

Pentecost Sunday 2020

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4a)

Hymn 372 [Come down, O Love divine](#)

Come down, O Love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing ;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

Prayers:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in us the fire of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sins to God.
(silence)

Gracious and Holy God, we confess that we have sinned against you and against our neighbour. Your Spirit gives light, but we have preferred darkness; your Spirit gives wisdom, but we have been foolish; your Spirit gives power, but we have trusted in our own strength. For the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, forgive our sins, and enable us by your Spirit to serve you in joyful obedience, to the glory of your Name. **Amen.**

There is now no condemnation, for those who live in union with Christ Jesus; for the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

Hymn 564 [O thou who camest from above](#)

O thou who camest from above
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart!

[Joel 2.21-32](#)

[Acts 2.14-21](#) [22-38]

Sermon - Yours sons and your daughters shall prophesy

(by Rev Dr Wendy Kilworth-Mason, Acting Superintendent)

Do you remember a time when the notice boards outside our churches would often display not only the name of the next Sunday's preacher but also the title of their sermon? Often the title would be similar to that offered in the lectionary that was published in our Service Book and would be rather humdrum. Sometimes the intended title would catch my eye because it had an element of challenge, but I find myself pondering as to whether these theological catchphrases actually conveyed anything of value to the unconverted (they were so full of church-y vocabulary). I know that recently, during the lockdown, some churches have discussed whether to put up an Easter cross, or even to update the posters. Maybe the most striking message for today would be— Foodbank Open (because we care about the vulnerable).

Back in a different time, I was serving overseas when the (current) Revised Common Lectionary was being introduced. Soon the Preachers complained that they were no longer being advised as to which was the 'controlling lesson' and there was no title to guide their thinking, so, as a new member of staff at the Theological College, I was tasked to provide a title and suggest a controlling lesson. I can remember that for Pentecost Sunday I suggested the title: that which I have chosen for this sermon, with the controlling lesson being that from Joel. I did this because I wanted to challenge preachers to look beyond the Acts account of the Pentecost event and explore the underlying potentially revolutionary impact of Joel's prophecy. (However, when the guide to the lectionary was published the Acts reading was designated as the controlling lesson

and the title was a bland one. Why do we persist in trying to take the challenge out of Christianity?)

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy

The Spirit is God's gift, the Spirit is not a gentle comforter: it's a breath or wind, that blows where it will, it is a powerful storm wind that's beyond human control. It can't be domesticated. It's the same breath or wind that blew over the waters of chaos: God's all-powerful creative and creating force.

The Spirit comes as a gift to recipients who would not expect to receive it. Remember how, in the Old Testament, God often chooses to favour those who are of lesser rank or significance: for example, younger sons like Jacob, Joseph and David. Joel goes beyond offering hope to noteworthy younger sons, he says to the people, "your sons and your daughters will prophesy, the old will have dreams and the young will see visions." In other words, the Spirit will be poured out on all flesh, irrespective of gender or age.

After this amazing outpouring there will be signs and portents. The Day of the Lord will come, a great and terrible day. (Remember, the Spirit is no gentle agent.) Only those who truly call on the Lord will be saved. In Acts 2 it's to this prophecy that Peter refers as he preaches to the crowd that has gathered on the Day of Pentecost, he proclaims that Joel's prophecy has been fulfilled. That is to say that at Pentecost God's revolution began.

A world turned upside down

Today, on Pentecost Sunday, we can seek the presence of the Spirit, if we dare. Are we waiting for the Day of the Lord?

In this interim period, (when we're bombarded by news updates and government briefings) but struggle to identify true prophets, do we accept that God's Spirit speaks to and inspires the forgotten and the insignificant? Are our sons and daughters recipients of the Spirit?

Do we live in a culture where the younger generation are truly encouraged to speak out and share their vision of how God sees the future? My observation would be that even in churches where there is a considerable commitment to youth work it is seldom the case that youth are encouraged to have a significant say in the life of the Church. Their place is not to lead but to learn!

What has happened to the dreams of the old and the visions of the young? I wonder, what our churches would be like if we truly looked to the youth to lead us? Would there be a more positive, outward looking and visionary understanding of the nature of Church?

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy! Amen.

Hymn 394 [Spirit of God, unseen as the wind](#)

Spirit of God, unseen as the wind, gentle as is the dove,
teach us the truth and help us believe, show us the Saviour's love.

Let us pray: Come, Holy Spirit

Ever living and ever-loving God,
We praise you for your loving presence with us.

Come, Holy Spirit,

take and transform our societies—
that broken people find healing; that lonely people find love;
that bitter people find peace; that fearful people find hope.

Come, Holy Spirit,

take our world's leaders and governments and bring renewal—
that communication can be open;
that relationships between hostile people and hostile nations will evaporate; that a hunger for justice addresses the hunger for food felt by so many.

Come, Holy Spirit,

fill your church—that our worship will be ever more pleasing to you;

that prayers will change our minds instead of trying to get you to change yours; that our lives will make a real difference to real people in the real world.

Come, Holy Spirit,

fill our lives with your presence—so that more and more every day,
all that we do and say and hope will be an act of worship to you and an expression of love to others, to the glory of your name. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 397 [The Spirit lives to set us free](#)

The Spirit lives to set us free, walk, walk in the light;
he binds us all in unity, walk, walk in the light.

Blessing

May God's breath stream within you.
May God's breath renew you.
May God's breath invigorate you.
Walk with confidence into this day. **Amen.**

A Pentecost Reflection:

*To live with the Spirit of God is to be a listener.
It is to keep the vigil of mystery, earthless and still.
One leans to catch the stirring of the Spirit,
strange as the wind's will.
The soul that walks where the wind of the Spirit blows
turns like a wandering weather-vane toward love.
It may lament like Job or Jeremiah,
echo the wounded hart, the mateless dove.
It may rejoice in spaciousness of meadow
that emulates the freedom of the sky.
Always it walks in waylessness, unknowing;
it has cast down forever from its hand
the compass of the whither and the why.
To live with the Spirit of God is to be a lover.
It is becoming love, and like to Him
toward Whom we strain with metaphors of creatures:
fire-sweep and water-rush and the wind's whim.
The soul is all activity, all silence;
and though it surges Godward to its goal,
it holds, as moving earth holds sleeping noonday,
the peace that is the listening of the soul.*

(Sis Jessica Powers 1905-1988, Carmelite Nun)

