

Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch Parish Church

Sunday 31st May 2020 Pentecost

To be able to access the links, go to the bottom of this page and left click on the date. This will download the pdf in a new window, then simply click on the links as indicated.

Welcome

Today is Pentecost Sunday. It is the day the worldwide Church celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Call to Worship: Psalm 104: 1-2, 33-34

*I praise you, LORD God, with all my heart.
You are glorious and majestic,
dressed in royal robes and surrounded by light.*

*As long as I live,
I will sing and praise you, the LORD God.
I hope my thoughts will please you,
because you are the one who makes me glad.*

Song: [Glory to God in the highest](#) *Click on the link*



Prayer of Praise, Confession, Assurance of Forgiveness and Lord's Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you praise and thanksgiving for all you have given us. As you created this world your Holy Spirit hovered over the waters and you brought order from chaos. Your creative Spirit remains visible within our everyday lives; through the colours and sounds of nature, the rhythm of the changing seasons, of day and night, sunrise and sunset, tide and wind, rain and shine.



Your Spirit, empowered the prophets of old, ordinary people called to live extraordinary lives. Your Spirit was so visible through the life of your Son, at the moment of conception to his death and glorious resurrection. Your Spirit is Jesus' gift to the world.

Father, you have called us to be your witnesses here and to the ends of the earth, yet we so often fail you. Forgive us when we have not loved you with all our heart soul mind and strength. Forgive us when we have failed to be Christ-like to others, refusing to help people in need, to carry their burdens and walk the journey of life alongside them. Forgive us when we choose safe and comfortable paths in place of the sometimes risky, even dangerous, routes of service and mission to which the Spirit directs us. Forgive us when we refuse to acknowledge your Spirit's action within us and in others. Forgive us when we stunt the growth of the fruit of the

Spirit in our lives. Forgive us when we block the Spirit's constant promptings to share the good news of Jesus with others.

We thank you, heavenly Father, that through faith in your Son, Jesus Christ, our sin is forgiven and that he died and rose again for us. We thank you that he ascended to sit at your right hand and reign in glory. We thank you that he sent the Holy Spirit to live within us that our faith might be enriched, our lives empowered, our witness emboldened.

In Jesus name we pray the great family prayer of the church;

Our Father, in heaven, holy is your name. Your Kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sin as we forgive those who sin against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom the power and the glory for ever. Amen

(Prayer adapted from John C Birch, © 2016 and Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison Church of Scotland)

A Prayer for this time of Coronavirus

Father God, we pray that you would protect those in our world who are most vulnerable to the Coronavirus. We lift up the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions and those without access to good medical care. We pray they would know your peace, comfort and protection. Father, would you bring healing to those who are already sick. Lord God, we pray particularly for countries that have fewer resources and less infrastructure to respond well to the Coronavirus. Lord God, in your might and power would you stop the virus from spreading in some of the most vulnerable communities in our world. Give governments great wisdom as they put in preventative measures.



Father God, we pray for great wisdom for our government and health advisers. Lord God, please guide their decisions and help them to communicate plans clearly. We pray they would make decisions which would quickly and effectively stop the spread of the Coronavirus. Sustain our leaders and grant them energy during a time where they will be working long hours under great stress and strain.

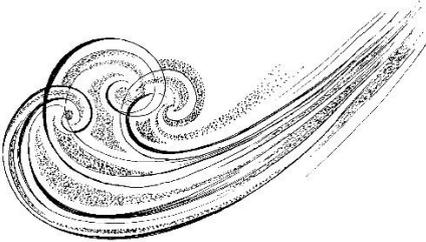
Father God, we pray for health workers around the world. We give thanks for the incredible NHS staff here in the UK. Lord, sustain and protect them during these times. Grant our health professionals great wisdom as they make medical decisions, and give them energy and resilience as they work long hours. We also ask for your blessing over medical researchers who are searching for a vaccine for the Coronavirus. Give them your wisdom and insight. Speed their work and make it effective in protecting lives. God, we thank you that your perfect love casts out all fear. We lift up those in our communities and further afield who are feeling gripped by fear during these times.

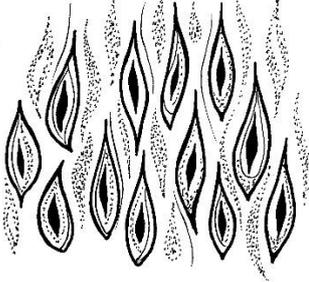
We pray where there is fear, your peace would reign. Amen.

(From Compassion UK <https://www.compassionuk.org/prayers/coronavirus/>)

The Holy Spirit

Today is Pentecost Sunday, the annual remembrance and celebration of the Holy Spirit being poured out on the Church. Traditionally the church has used three symbols of the Holy Spirit, each one tells us something of his nature.

<p style="text-align: center;">Wind or Breath</p> 	<p>The Greek word for 'spirit', 'wind', and 'breath' is <i>pneuma</i>. When we read the New Testament we can translate the Greek in either of these three ways. In our New Testament reading today we will read how at Pentecost, "suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house" (Acts 2:2) where the disciples had gathered.</p> <p>However, we also meet the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. Significantly, we find the Holy Spirit right at the beginning of creation. Genesis 1:1 speaks of "the Spirit of God hovering over the waters". In Genesis 2 we read of God creating human beings breathing "the breath of life" into the nostrils of Adam.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit gives life. Mary became pregnant with Jesus because the Holy Spirit came up on her (Luke 1:35).</p> <p>We mostly associate the Holy Spirit breathing the new life of Christ into us. Jesus speaks to Nicodemus about being born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:1-21). Jesus also said, "It is the Spirit who gives life" (John 6:63).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Dove</p> 	<p>We use the dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit because, at his baptism, the Spirit descended upon Jesus "like a dove" (Mark 1:10). The dove is also used as a symbol of peace.</p> <p>Noah sent out a dove from the Ark to see if there was any dry land. The dove returned with olive twig in its beak, signifying that it had found dry land somewhere. This brought relief to Noah and his family. The dove represented God's presence with Noah and all creation in the Ark. The dove was a symbol of God's care and protection as well as marking the end of the flood, storm and chaos.</p>

	<p>Consequently, the dove is considered a symbol of peace and intimately connected with the Prince of Peace through his baptism.</p> <p>Peace is one element of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The presence of the Spirit living within us brings us inner peace that is beyond our understanding.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fire</p> 	<p>The third image we use for the Holy Spirit, like wind, is seen in our New Testament reading today – fire.</p> <p>Fire is a significant symbol in the Bible used as metaphor for cleansing people like a refining fire for gold or silver, burning away the rubbish to leave us pure. (See Zechariah 13:9, Isaiah 48:10, Malachi 3:3.)</p> <p>We also associate fire with passion. We are called to be passionate, about the Gospel. Paul wrote to Timothy about Timothy’s faith nurtured by his mother and grandmother; “I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you.... For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. (1 Timothy 1: 6-8)</p> <p>The fire at Pentecost, as we shall read later, came as tongues of fire. The tongues may have a particular significance since it is by speaking that the Gospel was proclaimed by the Apostles. We are called to be witnesses to the work of the Holy Spirit with us. Words are important in mission and in expressing our love of God. Let’s do both with passionate love for the one who loves us passionately.</p>

Song: [Spirit of God unseen as the wind](#) *Click on the link*

Bible Passages : Pentecost

What comes to your mind when you hear the word ‘Pentecost’?

Do you think of Pentecost as a harvest thanksgiving festival?

The Day of Pentecost is the Christian festival of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. It is sometimes referred to as the birthday of the church for it was when the

church, God's faithful people, were empowered by the spirit to continue the earthly mission and ministry of Jesus, just as he had commanded them to do.

However, Pentecost was a Hebrew harvest thanksgiving festival. It was the day they celebrated the first fruits of the harvest. The Christian Pentecost is similarly a celebration of first fruits, the first fruits of the Spirit working within and through the apostles.

Leviticus 23: 9-22 (CEV)

⁹The LORD told Moses ¹⁰to say to the community of Israel:

After you enter the land I am giving you, the first bundle of wheat from each crop must be given to me. So bring it to a priest ¹¹on the day after the Sabbath. He will lift it up in dedication to me, and I will accept you. ¹²You must also offer a sacrifice to please me. So bring the priest a one-year-old lamb that has nothing wrong with it ¹³and four pounds of your finest flour mixed with olive oil. Then he will place these on the bronze altar and send them up in smoke with a smell that pleases me. Together with these, you must bring a quart of wine as a drink offering. ¹⁴I am your God, and I forbid you to eat any new grain or anything made from it until you have brought these offerings. This law will never change.

¹⁵Seven weeks after you offer this bundle of grain, each family must bring another offering of new grain. ¹⁶Do this exactly fifty days later, which is the day following the seventh Sabbath. ¹⁷Bring two loaves of bread to be lifted up in dedication to me. Each loaf is to be made with yeast and with four pounds of the finest flour from the first part of your harvest.

¹⁸At this same time, the entire community of Israel must bring seven lambs that are a year old, a young bull, and two rams. These animals must have nothing wrong with them, and they must be offered as a sacrifice to please me. You must also offer the proper grain and wine sacrifices with each animal.

Contd/

¹⁹ Offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin, and two rams a year old as a sacrifice to ask my blessing. ²⁰ The priest will lift up the rams together with the bread in dedication to me. These offerings are holy and are my gift to the priest. ²¹ This is a day of celebration and worship, a time of rest from your work. You and your descendants must obey this law.

²² When you harvest your grain, always leave some of it standing around the edges of your fields and don't pick up what falls on the ground. Leave it for the poor and for those foreigners who live among you. I am the Lord your God!

Our second reading tells of that great day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles.

Acts 2: 1-13

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and 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, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

Song: [Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me](#) *Click on the link*

Pentecost

It's an odd word, 'Pentecost'. It's Greek. We know a pentagon has 5 sides, so 'Pentecost' simply means '50'. We are 50 days from Easter Day.

The festival we read about in Leviticus was a festival of thanksgiving for the first fruits of the harvest. It was to help the Hebrew people recall the very first harvest they reaped once settled in the Promised Land of Canaan, the land God had brought them to following their exodus from bondage in Egypt. It was known as the Feast of Weeks because it was held seven weeks after the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, a festival that remembered and celebrated the Passover and the Hebrew escape from bondage in Egypt under Moses leadership.

So, what has it to do with Pentecost or 50, and what's it to do with the coming of the Holy Spirit?

During the Feast of Unleavened Bread the Israelites were to give the first sheaf of grain harvested as a first fruits offering to the Lord. This was done on the Sabbath. Then, starting with the day after Sabbath they counted seven weeks. Seven weeks of seven days is 49 days, plus the Sabbath makes 50 days. The Feast was celebrated using bread, made from the first of the harvested produce. They waved two loaves before God, symbolising their dependence on him.

However, by the time Luke was writing Acts, the Feast of Weeks had become less associated with agriculture and more a celebration of freedom, and Moses receiving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

Now we can see two important facets of the Christian Pentecost. Firstly, God's outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples happened while the Jewish Priests were waving the two loaves before God. They were thanking God for the bread that kept them alive! But today Christians give thanks to God for the life force that lives within – the Holy Spirit. As the Nicene creed puts it; "we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of life who proceeds from the Father and the Son".

Secondly, the Jews were still celebrating receiving the Old Covenant, written in stone on Mt Sinai, whilst God was inaugurating the New Covenant, written in the blood of Christ on Good Friday, by pouring out the Holy Spirit on his Church.

You may recall that when Moses was receiving the Law on Mt Sinai the Hebrew nation were frustrated with the time he was away from their camp and so they crafted a golden calf of their own to worship. We read in Exodus 32 that due to their disobedience about 3,000 people were slaughtered. Now, if we'd read on in Acts we find that when the disciples had finished speaking around 3,000 were added to their number (Acts 2:41). Just as Pentecost was originally a harvest festival of first fruits, so now, for the Christian Church, Pentecost, too, is a harvest festival; but this time it is an abundant harvest of souls.

So what does it all mean for us today?

Pentecost means that Jesus has kept his promise to send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is with us and lives within us. As Paul wrote to Timothy in his second letter; "let the faith and love of Christ Jesus be your model. You have been trusted with a wonderful treasure. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit, who lives within you." (2 Timothy 1:13-14).

Pentecost is a call to mission. As we have seen over the Easter season, each of Jesus' resurrection appearances were a call and encouragement to mission, a call for us to be witnesses to God working in our lives, a call to take the Good News of Jesus to the world. Pentecost is another call to the mission of the Kingdom and it reassures us that because of the Holy Spirit living within us we have the power and the gifts to be bold and make Christ known in the world.

Pentecost means that our hearts and minds are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, who lives within us. This is what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth; "wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.... And the Lord, who is the Spirit, makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image." (2 Corinthians 3:17-18) With our transformation we are given power and courage, and we are equipped to do the work of mission and ministry. The apostles give us the evidence that this is true. On the evening of Easter Day they had been gathered together in an upper room hiding from the Jewish authorities. But then, filled with the Holy Spirit, these once ignorant fishermen were able to stand up in public and proclaim the good news of Jesus. It's amazing what the Holy Spirit can do.

The Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in many different languages so that thousands were won over to Christ. This act of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost underlines the multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-national nature of Christ's kingdom.

Filled with the Spirit, the apostles went on to build the church, or more correctly the Holy Spirit went on to build the church using the apostles. They were compelled to announce the Gospel of Christ to the world—it couldn't be kept under wraps any longer, they found reserves of courage they never knew they had, went to the ends of the earth, and faced all kinds of dangers, despite having been a timid little group huddled together in an upper room just seven weeks before.

In the same way, as disciples of Jesus, we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives us power and transforms us into something beautiful for God. Just see what he did for St Paul! He was transformed from a persecutor of Christians into one of Christ's greatest missionaries. We must not quench the fire of the Spirit within us.

The purpose of our mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus. God's purpose in pouring out His Spirit is not to amaze us with wind and fire or an ability to speak foreign languages; God's purpose is to save his fallen people, to forgive sin and give us life. As the prophet Joel records the words of God, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people... and everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved!" (Joel 2:28 & 34)

Mission is not always going to be easy, even the disciples had fun poked at them. "They must be drunk!" people said. But they weren't, they were simply revealing the first fruits of the of the harvest. As Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So, as a conclusion to these thoughts, click on the link and listen to the song.

Song: [Field of Souls](#) *Click on the link*

Prayers of the People for the People



Paul writes to the Romans that, “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. 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. So, come to God in prayer recognising that our words feel so inadequate but with confidence that the Spirit knows our hearts and intercedes for us. Let us pray...

Loving God, as the disciples gathered to celebrate and pray on Pentecost, we also unite in prayer for situations and people in your good world.

Eternal God, as we work tirelessly to protect one another from disease and death from a virus, we are saddened that this morning so many people wake to find themselves in places of war and conflict. Thank you for people and organisations who work tirelessly for peace and those who risk their lives for others’ safety. Pour out your blessing and comfort on all who live daily with death and destruction, fear and terror. May those who have run from death find welcome and acceptance in foreign lands, and places of safety and stability to raise families. Our out your healing Spirit upon all injured in body or mind and heal the wounds with forgiveness, tolerance, and love. May communities that have been ripped apart, where futures seem hopeless, know the peace of your Spirit and the hope that you bring.

We pray for families, thanking you for homes filled with loving relationships and for the love and support we receive from one another. We ask your blessing and peace on all who have woken today who have no family, or no home, and on those whose family relationships are broken and for people who feel lost and alone. May they know the love of your Spirit and the hope that you bring.

We pray for those who have woken this morning suffering with mental and physical illnesses. Thank you, Father, for people who care, support and listen. We thank you for our relatively easy of access to medical care and medicines knowing this is not the case for everyone. We bring before you all those for whom gaining the medical care they need is a struggle. Father, we also bring to you care those who have been awake all night, troubled by fear, guilt, an unknown future; those struggling with debt, abuse, exploitation, unemployment, or whatever unhidden burden they carry. May they know the love of your Spirit and the hope that you bring.

We pray for the 1.3million people displaced in Kenya and Somalia due to recent flooding. Bless and guide the authorities and charitable organisations that are supporting these people. May they know the love of your Spirit and the hope that you bring.

We pray too for those who are grieving the loss of loved ones, grant them your comfort and healing.

May your Spirit blow like healing breeze into the lives of the sick, the troubled and the dying, bringing your eternal love and hope.

We pray in the name of Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Benediction and Blessing

God poured out his Holy Spirit in tongues of flame at Pentecost. May that same Holy Spirit send us out to tell his story and give us a voice to glorify God before all people.

[Blessing](#) **click on the link**

One of the consequences of us not being able to worship together is that the church anticipates a fall in income. However, we will continue to incur costs, of insurance etc. There will be little financial saving to our not meeting, yet revenues could be severely hit. Please prayerfully reflect on this and, if you are able, continue to put aside your financial offering so that you can make your contribution for the work of the church when we next meet together. Thank you.

Thank you too if you already give by standing order or by bank transfer, that is much appreciated.