

Sunday Update
31st May 2020

Acts 2:1-13

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 them 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 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.'

Today is the Day of Pentecost. This is the day when we remember that God poured out His spirit on the disciples in Jerusalem, fifty days after Easter and ten days after Jesus ascended back to heaven. Luke tries, in the book of Acts, to describe something that is beyond words; he uses pictures that we know to describe something we can't see and so find hard to understand. The disciples were all together, perhaps about 120 of them in total and perhaps in the temple, when something happened that sounded like the wind blowing and that looked like fire coming to rest on these people. Luke tells us that this was the coming of the Spirit of God on the disciples and we have celebrated the Day of Pentecost ever since as the day the church was born.

There are a few themes here that it is good to see:

First of all, God keeps a promise. God says *"I will pour out my Spirit"* (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28ff) Jesus has promised that after He went away, He would send His spirit to live in the disciples. The coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is the keeping of a promise (or a set of promises) that starts in the Old Testament and ends just before Easter when Jesus talked with His friends before He died. Pentecost is the keeping of a promise and when Peter begins his sermon in Acts 2:14, he quotes Joel and says to the crowd "what you see is that promise come true!" Jesus promises to be with his friends always and everywhere; here is that promise coming true.

God gives the disciples strength and power. What were the disciples like when we saw them last? They were afraid, living behind locked doors; they were confused, going fishing because they didn't know what else to do; they were trying to understand what had happened to Jesus. What is Peter like now? He stands up in Jerusalem, in front of a huge crowd of people and tells people what God has done. Before He left, Jesus told them to *"stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high"* (Luke 24:49) and they have stayed. On the Day of Pentecost, that power came; they were clothed with power from God and Peter had the courage to tell people *"the wonders of God!"*

The disciples have a new mission. As He leaves, Jesus tells them what they will do. *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8) They will be witnesses – they will tell people what they know about Jesus, what they believe, what they have seen and heard. That verse in Acts

becomes the story of the whole book of Acts and the story spreads wider and wider through the world. The story begins in Jerusalem and Peter tells people what he believes, what he has seen and heard, what God has done through Jesus. He has the courage to tell that story in public and many people believed his witness testimony and became Christians that day.

All three of these themes are still true for us:

- Jesus keeps His promises: *"I will not leave you helpless; I will come to you" "I am with you always"* (John 14:18; Matthew 28:20) Because God gives His spirit to live in us and with us, Jesus' promises still stand true and He is with us always and everywhere, in all the circumstances of our lives.
- God gives us strength and power and equips us for life. This is an "inside" quality; this is about courage and resilience, about hope and trust, about love and grace. God gives us these qualities so that we can live our lives well and these qualities are the fruit of the Spirit's influence on our lives.
- The Church has a mission. Our mission is to tell people about Jesus. We go to work with "two hands": the "first hand" is telling people what we believe and what we have heard and using words when the opportunity comes along; the "second hand" is our love for others, caring and helping, showing people what Jesus is like. We need to use both "hands"; one without the other is not quite enough!

God promises *"I will pour out water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants."* (Isaiah 44:3) Let it be our Pentecost prayer that God will fill us afresh with His Spirit. Pray that your faith becomes fresh again; pray that you have strength and courage to face all that is difficult; pray that you have opportunities to tell people about Jesus and the wisdom to know what to say; pray that you will be patient and kind and forgiving to the people you meet. This is the way the Spirit works in us, unseen yet inspiring us to follow Jesus more closely.

Prayer:

Thank you for Pentecost, for the gift of Your Spirit given to Your Church. Thank you that You keep your promises, this among them; thank you for strength and power to live life by faith; thank you for the challenge to tell others the wonders of God in Jesus. Lord, help us; fill us afresh with Your Spirit so that we may be able to follow Jesus well.

Day by day, dear Lord of you

Three things I pray:

To see you more clearly,

To love you more dearly,

To follow you more nearly,

Day by day.

Pray for:

- People who are weak and vulnerable today, those who mourn, those who are sick, those who are isolated and lonely; those in hospital and families who can't visit; pray for people you know by name.
- NHS staff, care home staff, those caring in the community – God keep them safe.
- People whose hearts and minds are feeling "shut-in", for whom the physical lockdown is affecting their mental health and sense of well-being and freedom. For victims of domestic violence, with nowhere to escape to.

- Children and young people at home, missing friends from school, missing exams and anxious about results and the future. Parents working, schooling children, trying to care for other family members.
- Those who are furloughed from work and those who have lost their jobs and have no prospect of a new job soon pray for a sense of purpose when they are away from paid employment.
- Our community, caring for vulnerable people, helping those in need, for resilience and strength.
- Our political leaders, trying to make difficult decisions in the right way.
- Other parts of the world, suffering as we are, in the same situation and with the same needs. The people of Bangladesh wrestling with the aftermath of last week's superstorm.
- For one another, sustaining our faith when there is nothing of the outward life of the church. For Martin Fair, the new Moderator of the General Assembly as he finds his feet in this new role in leadership of the Church.

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love; go and have a listen.

In Christ alone	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16KYvflc2bE
Fear not rejoice and be glad	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvjB1yVJDX0
Breathe on me breath of God	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmkzSjs9eAw
Spirit of God, unseen as the wind	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy8AZ46GKqc
I heard the voice of Jesus say	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUVCpF8-VuE

Heather's A-Z of videos: the latest is

Favourite Bible passage:

Martin's video post based on his favourite Bible reading set me thinking: in 2011 we asked people to choose their favourite Bible passage, then to read it in our Sunday service and say why they had picked it; many of you took part. I'd love to do that again for 2020: pick your favourite Bible passage, then video yourself reading it and in a sentence explain why you picked it. E-mail the video to me and we'll collect them on the Youtube channel or the church website. Give it a go!

Pentecost Service:

There will be a Church of Scotland-wide service for Pentecost, conducted by the Moderator of the General Assembly, Martin Fair. It will be available on the Church of Scotland website (www.churchofscotland.org.uk) and on the Church of Scotland Facebook page; you can watch it live from 10am this morning or you can catch it later. It will last for 30 minutes.

Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the "sermons" tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – www.jgpc.org.uk
- If you have a smartphone, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#

- There will be a service on BBC1 at some time on Sunday morning.

Opportunities to give:

There are a few groups to which to draw your attention in May:

The Foodbanks are still needing donations; if you can't get there to donate food as you would normally do, you can donate money online; for example the Trussel Trust website has this page: <https://www.trusseltrust.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/>

Fresh Start is trying to make packs available to people who are homeless and making new beginnings; we can't donate items at the moment because their offices are shut, but again they have an online page for cash donations: <https://www.freshstartweb.org.uk/donate>

May is the month when Christian Aid week normally happens, but the envelope collection is lost to us. Again, there is an online place where you can donate to Christian Aid: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/emergencies/coronavirus-emergency-appeal>

Even though the Church building is shut and our activities are halted, the congregation still has bills to pay; many of you give by Standing Order which is great, giving us a reliable income stream. If you are able, it would be good if you would increase that standing order by even just a little to help us overcome the temporary loss of other income on which we usually depend. If you want to know more, speak with Douglas Buchanan.



Pentecost

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and have fun spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Pray

God of life!

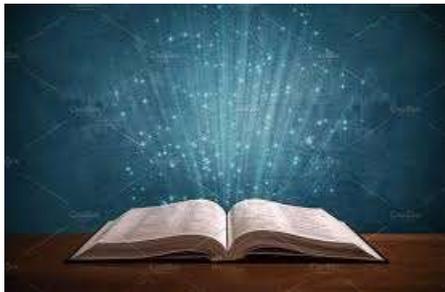
As Jesus promised,
you sent your Spirit to enrich our
lives.

As we come to worship you today
pour out your Spirit on us,
that we may give you all we have:
receive our worship, we pray.



Question...

Think about one person you know – it could be someone in your family, or a friend. In what ways are you the same as them? In what ways are you different from each other?



Read the Bible...

Here's a few options you could choose from:

- Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuUK6REOWuE>
- Read the story in Acts 2:1-21
- Look at the pictures and read the story here:
<http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/pentecost/>

Think together...

What does it feel like to wait for a gift? Jesus had promised his disciples he would send them a gift, something that would help them to tell others about God and to help them live God's way, but they had to wait for it. They didn't know when it would come but they were probably all surprised by what happened when it did! When we choose to follow Jesus we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit too, it can help us to be bold in telling others about God and helps us to live God's way.

Talk together...

- What is the Holy Spirit?
- What do you think it felt like to be in the room when the Holy Spirit came?
- What did it help the disciples to do? What does it help us to do?
- Look at the picture below, what does it make you think about?
- What do you think this story can teach us about God?



Praise together...

This is a fun song that reminds us we can make a difference when we have God's help:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwLxrVLQgxA&list=PLMoyWLMawFN4UMAPOmVaLciC1fgguZ8bF&index=11&t=0s>

Learn together...

Choose a phrase such as God is amazing or Praise the Lord. Look up how to say the phrase in different languages and practise saying them together. How many can you learn and remember?



Make something...

Here's some ideas for you to choose from:

- Make a windsock! You'll need: cardboard tube or card rolled into a tube; strips of paper, ribbon or plastic bag, glue or stapler; a piece of string or thin strip of paper. Attach your strips to one end of the cardboard tube so they hang down. On the other end attach the string/paper to create a hanging loop. Hang it up outside somewhere and watch what happens when the wind blows!
- Pentecost cakes! You'll need: fairy cakes, icing, food colouring (red/yellow/orange), sprinkles, candle. Make flame coloured icing then decorate your cakes with the icing and sprinkles. Add a candle. Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian church so today we celebrate and thank God for his gift to us.
- Paint blowing pictures! You'll need: watered down paint, paper, straws, teaspoon. Create a pattern on your paper by dropping small amounts of paint onto it and then blowing it with the straw. Just as each pattern is different, the Holy Spirit's work looks different in each of our lives, but as Jesus' followers we each have this gift inside us.
- Popcorn reflection! You'll need popcorn (kernels/ready made/microwave bags) Think about a popcorn kernel, it's small and not much use, but it can be transformed into something very different! (Now's the time to pop the popcorn if not using ready made!) Once popped it's very different and is something much better. That's just like how the Holy Spirit transforms us, it's God's spirit working in us!