see it as well (but somewhere safe, where it won't set your computer on fire!).

And as we light our candles, let's pause to think about our experience of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Lord God,

When was the last time that we heard the wind of your Spirit roar through our homes?

When was the last time your fire lit up our rooms?

When was the last time we took you at your word

and met together in expectation of your Spirit filling our lives with your Glory and Power?

Lord, you challenge us with Pentecost.

Do we believe that this was a once in eternity experience, never to be repeated?

That the Holy Spirit was poured out on your followers for a single purpose?

That the Church today seems powerless when faced with the needs of the world?

No Lord, as we meet together, and celebrate once again the memory of that first Pentecost, we know that you can work in our lives, in our homes and in the world today.

We light these candles as a symbol of empowerment, as the Spirit was for the first disciples.  
We light these candles as a reminder of your *Glory* in this dark world; and  
We light these candles to show that when we meet with you, it is a life changing experience.

**Amen**

### **Song: Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God**

Holy Spirit, living Breath of God,  
Breathe new life into my willing soul.  
Bring the presence of the risen Lord  
To renew my heart and make me whole.  
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;  
Give me faith for what I cannot see;  
Give me passion for Your purity.  
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within;  
May Your joy be seen in all I do—  
Love enough to cover ev'ry sin  
In each thought and deed and attitude,  
Kindness to the greatest and the least,  
Gentleness that sows the path of peace.  
Turn my striving into works of grace.  
Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,  
Giving life to all that God has made,  
Show Your power once again on earth;  
Cause Your church to hunger for Your ways.  
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise.  
Lead us on the road of sacrifice  
That in unity the face of Christ  
Will be clear for all the world to see.

### **Intercessions (Eileen)**



Let us pause for a moment and picture the globe. Our troubles here in Peebles, in Scotland and in the UK are shared throughout the world and so, as we pray today, please keep that in mind.

Lord God, be with us in our collective lament and loss as we bring to you the world we thought we knew. We pray for people who have lost businesses, who have lost connections with others, who have lost health, who have lost the safety they once had, who have lost their sense of security or who are just afraid of any loss. Help them to see that you can make all things new.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, be with us in our collective grief for those whose lives have been shattered by bereavement for whatever reason but especially by the devastating worldwide effects of Covid 19. Shine on all who are in the darkness of suffering that in your light they may receive hope and courage.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, be with us in our collective thanksgiving: for phones and computers; new ways of work, business and shopping; and for the hard work and courage of medical and care staff. We give thanks for all who have rallied round to produce protective equipment, and we pray now for all scientists and medical researchers tracking and tracing the effects of the virus worldwide, and working at speed to produce vaccines. We ask that with knowledge will go wisdom to use that knowledge in right ways.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, we lament, we grieve and we give thanks all at the same time. In you may we find our peace knowing that in a changing world you are the same, yesterday, today and for ever.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Do not bring us to the time of trial but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever. Amen.**

**Peace:**

On the first Easter evening, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the LORD. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20: 19-23)

**We are the body of Christ  
In the one spirit we were all baptised into one family.**

**The peace of the Lord be always with us. Amen.**

The Holy Spirit in each of us is God's presence in our lives and without it we cannot be all that God has made us to be - think of the whistle and its uselessness without breath blown through it; For all of us together, the Holy Spirit is the glue that binds us together as the family of God, and the Holy Spirit is present in the world - weaving it's inspiration and life through everything, across the globe, for the glory of God and to show God's love.

**Song: God has spoken by his prophets (MP 831)**

God has spoken by his prophets,  
spoken his unchanging Word;  
each from age to age proclaiming  
God the one, the righteous Lord!  
In the world's despair and turmoil  
one firm anchor still holds fast,  
God is on his throne eternal,  
he alone the first and last.

God has spoken by Christ Jesus,  
Christ the everlasting Son,  
brightness of the Father's glory,  
with the Father, ever one:  
spoken by the Word incarnate,  
God, before all time began,  
light of light, to Earth descending,  
Man, revealing God to man.

God is speaking by his Spirit  
speaking to the hearts of men;  
in the age-long Word declaring  
God's own message, now as then.  
Through the rise and fall of nations  
one sure faith is standing fast:  
God abides, his Word unchanging,  
God the first and God the last.

**Ending prayer:**

Go, and know that the Spirit of God is with you.  
Let God lead you each day  
into the quiet place of your heart,  
where he will speak with you.  
Know that He loves you and watches over you -  
that he listens in gentle understanding,  
that he is always with you,

wherever you are and however you may feel.

And the blessing of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - be yours for ever. **Amen.**