

**Kingswinford Methodist Church (StF)  
10.30 a.m. 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2020 (Pentecost)**

**Notices**

**Call to worship: Psalm 104 verses 31 to 34**

May the glory of the LORD endure for ever; may the LORD rejoice in his works— he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke. I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD. Amen.

*We shall rejoice in the Lord as we sing the first hymn on our sheets, ‘Hallelujah! Christ ascended.’*

**1. Hallelujah! Christ ascended.**

**Hallelujah! Lord of all!**

**Glorified, our risen Saviour,**

**Sends his Spirit, drives our call.**

**Holy Ruach, come enfold us,**

**As you did at Pentecost:**

**Kindle in our souls a fire**

**Seeking out the weak and lost.**

**2. Hallelujah! Holy Spirit.**

**Hallelujah! God within:**

**Warm our hearts, inspire and guide us,**

**Cast out selfishness and sin.**

**Let Christ be our boast and passion,**

**Christ the pattern for our days,**

**Be our Comforter and Wisdom,**

**Help our lives bring Jesus praise.**

**3. Hallelujah! Live within us.**

**‘Hallelujah!’ We shall shout.**

**Counsel, strengthen and enthuse us;**

**From our ‘locked room’ drive us out.**

**Let our words and deeds reveal you**

**To a world in need of light;**

**Let us give our lives to serve you,**

**Seeing wrong and setting right.**

**4. Hallelujah! Bread of heaven!**

**Hallelujah! Love divine!**

**Fill us with the gospel message;**

**In our hearts Christ’s call enshrine.**

**Bid fears cease and faith grow stronger,**

**Breath of God grant us your power:**

**Let us hesitate no longer,**

**Serve Christ till our final hour.**

*M. Rider (written at ‘Ignite’, Dudley 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2017 – to “Lux Eoi” StF 400 or “Ode to Joy” StF8)*

*Dedicated to Revd. Gill Daniel, a very gifted Minister.*

## ***Let us pray***

We come to you, O God, on this day of Pentecost, to offer our praise and adoration, for you, Lord, are all that is life. It was you whose Word brought creation into being and its wonders and beauty amaze us. You Lord are all that is life, for it was the Word who became flesh and lived among us in Jesus, full of grace and truth.

You Lord are all that is life, for you breathed the Word and he came among us, giving life, enthusiasm, love and meaning. Therefore, we come to worship and adore you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, new every moment, yet still the same. O loving heavenly Father, may your love burn within us, for you are our God and our times are in your hand.

You Lord are all that is life and you have blessed us throughout our life. Accept our thanks for the good things we enjoy, for people who have brought us love, light and guidance and also the opportunities and experiences that have fulfilled us, but above all things, thank you for loving us so much that you came as our Redeemer and friend.

Yet as we offer our praise and acknowledge your holiness, we are aware of our own failings. Forgive us, loving Creator, for our failure to delight in the variety and differences of people, for imagining that everyone should be the same and like us, thereby limiting your love which is given to all-comers. Forgive us, Lord of all, for failing to challenge those who mistreat others, for our lack of will in our search for justice, thus limiting your Spirit, who would bring unity to our society and our world. Forgive us, Creator God, for being afraid to take the first step, for not wanting to reach out to those in need or distress, so limiting your Son, Christ Jesus, who gave himself for all as our Lord of love.

The God who spoke and breathed and lives declares, 'Behold, I make all things new.' He forgives our sins and offers us a new beginning through his boundless grace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## ***We shall say 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.**

***We shall sing Daniel Iverson's hymn, Spirit of the living God,' twice, as we prepare for our prayers of intercession. We remain seated as we sing hymn number 295.***

## ***In our prayers of intercession we pray for our world and its needs.***

Creator God, as we praise and thank you for this beautiful world, we are only too well aware of its brokenness, some of which is caused by natural disasters, but much of which is the result of mankind's failure to recognize and honour kingdom values such as justice and loving-kindness. As our response to your amazing grace help us to serve you in whatever way we

can to make our contribution to the wellbeing of our neighbours, nearby and far away from us. Sometimes, when the best we can offer is inadequate, in those circumstances we ask you to warm the hearts of and motivate people who can really make a difference.

God of love, hear our prayer for peace, founded upon justice and mercy, throughout the world. May your Spirit guide governments of all nations, so they learn the value of negotiation and a willingness to compromise when disputes arise, so armed conflict is avoided. We remember, too, the victims of warfare, terrorism and persecution throughout the earth. Grant all of them effective support, courage and hope, so they may rebuild their broken lives.

Gracious God, in the name of our risen Lord Jesus, create within us a desire to build a world where kingdom values are upheld: where we strive to help the poor here and abroad; where we share justly the earth's resources, rather than fighting over them; where we work together for the common good, accepting, indeed, rejoicing over our differences and standing up against prejudice in any of its forms.

Heavenly Father, as we share the grief of families and friends who have lost loved ones during this pandemic, we pray for the deliverance of victims of COVID 19. Heavenly Father, many of us are filled with anguish at the immense suffering of people here and abroad. Lord, the bleakness of both the gloomy news and the strains of the lockdown are severely testing our faith and resolve. Reassure us that you are with us throughout this time of trial, so we all may face an uncertain, even threatening future, with hope grounded in your salvation.

Lord of life, hear our prayer for the NHS which we know is under immense pressure. May it receive all the support and equipment it needs to heal the sick and to grow to meet the changing needs of our society. Bless all doctors, nurses, ancillary staff, care workers, key-workers and kind-hearted volunteers, who potentially put themselves in harm's way as they seek to help Coronavirus patients and vulnerable members of society. We pray especially for our local hospitals, as well as all in our community whose efforts keep us safe. Grant them the determination and courage they need to cope with the pressures they are facing and keep them safe in their work.

Lord, whose loving-kindness is boundless, let the light of your love shine upon people in our community who suffer from sickness, grief or trouble: for all who are sick in body, mind, or spirit, that they may find healing, renewed strength and peace, not only as a result of the care and support they receive, but by experiencing your holy presence in their time of need. We pray, too, for people who are living with a dementia and their friends, carers and families, who seek to support them; grant them comfort in their distress, reassurance in their confusion and a sense of being valued for who they are.

Lord, remember neighbours who are lonely, afraid, broken-hearted, overworked, or who are facing a broken relationship, as well as everyone who mourns the loss of a loved one. In a time of silence, we offer names of people for whom we are particularly concerned, trusting that you will know their need and will reach out in compassion to them..... Lord, help us to offer them practical support and friendship as well as sympathy, but hold everybody for whom we pray in the warm embrace of your love, from which there is healing, courage, strength and peace.

Holy God, on this anniversary of the birth of the Church, grant that this church and churches throughout the world may unite in love and action, so we represent the glory of shalom, the kind of peace which passes understanding and offers your full blessing. May we bear the Gospel light bravely in a sceptical and sometimes hostile world in Jesus' name.

Abba, heavenly Father, look upon us, our friends and families with loving-kindness. In the power of the Holy Spirit, keep us from harm, help us resist the temptation to sin, and, most of all help us to live out the gospel message in all that we do and say, so our lives bring the gospel light into our world and we honour your holy name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*We shall sing the second hymn on our sheets, 'Once, a group of frightened people hid inside a bolted room,'*

**1. Once, a group of frightened people hid inside a bolted room,  
Mourning Jesus Christ, who'd left them – it seemed naught could lift their gloom:  
But the promise made by Jesus on the eve of Calvary  
Was fulfilled for each of them like fire and wind and ecstasy!**

**2. As the Holy Spirit filled them, every sorry soul transformed:  
Resolution replaced weakness; fearful hearts God's breath had warmed;  
While the tongues of mundane people were endowed with holy might,  
As the impulse of the Spirit turned their darkness into light.**

**3. Fled were gloominess and doubting, as their praise and joy they cried;  
Bolts were pulled, the door was opened as they boldly poured outside,  
While their neighbours, in amazement, swore their mood was excess wine:  
Yet their speech, their dance and laughter were the fruits of Pow'r Divine.**

**4. Pilgrims to the holy city heard the gospel in their tongues:  
Christ's salvation was extended and to everyone belongs;  
For the grace of God is boundless – Christ has died to save us all  
And the power of the Spirit helps us answer Jesu's call!**

**5. Then empowered by the Spirit, Peter preached unto the Jews –  
And three thousand men were baptised in response to Christ's Good News!  
So ten dozen helpless people – our Redeemer's 'mustard seed' –  
In the power of the Spirit, grew with awe-inspiring speed.**

**6. May all honour, praise and glory be to God, the Three-in-One:  
Give all honour to the Father for the mighty deeds He's done;  
We shall praise His Son, Christ Jesus, who revealed the Father's love,  
As we glory in the Spirit whom He sent down from above!**

## **The First reading is Acts chapter 2 verses 1 to 13**

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 them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked:

"Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own 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 men 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 heaven 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.'"

Amen.

*Our next hymn was set to the Skye Boat Song by Margaret Old. We shall sing number 394, 'Spirit of God, unseen as the wind'.*

## **Our Epistle is 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verses 3 to 13**

Therefore I tell you that no-one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no-one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.

There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Amen.

*Our next hymn was written by a Nineteenth Century Bishop of Lincoln, Christopher Wordsworth, who happened to be a nephew of the great poet, William Wordsworth. It is based upon St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13 – his hymn of praise for the qualities of agape – God's boundless love, which is ours to share through the Holy Spirit. We shall sing hymn number 379, 'Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost'.*

**Sermon** *"Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"* Acts 2:12 Dr. Luke recorded how, around 2000 years ago, a hundred and twenty followers of Jesus had assembled at a house in Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost. They were in a bolted room because Jesus had ascended into heaven and they were afraid. They certainly felt a deep sense of hopelessness and failure. The disciples had been slow to understand Jesus' teachings, had deserted Christ in his hour of need, while Peter, who had boasted that he would remain loyal to the death had denied knowing Jesus three times. They had rejected the women's news that Jesus had been raised from the dead, only accepting the resurrection when the Lord appeared directly to them. Although Jesus' appearances had filled the hundred and twenty with joy, following his ascension they were not only afraid of the Jewish Establishment, but clearly felt inadequate to Jesus' commission, **'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation'**. How could such, weak, ignorant failures do what Jesus had commanded?

John's gospel provided the answer, for, at the Last Supper Jesus promised his disciples, **'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth'**. Jesus added, **'the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you'**. The Spirit entered them, their hearts were warmed so much that they seemed drunk with joy and those simple Galileans received the gift of communicating with Jews from throughout the known world – ***truly a reversal of Babel!***

To the amazement of all who saw them, the apostles were as bold then as they had been afraid less than an hour before and Peter preached his first sermon – after which three thousand men, not counting women and children were baptised into Christ Jesus. Jesus told his followers, **'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do**

**not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'** The word **'peace'** is a translation of the **Greek 'eirene'**, which is similar to **'Shalom' in Hebrew**. It is a **blessing, a fulfilment** as well as an inner peace, borne out of trusting Jesus. Remember, this was the hour when the Church was born, not sickly and feeble, but so dynamic that it frightened the Roman Empire, the one superpower of its age, sufficiently for measures to be taken to destroy all who proclaimed, **"Jesus is Lord"**! That's not bad work for one hundred and twenty former backsliders, is it?

The Holy Spirit does not just belong to ancient history: he is evident in our world, too, if only we are perceptive enough to recognise him. Here are two brief examples how the Holy Spirit brought freedom and peace. On 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1738 John Benjamin Wesley sat alone at a house in Temple Bar, London, in total despair, doubting if he was even a Christian, although he had been ordained thirteen years. He was born into a God-fearing family: he and younger brother, Charles, were devoted sons; were honours students at Oxford University; gave generously to charity; they regularly visited the sick and ministered at Newgate Prison, comforting the condemned as they were on the scaffold. Despite these virtues, John Wesley declared that he **'was no better than the vilest offender in the kingdom'**, because of a great burden of unworthiness he carried.

In 1735, John and Charles Wesley had sailed for Georgia, America with high hopes to be great evangelists. However, their ministries were marked by a series of scandals and tactless enthusiasm that culminated with John summoning his flock to church by beating a drum loudly, early on the Sabbath. He grew so unpopular that the Governor told the brothers to return forthwith to England. They reached home in February, 1738 with a profound sense of failure. Clearly, their efforts to gain salvation by works had not succeeded! On the evening of 24<sup>th</sup> May, John Wesley went to a Moravian service @ Aldersgate Street, London, where in his own words: **"In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.'**

The strange warming of his heart was the Holy Spirit taking charge. He brought about a remarkable transformation – the Wesleys felt freed from a sense of obligation to earn redemption for their sins and realised that forgiveness of sins and failure were God's free gift. That knowledge left them free to serve God's call as a loving response to his graciousness and led to one of the greatest spiritual and social revolutions in British history. Realising that Jesus wanted them to minister to the outcasts and marginalized of society in the early Industrial Revolution, the Wesleys and their followers brought Good News to parts of our industrial towns and villages that the established church daren't even enter! Methodism was as much a social movement as a worship movement, but it made a deep impression on British society as well as much further afield.

You may well be thinking, 'That's all very well, but even the Wesleys are two hundred and fifty years in the past!' I cannot argue with that, but if you think the Holy Spirit belongs to the past, you couldn't be more wrong. He is our gift, seen in abundance during this COVID pandemic: the courageous devotion of NHS workers, carers and key workers; the unrequested random acts of kindness and care for vulnerable members of society. He is seen in the efforts to conduct worship at a time

when churches are shut, in our willingness to support foodbanks and charities, especially at this time of need. The Spirit is here and now and His call is the same as when He sent out the one hundred and twenty into that Jerusalem street: '**Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation**'. How does that make you feel? Elated, determined, or overwhelmed or afraid?

This time of lockdown closure ought not to be a period of hibernation, but an opportunity to plan our future Church. Let us begin with ourselves and our own churches. Are we and they, open, welcoming, evangelistic, obedient and Spirit-led, hearts fired by His power, or are our hearts barely-glowing-embers, fearful of or unwilling to change, because 'It's always been done this way'? Are we held back by our fear of failure? So were the disciples and the Wesleys, but the Spirit's power transformed them all. Are you worried that new initiatives may change worship styles, or provoke changes to our properties? Early Christians adapted Hebrew worship and sang Psalms. Metrical Psalms were sung instead of hymns long after writers like Isaac Watts penned their first hymns. Consider some of the worship songs from the 1970s and 1980s: they led a revolutionary change from the traditional, earlier hymns. The Spirit-led Church is both evolutionary and revolutionary and must be both if it is to survive. Let us trust in the One who trusted his Father would raise him from death, as well as his empowering gift of the Holy Spirit. Unbolt the doors of our fears and embrace the world beyond with His redemptive love. Amen.

*We conclude our worship as we sing a hymn by Brian Wren which assures us that the Holy Spirit is not confined to ancient times, but is at work in us and throughout the world today and shall be tomorrow. We sing hymn number 398, "There's a Spirit in the air,"*

### ***Benediction***

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and for evermore. Amen.