



## Pentecost Worship 2020

### Prayer

Living God

as we consider some of those first people touched by your Spirit – help us to recognise the way you come to us – the gifts you give to us, and the way you are able to use us in a multitude of different ways – and have done so particularly at this difficult time in the lives of us all.

We bring our praise and thanksgiving for those gifts which are bestowed on us all. Help us to bathe in your Spirit just as earnestly as did your followers thousands of years ago. **Amen**

### StF 380: Holy breath of God

Holy breath of God,  
find me in this place.  
Fall, sweet mercy, fall on me,  
healing by your grace.  
Tender hand of god,  
hold me in your care.  
All my fears and broken dreams,  
every burden bear.

*Come, O breathe of God,  
breathe your life again.  
Stir the embers of this heart,  
set my soul aflame.  
Come, O breath of God,  
draw me once again  
ever closer to your heart,  
to your burning flame*

Light of life Divine,  
search my selfish ways.  
Tear from me my foolish will;  
lead me all my days.  
Ageless God of Hope,  
stay for ever near  
to the wounded broken heart;  
scatter every fear.

Johnny Markin

## Reflections on Acts 2, 1-11

At a time when we celebrate Pentecost – the gift of the Holy Spirit on Jesus’ disciples – we are reminded that in the midst of uncertainty, fears and confusion, new hope and new life are possible. I would like to reflect a little bit on what the gift of the Holy Spirit meant for the disciples locked inside because of fear of persecution, and what this Pentecost 2020 means for us still living under the lockdown restrictions but contemplating the prospects of emerging from COVID-19 isolation, especially within the context of the political drama at Westminster with the Prime Minister’s special adviser Dominique Cummings (DC)

What was it like for the disciples? ‘One moment confusion – and the next certainty; one moment doubt – and the next faith; one moment despair and the next hope; one moment fear and the next confidence.’ You might well wonder if I am describing the raft of emotions we have all been experiencing in the past couple of months – when all our lives have been turned completely upside down because of coronavirus. But those words are referring to what actually happened on that extraordinary day of Pentecost - where in Acts 2. It says:

“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 and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability”.

What exactly was going on there? And how did those people directly affected make sense of their experience? This passage tells us that the fifty days of Easter did not end on a low note. According to the description in Acts Easter came to its fulfilment with “noise like a strong driving wind.” The noise filled the whole house where the disciples were gathered. That noise called bystanders and neighbours to come and find out what was going on. It was a gathering from every nation. The diversity of those gathered matched the uniqueness of the noise itself.

I wish I was there to personally witness this event; and be caught up in its drama. I can only imagine the people inside this house and noise entering what they thought was a safe space. After they had locked their house, they probably thought the locked door would keep out unwanted interruption. We are told the noise filled the house and entered within their dwelling. But then we are also told that along with sound there was fire in the shape of tongues. The fire entered into each person; and suddenly those gathered are filled with the Holy Spirit. The noise like wind and the fire like tongues filled the dwelling and the people. In this drama the wind and fire symbolize God’s power to dwell within. The wind and fire are God’s dramatic entrance into the heart of the human community and person. Put simply, the Holy Spirit is God within. Now God fills all space both without and within. I definitely would have wanted to be caught up in this drama. In saying this I am not underestimating how strange and scary it must have been for the disciples. Indeed it must have been bewildering to say the least.

Compared to the Dominique Cummings drama we followed since last Friday way into much of this week, there is no doubt that I would have wanted to be in a different drama. The DC drama has been life draining, infuriating and quite frankly disappointing at many levels. As one Cabinet minister after another came out to throw their weight behind DC, there was a sense of noise and clamour of unhealthy kind; the questioning of the Prime Minister on Wednesday afternoon by the Liaison Committee was at times fiery. Noise or sound and fire were definitely there! There were divisions, confusion and anger too. I must confess that at times it was painful to watch. It has been an unhelpful and life draining drama.

On Pentecost the Spirit came as God dwelling within the human heart. The noise of God's breath as it filled each disciple. Something incredible happened; something changed. The noise of the wind became the speech of the disciples who spoke and got understood in the many languages represented there. The Spirit breath of God was filling human language, bringing the much needed confidence and clarity. Barriers were dismantled and people were connected to each other in a new way. Human language took on a significant and transforming role in this drama. The loud noise that the disciples and the crowds heard could be taken as God's shout which came out in human speech that all could hear and understand. In other words, God's word comes to live in us. We have been transformed into his messengers. God lives, daringly, in our human languages, in our everyday speech. You can definitely see why I wanted to be caught up in the Pentecost drama rather than the DC drama. Pentecost makes a loud noise in our ears so as to disturb our thinking which needs disturbing; our language needs to be transformed to bear always a word, a sound of good news. The Spirit is what holds us together. It is found in our fidelity to our commitments. It is found in the love that we have for each other, in the love and fidelity we have to Christ and his word; in our responsible actions and words, our care for each other and concern: that is the Spirit of Pentecost living in us.

Pentecost's noise is meant to wake us up to the power of human language; we go from life-draining noise to speech and words which pass on wisdom, offer comfort, speak of hope, proclaim faith and above all words that find their fulfilment in communicating love. It is love that is the heart beat of Jesus' words; it is love that brought creation into being and it is love dwelling in us and around us that sustains the world and transforms it until it all is a place where God is dwelling in his Spirit. **Amen**

### **STF 395 Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me**

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.  
Spirit of the living God  
fall afresh on me  
break me, melt me,  
mould me, fill me,  
Spirit of the living God  
fall afresh on me.  
Daniel Iverson (1890-1977)

### **Prayers of intercession**

Living God

At a time when we might feel lonely – anxious – ill or weary – at a challenging time in life. We have heard today that your Holy Spirit brings life-giving qualities to us all – those of love, care and compassion.

We know that at this time there are others worse off than us and we hold them in prayers. We pray for those worrying about loved ones seriously ill in hospital and who they cannot be with; for those grieving for those lost and with whom they could not share final moments.

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

We pray for the doctors, nurses and carers who have worked tirelessly through the past weeks and months to help those in need – and to comfort the dying. We remember that they too witness and have to deal with things which no-one can be prepared for and we ask that you will continue to give strength and guidance to them all at this time.

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

We pray for our brothers and sisters of other races and faiths – many of whom seem to have been particularly affected by Covid 19. People who have reason to be even more anxious than many of us. May they feel the love and care of neighbours around them who make them feel welcome and part of their community.

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

We remember those involved in accidents – and afraid of going to hospital - those tortured, abused or suffering with mental illness, for whom this is an even more difficult time than usual. Those who have dementia or frailty and find it difficult to understand why life is so changed. We pray for those we love but cannot meet at the moment. Those who may rely on us – but who we cannot visit at present.

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

And finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves that we may be kept assured of your love and care as we continue to live under the uncertainties and challenges brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic. Bless us with your continuing presence. **Amen**

The Lord's prayer:

**StF 67: This is the God we adore**

This, this is the God we adore,  
our faithful, unchangeable friend  
whose love is as great as his power,  
and neither knows measure nor end.

Tis Jesus the first and the last,  
whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;  
we'll praise him for all that is past,  
and trust him for all that's to come

Joseph Hart (1712-1767)

**Blessing:**

Spirit of life – fill our emptiness with your fullness  
Spirit of power – stir our hearts afresh  
Spirit of love – touch us, and through us, our neighbour  
Spirit of creativity – enable the gifts that you have given  
Spirit of eternity – draw us ever deeper into your Kingdom  
**Amen**

Rev. Paul Nzacahayo