

Sunday 'Spiritual Communion' on the Day of Pentecost

*You may wish to find a space for prayer in front of a cross, a candle, or a special place. The words in **bold** you are encouraged to say out loud as worship and prayer.*

Opening Prayer

The Church of which we are members is not defined by the walls of a building but by the Body of Christ of which we are members. And today we recall the birth of that Church at Pentecost!

We are joining with Christians everywhere, and indeed throughout Time to be nourished by the One who tells us, 'I am the Bread of Life'.

Opening Sentences Reminding us where we are on Our Christian Journey

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, on this the fiftieth day of Easter, God sends his Holy Spirit to empower the Church to perform the mission which the risen Christ has entrusted to it. Pentecost celebrates both the Holy Spirit and the Christian Church. It is the crown and completion of the Easter season.



Jesus Christ is our crucified, risen and ascended Lord. We have celebrated His return to the throne before which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that this Jesus is Lord. And now, with the followers of his own time, we await the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, his gift to his people, through whom we make Christ known to the world.

Blessed are you, Lord God. Daily your Spirit renews the face of the earth, bringing strength out of weakness, hope out of despair and life out of death. By the power of your Spirit, may your blessing rest upon the Church of God and et this day be for us a sign of your acceptance and adoption, your equipping and empowering.

Prayers of Preparation and Confession

Almighty God to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen

At Pentecost we pray especially for personal renewal and the renewal of God's people. Let us pray these prayers slowly and mindfully and after each we use the refrain (R) **'Fill us with your Spirit'**:

We will wait in silence (R)	We worship you in majesty (R)	We long for your refreshing (R)
We long for your renewing (R)	We long for your equipping (R)	We long for your empowering (R)

You may wish to pray:

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



A reading from the Book of Acts

Read Acts 2 v 1-21 (A reflection attached to the end of the service sheet)

Intercessions

Let us pray for the Church here in our local community and around the World. Pray for it's leaders, it's congregations, it's buildings, it's resources, it's mission and it's life. Our personal prayers end with ..

Be with us, Spirit of God .. **nothing can separate us from your love.**

Breathe on us, breath of God .. **fill us with your saving power.**

Speak in us, wisdom of God ... **bring strength, healing, and peace.**

The Lord's Prayer.

Our Father...

(If we were gathered this morning we would each receive a candle now and be asked to affirm this commission .. you may wish to light a candle or simply respond in your heart to these words)

For fifty days we have celebrated the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over the powers of sin and death. We have proclaimed God's mighty acts and we have prayed that the power that was at work when God raised Jesus from the dead might be at work in us. As part of God's Church here in this Benefice, I call upon you to live out what you proclaim.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, will you dare to walk into God's future, trusting him to be your guide?

By the Spirit's power, we will.

Will you dare to embrace each other and grow together in love? **We will.**

Will you dare to share your riches in common and minister to each other in need? **We will.**

Will you dare to pray for each other until your hearts beat with the longings of God? **We will.**

Will you dare to carry the light of Christ into the world's dark places? **We will.**

Blessing and Peace

May the Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**



The Peace of the Lord be always with you



Reflection on Acts 2 v 1-21

This morning we reflect on how the birth of the Church came about with the symbols of flames and fire! This image reminds us that we are a sacramental people. The word *sacramental* means we, as Christians, invoke the presence of our God who is unseen through our focus on that which is clearly seen. It means **we** meet God who transcends our world and our knowing, in the things which we can touch and taste and know more fully. Put simply we use bread and wine and water and oil and, today fire, to remember that though unseen God is present in all Creation. As Elizabeth Barrett Browning has put it in beautiful poetic language we must just take time to understand this:

“Earth is crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes; the rest sit round and pluck blackberries.”

This being the case I wonder why **fire** symbolizes the Church and it's mission? Water for Baptism with it's refreshing and cleansing qualities. Bread and wine for our communion with God with their sustaining and nourishing qualities. Oil for anointing with its healing and preserving qualities. And **fire** for the Church!! But why? The flames of Pentecost must tell us something about the Church and its nature. I don't intend to offer an answer to this question here. Have a think this week. Decide for yourself what the flames might mean in the context of the Church and the presence of God within her.

What I want to suggest this morning is that it is helpful to remember for a flame to keep burning it needs different things at different times. A flame responds to its surroundings and to minimal changes in its environment. A slight breeze or an increase in oxygen levels can fan a flame or snuff it out in moments. Keeping a fire going is no longer the important task it would have been for our ancestors ... for them preserving the fire was the most important and fundamental task for survival. What might that tell us about the Church? Are we as attentive to kindling and fanning the flame of the Church as we should be or could be? Are we aware of how the environment is affecting the rise and fall of the fire which keeps the Church alight? Are we diligent keepers of the flame which has been kept alight for us throughout generations until this time in history? What is the state of the flame which is the sacramental symbol of the Church this Pentecost?

We have all heard the metaphor of the coal taken out of the fire and which soon becomes cold and dead. We know of the importance of keeping the coals in contact with one another to keep the fire alive. This is a huge challenge for us in the current climate of isolation .. but it is one we must rise to if we are to breathe new life into the Church of God this Pentecost. What are the acts which are going to keep the flame of the Church burning at this time in History? What will you need to do to stay in touch and keep contact with the burning coals around you? We read that on the first Pentecost 'divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them'. A flame rested on each of them. This is our invitation and challenge. To let the flame which rests upon each of us breath and grow so that the Church and others might see the unseen in our world.