

24th May 2026 – Morning Service

Pentecost

Liam Hodgetts

Call to Worship: Acts 1:8

But you will receive power from on high...
When the Holy Spirit comes upon you...
And you will be my witnesses...
To the ends of the earth...

This is not a quiet moment. This is not a private faith. This is not business as usual.
This is Pentecost.

It's the day heaven touched earth and God kept his promise by sending his spirit.

Once God's presence filled the temple, but now it fills his people.

Ordinary men and women filled with extraordinary power.

Fear turned into boldness. Waiting turned into movement. Silence turned into witness.

Pentecost is the birth of the church. Not a building, not an institution, but a living and active community. Spirit filled people sent into the world by Christ and for Christ, a beacon of hope and a pillar of truth, light of the world, and salt of the earth.

Pentecost reminds us that God is not distant, God is not passive, and God is not done.

Because the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us to convict, to comfort, and to transform.

This is Pentecost.

God is with us... God is for us... God is in us...

Come, Holy Spirit, fill your people for your glory. **Amen.**

StF 372 – Come down O love divine

This is one of the most stunningly beautiful hymns ever written, as it focuses on the life-altering effects of a heart consumed by the Holy Spirit's fire. It was initially an Italian poem, which was translated by Littledale and set to a melody by English composer Vaughan Williams.

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| 1) 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. | 3) Let holy charity
Mine outward vesture be,
And lowliness become mine inner clothing,
True lowliness of heart,
Which takes the humbler part,
And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing. |
| 2) O let it freely burn,
Till earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
And let thy glorious light
Shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming. | 4) And so the yearning strong,
With which the soul will long,
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace,
Till he become the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling. |

Biano da Siena translated by Richard Frederick Littledale

Introduction

Who here owns a torch? Do you keep one under your stairs in case of a power cut? Did any of you use one to read in bed under the covers as a child when you should have been asleep?

I have an array of different torches – they were very useful when crawling round in a loft, or working on lights when the power was turned off! I have big ones, and small ones, ones that I wear on my head, one

on my keys... but do you know what I was terrible at? Keeping the batteries charged! There's not much use of a torch without a battery!

We are rather like the shell of a torch, and the Holy Spirit is like our battery. The Spirit turns us into witnesses, just like the battery makes the torch light up. A torch can never work on its own, no matter how hard it tries.

This morning, we're going to be looking at Acts 2, where the Holy Spirit came down and filled the people who were there. When the Spirit comes down to dwell in us, we receive power which we could not possibly have otherwise, and as a result, we become witness. We will shine for Jesus.

Opening Prayers

Lord, we believe that you have called us here
and we have come to hear the Word of Life
and respond to the truth of Jesus.

By your Holy Spirit, transform our worship
into a joyous celebration of your love.

May our praise overflow with love as on the day of Pentecost.

In the name of Jesus, may our worship honour you
here and everywhere and for ever.

We pray for our congregation,
that your Holy Spirit will empower our praise for your glory
and infuse our discipleship with the presence of the living Christ. **Amen.**

Lord, we confess that we have tried to worship you in our own strength and in ways that pleased us.
We confess that, though we seek to serve you, our commitment is stretched to the limit.

We confess that we have relied on ourselves and on what we do and hoped that this would restore
our relationship with you.

We confess that we have tried in vain.

Come, Lord, fill us with your Spirit.

Come, Lord, renew our whole lives.

Come, Lord, transform us by your grace.

Come, Lord, come that by your Spirit we may serve you, know you, and love you as our Saviour and
Lord. **Amen.**

Lord of the gentle breeze that ripples the surface of the river
and causes the trees to move calmly as if by the touch of your unseen hand:

may the gentle breeze of your Spirit
begin to ruffle our lives and start the shaking
that will reach the foundations of our hopes and dreams.

Lord of the wind that whips up the waves
and causes trees to move in unexpected ways:
may the wind of the Spirit who came at Pentecost
fill our lives, our service, and our worship
with joy and a freshness we have never known before.

Lord of the powerful wind that moves everything in its path,
the wind that challenges everything in its path:
may the mighty rushing wind of your Holy Spirit
make every moment in your presence a Pentecost,
and every experience of his blessing
a challenge to allow him to control all things, for ever.

Come Holy Spirit,
refresh, renew, and remould who we are and who we shall be. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 370 – Breathe on me, Breath of God

This is one of the most simple yet profound prayers for the Holy Spirit simply to make us more like Jesus – that we would love what he loves and do what he does, until our will is like his and ultimately we live with him in perfect life.

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| 1) Breathe on me, Breath of God;
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what thou dost love,
And do what thou wouldst do. | 3) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with thy fire divine. |
| 2) Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with thee I will one will,
To do and to endure. | 4) Breathe on me, Breath of God;
So shall I never die,
But live with thee the perfect life
Of thine eternity. |

Edwin Hatch

StF 395 – Spirit of the living God

This simple song was written by Daniel Iverson during an evangelistic crusade about one hundred years ago. Its simplicity has helped many people as we ask the Lord in worship to break down so many of the barriers that we put up in the daily grind of living.

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.
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Daniel Iverson

Reading: Acts 2: 1-21 (NIV)

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors

from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’ Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’

Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Reflection

Loving God, as we hear your word today, open our hearts and minds. May your Spirit speak to us, challenge us, encourage us, and help us to follow Jesus more faithfully. **Amen.**

What comes to mind when you hear the word Pentecost?

Perhaps you think of flames over people’s heads. Maybe it’s people speaking in different languages. For many Christians, Pentecost feels like the birthday of the Church, but for the people gathered in Jerusalem that day, Pentecost was already a very important festival.

First-century Jews knew Pentecost as the Feast of Weeks – a harvest celebration. Farmers would bring the first part of their harvest and offer it to God. It was a way of saying thank you, but also a prayer asking God to bless the harvest still to come. It was also a time for remembering God’s faithfulness. Fifty days after Passover, the people of Israel came to Mount Sinai, where Moses received God’s law.

Luke, the writer of Acts, wants us to notice something important here. Moses went up the mountain and came back down with God’s law; Jesus has gone up to heaven in the Ascension, and now something comes down from heaven — not stone tablets this time, but God’s Spirit, writing God’s life and love onto human hearts.

Then, in verse 2 and 3, we hear: *“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.”*

Can you imagine being there? How would you feel?
Terrified? Overwhelmed? Excited? Confused?

Luke is showing us that this was not an ordinary experience. God was doing something completely new. But at the same time, he is also connecting it with very old, well-known stories. Throughout Scripture, wind and

fire often point to God's presence. In Exodus, Moses saw a bush burning without being consumed. God appeared on Mount Sinai in fire. God's glory filled the tabernacle and later the temple.

And now, in Acts 2, the fire appears again. But do you notice something different this time round? Verse 3 tells us the flames *"came to rest on each of them."* Not on a mountain. Not on a building. Not in the temple. On people. God's dwelling place has changed. No longer a temple made of stone, but a temple made of people.

God chooses to live within ordinary men and women – people with doubts, people with fears, people who did not have everything figured out. People like us. I think sometimes we imagine we need to become spiritually impressive before God can use us. We imagine we need stronger faith, better prayers, or more confidence. But Pentecost says otherwise.

The disciples had been frightened and confused only days earlier. Some had hidden behind locked doors. Some had doubted. Yet here they are, filled with God's Spirit. And perhaps that leads us to another question people often ask. Who exactly is the Holy Spirit?

A recurring theme at our Bible Study is that the Holy Spirit can sometimes feel a little difficult to grasp. We understand Jesus because we can picture him, and we understand God as Father. But the Spirit can seem more mysterious.

Yet the Bible starts helping us understand on the very first page. Before creation took shape, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. The Hebrew word used is *ruakh*, and it can mean Spirit, wind, or breath. All these meanings carry the same idea: life-giving energy and presence. You cannot see the wind, but you see what it does. You see trees move; you feel air on your face; you breathe in and live because of breath. The Spirit is like that – invisible, but powerful; present, even when unseen. And maybe that helps us understand what is happening in verse 2. The sound of rushing wind is not random. Luke wants us to see God's life and power arriving among his people.

But the Holy Spirit is not simply a force or a feeling. The Spirit is God's living presence with us – strengthening us when we are weak, guiding us when we are uncertain, comforting us when we are hurting, challenging us when we have become comfortable, and giving us courage to live for Christ.

Then Luke gives us what at first feels like a rather strange section. In verses 9–11, we get a long list of places and nations. It can feel like one of those passages we quickly read through. But this isn't a geography lesson, he is painting a picture.

People from all over the known world were there – different languages, different cultures, different backgrounds. Yet verse 6 says that *"each one heard their own language being spoken."* What's going on?

Do you remember the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis? Human pride caused division and confusion. God separated people by confusing their languages and scattering them. But Pentecost reverses that story. God does not erase differences. Everybody doesn't suddenly speak one language. Rather, through the Spirit, people understand one another.

The Spirit comes not to divide, but to unite. God begins restoring the harmony of creation and drawing people back together. And perhaps that speaks into our lives as well. Are there people you find difficult to understand? Difficult to love? Difficult to listen to? How might the Spirit be inviting you toward greater understanding?

Now imagine standing in that crowd and watching all this happen. I think I would have been completely confused; some people there certainly were. Verse 13 tells us: *"Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'" People look at the disciples and assume they are drunk. But Peter stands up and says: "These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!"*

Then Peter explains that something far bigger is happening. He points them to the prophet Joel and says that God's promise is now being fulfilled: *"I will pour out my Spirit on all people."* Notice those words: **all**

people. Young and old. Men and women. Servants and masters. Not a select few. Not spiritual experts. Not only leaders. God's Spirit is poured out generously. The invitation is wide.

The Church begins not as an exclusive club, but as an open invitation. And that means Pentecost is not simply a story about what happened long ago. It asks questions of us today. Where do I need God's life-giving breath? Where do I need courage? Where do I need healing? Where do I need to move beyond fear? Because the disciples began as a small, frightened group gathered in an upstairs room, yet through The Holy Spirit they became part of a movement that spread throughout the world.

God took ordinary people and did extraordinary things through them. And that same Spirit is working today! Still breathing life into tired hearts. Still creating unity where there is division. Still giving courage where there is fear. Still calling ordinary people into God's extraordinary work. The same Spirit who hovered over creation, who empowered Moses, who filled the disciples, is still at work today. So the question is not whether the Spirit is present. The question is: Are we willing to open ourselves to what the Spirit wants to do in us?

Let us pray

Holy Spirit, breathe your life into us again. Fill us with your love, your courage, and your peace. Help us to be people who bring unity where there is division, hope where there is despair, and love where there is fear. May we follow Jesus faithfully in the power of your Spirit. **Amen.**

Song – Christus Victor (Amen)

The Gettys collaborated with Matt Boswell, Bryan Fowler, and Matt Papa over several years to write this majestic anthem, drawn from the first and last songs of victory found in Scripture—the Song of Moses in Exodus and the Song of the Lamb in Revelation—proclaiming Christ as Lord from the beginning.

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| 1) O Most High, King of the ages,
great I AM, God of wonders,
by the blood you have redeemed us,
led us through mighty waters.
Our strength, our song, our sure salvation. | <i>Ch2) Now to the Lamb upon the throne
be blessing, honour, glory, power
for the battle you have won.
Hallelujah!
With ev'ry tribe and ev'ry tongue
we join the anthem of the angels
in the triumph of the Son.
Hallelujah! Amen!</i> |
| <i>Ch1) Now to the Lamb upon the throne
be blessing, honour, glory, power
for the battle you have won.
Hallelujah! Amen!</i> | 3) O Most High, King of the nations,
robed in praise, crowned in splendour.
On that day, who will not tremble?
When you stand, Christ the Victor
who was, and is, and is forever. |
| 2) O Most High, dwelling among us,
Son of Man, sent for sinners.
By your blood you have redeemed us;
spotless Lamb, mighty Saviour
who lived, who died, who rose victorious. | Br) Amen, Amen, Amen.
Amen, Amen, Amen.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

E) Amen. |

Matt Boswell, Bryan Fowler, Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, Matt Papa

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Reading: John 20: 19-23 (NIV)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

Reflection

When we place John 20:19–23 alongside Acts 2:1–21, we are really hearing two parts of the same story. In John, the disciples are gathered behind locked doors. In Acts, they are gathered together in one place. And in both passages, something happens that completely changes them – fear gives way to peace, and waiting gives way to mission.

The first thing we notice is that **Jesus meets people in their fear.**

In John, the disciples are hiding because they are afraid of the Jewish authorities. This follows Jesus' execution, so their doors are locked shut. They are scared, confused, and don't know what comes next for them. But Jesus doesn't wait for them to sort themselves out. He comes and stands among them and says, "*Peace be with you.*" In Acts, we begin to see what that peace becomes when the Spirit arrives. The same disciples who were hidden away are now standing publicly, speaking so that others can hear and understand.

So perhaps the first question to take with us is:

Where is fear closing a door in my life, and where might Jesus be speaking his peace into it?

The second thing we notice is that **Jesus does not leave his people unprepared – he equips them for what he is calling them to do.**

In John's Gospel, he breathes on them and says, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*" It is a quiet, intimate moment – like new creation beginning again. Then in Acts, that same Spirit arrives like wind and fire – powerful, disruptive, unmistakable. And what changes is not just how the disciples feel, but what they are now able to do. In Acts 2, they are suddenly able to speak, witness, and proclaim in ways that reach far beyond themselves and each other. What was hidden becomes visible. What was private becomes public. What was uncertain becomes courageous.

So perhaps the question here is:

Where is God calling me to move from waiting into action?

Which leads us to the third movement: **the Spirit forms a people who are sent into the world with courage and purpose.**

In John, Jesus says: "*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*" And in Acts, we see that sending take shape immediately – the good news being spoken so that people from every place can hear. This is no longer a hidden faith behind closed doors; it is a Church stepping into the world.

We have this vision of a Church not defined by comfort, but by calling. A Church not held back by fear, but strengthened by Christ. A Church that is clothed in the armour of God – truth, righteousness, faith – not because it is strong in itself, but because it stands in the strength of Christ who has already won the victory.

Acts 2 shows us what that looks like in real life: ordinary people speaking with courage they did not have before, carrying a message that cannot be contained, stepping into a world that does not yet understand what God is doing. This is what it looks like when the Spirit sends the Church out.

So the final question is:

Where might God be calling me this week to step out in courage?

Because in both John and Acts, the story is the same: fearful people are met by Christ, filled with his Spirit, and then sent into the world. And perhaps God is still forming that same kind of Church today.

The tragedy of Pentecost would be this: that God pours out his Spirit, the Church is born in power, fear is broken, mission begins... but we choose to stay in the upper room. The only real question left is whether we will remain spectators of God's Spirit, or become active in what he is still doing.

Song – O Church, Arise

The challenge with this number was to write a modern hymn about the church that celebrated the joy and wonder of being part of his body, "the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23). Keith Getty and Stuart Townend used many ideas such as the "communion of the saints," the amazing truth that, when we gather to sing, we are joining with people of every generation to sing his praise. They also addressed the realisation of spiritual warfare, as we live in a world that wars against the great truths of the faith. The overall impact of the song, however, is a call to action not merely as individuals but as his bride, the church.

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| 1) O church, arise and put your armor on;
hear the call of Christ our Captain;
for now the weak can say
that they are strong
in the strength that God has given.
With shield of faith and belt of truth
we'll stand against the devil's lies,
an army bold whose battle cry is "Love!"
reaching out to those in darkness. | 3) Come, see the cross where love
and mercy meet,
as the Son of God is stricken;
then see his foes lie crushed beneath his feet,
for the Conqueror has risen!
And as the stone is rolled away,
and Christ emerges from the grave,
this vict'ry march continues till the day
ev'ry eye and heart shall see him. |
| 2) Our call to war, to love the captive soul,
but to rage against the captor;
and with the sword that makes
the wounded whole,
we will fight with faith and valour.
When faced with trials on ev'ry side,
we know the outcome is secure,
and Christ will have the prize
for which he died:
an inheritance of nations. | 4) So Spirit, come! Put strength in ev'ry stride,
give grace for ev'ry hurdle,
that we may run with faith to win the prize
of a servant good and faithful.
As saints of old still line the way,
retelling triumphs of his grace,
we hear their calls, and hunger for the day
when with Christ we stand in glory! |

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend © 2005 Thankyou Music Ltd

Prayers of Intercession

Lord, we pray for people in the world; for leaders of nations, for those with the power to influence the hearts and minds of millions; for the people in areas of need at this time. May the coming of your Spirit bring the fire of cleansing and the wind that renews.

We pray for the people of our nation; for those who influence the minds and will of the young; for those who are responsible for what we see in the media; for those who are role models for others and whose attitudes, values, and lifestyles undermine all that is good, true, and of you. May the coming of your Spirit bring the fire of cleansing and the wind that renews.

Lord, we bring to you the life of this church and circuit; for a deeper trust, a wider love, and a longer-lasting commitment, that our worship, witness, and service may reach the heights of your throne; for guidance as we seek your will for the life, mission, and future of the church. Give us grace and joy and wisdom, that we may discern the truth. May the coming of your Spirit bring the fire of cleansing and the wind that renews.

Lord, we pray for the people we know; for those in need of you and your love, for those aching for your peace, who truly desire to know more of you, for those longing for your health-giving, life-renewing touch and life-changing grace; for those known to us personally. May the coming of your Spirit bring the fire of cleansing and the wind that renews.

We pray for ourselves and for all we must face in the coming days and months and years of our lives; for our time alone of doubts and fear; for our longing to be free as you long for us to be, for renewal of our hearts and minds and lives and for a chance to learn to love ourselves. May the coming of your Spirit bring the fire of cleansing and the wind that renews.

This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our merciful Lord. **Amen.**

Final thoughts

Today we have travelled with the disciples from fear to courage, from locked doors to open proclamation, from waiting to being sent. We have heard that Jesus meets people in their fears, that he gives his Spirit to strengthen and equip his people, and that the Spirit never leaves us standing still. The Spirit always moves us to share the good news.

And perhaps that leaves us with one final challenge. The disciples did not receive the Spirit simply for themselves. They received the Spirit so that others might hear, understand, and encounter Christ through them. That challenge remains for us.

So as we go from this place, perhaps we ask:

- Who needs to hear words of hope from me this week?
- Who needs encouragement?
- Who might God be sending me to?

Because the story of Pentecost did not end in Acts 2. The Spirit is still at work. The Church is still being sent. And now, so are we.

StF 503 – Love Divine

Charles Wesley's hymn is an earnest prayer for the Author of divine love to return to his people and complete his work, never to leave again but to take us all to his throne room, where we will be "lost in wonder, love, and praise". We shall sing the additional verse not found in our hymn books which begins *breathe, oh, breathe thy loving Spirit into ev'ry troubled breast.*

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| 1) Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,
All thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesu, thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love thou art;
Visit us with thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart. | 3) Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve thee as thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love. |
| 2) Breathe, oh, breathe thy loving Spirit
into ev'ry troubled breast!
Let us all in thee inherit;
let us find the promised rest.
Take away our love of sinning,
Alpha and Omega be;
end of faith as its beginning;
set our hearts at liberty. | 4) Finish then thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in thee:
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise! |

Charles Wesley

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. **Amen.**