

**DSW Written Service Pentecost Sunday**  
**19 05 2024**

Today we're celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit  
50 days after Easter - Happy Pentecost!

**Prayer**

*Spirit of God, come as flame, and fill our hearts with  
the fire of your love.*

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

*Spirit of God, come as wind, and refresh our souls  
with your breath of new life.*

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

*Spirit of God, come in power to fill us anew with your  
truth and grace.*

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

*Spirit of God open our hearts and help us to hear  
your word for each one of us today.*

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

**SONG: [STF 385]**

Holy Spirit, we welcome you  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Move among us with holy fire,  
As we lay aside all earthly desires,  
Hands reach out and our hearts aspire.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Let the breeze of Your presence blow,  
That Your children here might truly know  
How to move in the Spirit's flow.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.  
Please accomplish in me today  
Some new work of loving grace, I pray;  
Unreservedly have Your way.  
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit,  
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.

*Christopher Alan Bowater ©1986 Sovereign Lifestyle Music*

**Bible Reading: Acts 2: 1-24, 37- 47 CEV**

On the day of Pentecost all the Lord's followers  
were together in one place. Suddenly there was a  
noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty  
wind! It filled the house where they were  
meeting. Then they saw what looked like fiery  
tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue  
came and settled on each person there. The Holy  
Spirit took control of everyone, and they began  
speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them  
speak.

Many religious Jews from every country in the  
world were living in Jerusalem. And when they  
heard this noise, a crowd gathered. But they  
were surprised because they were hearing  
everything in their own languages. They were  
excited and amazed, and said:

Don't all these who are speaking come from  
Galilee? Then why do we hear them speaking our  
very own languages? Some of us are from Parthia,  
Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia,  
Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia,  
Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya near Cyrene,  
Rome, Crete, and Arabia. Some of us were born  
Jews, and others of us have chosen to be Jews.  
Yet we all hear them using our own languages to  
tell the wonderful things God has done.

Everyone was excited and confused. Some of  
them even kept asking each other, "What does all  
this mean?"

Others made fun of the Lord's followers and said,  
"They are drunk."

Peter stood with the eleven apostles and spoke in  
a loud and clear voice to the crowd:

Friends and everyone else living in Jerusalem,  
listen carefully to what I have to say! You are  
wrong to think that these people are drunk. After  
all, it is only nine o'clock in the morning. But this  
is what God had the prophet Joel say,  
"When the last days come,

I will give my Spirit to everyone.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions,  
and your old men will have dreams.

In those days I will give my Spirit to my servants,  
both men and women, and they will prophesy.

I will work miracles in the sky above  
and wonders on the earth below.

There will be blood and fire and clouds of smoke.  
The sun will turn dark, and the moon

will be as red as blood before the great  
and wonderful day of the Lord appears.

Then the Lord will save everyone  
who asks for his help."

Now, listen to what I have to say about Jesus  
from Nazareth. God proved that he sent Jesus to  
you by having him work miracles, wonders, and  
signs. All of you know this. God had already  
planned and decided that Jesus would be handed  
over to you. So you took him and had evil men  
put him to death on a cross. But God set him  
free from death and raised him to life. Death  
could not hold him in its power.

When the people heard this, they were very  
upset. They asked Peter and the other apostles,  
"Friends, what shall we do?"

Peter said, “Turn back to God! Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will be given the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children. It is for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live.”

Peter told them many other things as well. Then he said, “I beg you to save yourselves from what will happen to all these evil people.” On that day about three thousand believed his message and were baptized. They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together.

Everyone was amazed by the many miracles and wonders that the apostles worked. All the Lord’s followers often met together, and they shared everything they had. They would sell their property and possessions and give the money to whoever needed it. Day after day they met together in the temple. They broke bread together in different homes and shared their food happily and freely, while praising God. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved.

## Reflection

Before he died Jesus promised his disciples that when he left them and returned to heaven, he would send his Holy Spirit to show them and all people what the truth is – God’s truth.

And Luke describes how that happened in this passage the Acts of the Apostles. We read how the Holy Spirit came on the day of the festival of Pentecost, when Jews from across the world were gathered together. And I guess when people saw what seemed to be tongues of fire, and heard a sound like a rushing wind, and realised that everyone could hear and understand what Peter was saying when he explained that what was happening was the fulfilment of what God promised, in their own language, they realised pretty quickly that something dramatic and amazing and miraculous was happening here!

Peter goes on to explain to all the people there who Jesus was, that he was sent by God, that he died on the cross and that God raised Jesus to life, and he appeared to many people before he eventually returned to heaven. And after the crowd have heard what Peter said, 3000 people decided to become followers of Jesus and were baptised, forming one of the first Christian communities, as they met together to hear more

about Jesus from Peter and the other apostles, and saw miraculous healings and people’s lives transformed.

In this community they share everything they have; they meet and eat and pray together, joyfully giving thanks and praising God for what he has done. Sounds wonderful, doesn’t it? A great model for what Christian community looks like!

Today we’re celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit because that wasn’t just a gift for the people who were gathered there that day, it’s a gift Jesus promised, and God wants to give, to all of us who follow Jesus.

Sometimes people (even Christians) ask: What is this gift of the Holy Spirit? Why do we need this gift and how do we get it?

And the answers to those questions lie in the Bible accounts of what happens when people receive the Holy Spirit, and how that changes things.

One of the things we see in this Pentecost account is that the Holy Spirit’s presence breaks down barriers.

Firstly, everyone there could suddenly hear what Peter was saying in their own language, even though they came from different places around the world. The Holy Spirit broke down the barrier of different languages and lack of understanding, because those listening to Peter suddenly found that they could understand what he was telling them about Jesus being God’s chosen one, the fulfilment of God’s promises in scripture to send someone who would save humans from themselves, offering forgiveness for all the wrong things we do and new life and freedom in him.

The followers who received the Holy Spirit lived by generosity, sharing, eating, learning and praying together and singing their praises to God. The Holy Spirit’s presence in them broke down the barriers of possessiveness and self-interest that are based on fear that we won’t have enough, or the desire to keep what we have for ourselves instead of sharing. The new followers of Jesus shared everything they had with each other and made sure that everyone in need was provided for.

The Holy Spirit also breaks down other barriers such as barriers of pain, sadness and guilt that we so often carry with us or we put around

ourselves to protect us from being hurt again, perhaps because of messages picked up in childhood about whether we are worth loving or whether we matter.

These new disciples were filled with joy because they understood the grace and forgiveness that God offers us through Jesus' death and resurrection and the peace that gives us. They praised God in the temple and at home, thanking him for what he'd done for them in Jesus, and for the gift of the Holy Spirit. And in response to those gifts from God, they generously shared what they had, both physical resources and by telling others the good news.

The Holy Spirit breaks down barriers including the barrier of fear which often prevents us from becoming the people and the church that God has created us to be. The disciples were filled with courage and confidence, sharing the truth of who Jesus is and the good news that God's love and grace is for everyone. Peter the fisherman - who denied even knowing Jesus 3 times and ran away as he was crucified – found his voice and stood up in front of everyone to tell them the truth and the good news about Jesus. And the disciples continued to share their stories about what they'd learned from Jesus and what a difference that made in their lives.

So why do we need the Holy Spirit? Put simply, we need the Holy Spirit to help us to be and do the same!

We need the Holy Spirit to break down all those same barriers of possessiveness and selfishness, of pain, sadness, or guilt, of fear and anxiety, all the things that make it seem hard to step out in faith and trust God that he knows what's best for us and wants to bless us.

We need the Holy Spirit to break down the barriers of lies and half-truths that Satan uses to deceive us, and to hide the truth of who we are in God's eyes: his beloved children.

The Holy Spirit also breaks down the barriers of things that seem impossible and shows us that with God all things are possible, and situations and people can be transformed in ways that go beyond what we can imagine!

Just look at the disciples - a motley crew of fisherman & tax collectors, ordinary flawed people to whom God entrusted the task of spreading his kingdom through the good news of Jesus Christ.

Look at the Spirit's work in changing hearts and minds through prayers that led to the abolition of slavery, the end of apartheid, the defeat of oppressive regimes – and will, we pray, lead to an international commitment to reverse the effects of manmade climate change.

Why do we need the Holy Spirit? It's like the song says – “The Spirit lives to set us free”. The Spirit really does set us free from all the things that would harm us or hold us back from fulfilling the potential God has placed within each one of us.

We need to be filled and refilled with the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit enables us to see things with God's eyes – to see the potential for what could be, and dream our dreams, and commit them to God, asking him to bless those that will lead to his glory and his life-giving kingdom coming on earth.

The disciples in this story had a pretty dramatic encounter with the Holy Spirit, as did Paul on the road to Damascus.

But for many followers of Jesus like us, the Holy Spirit often comes in gentler ways. Sometimes it's in a thought or idea that just won't go away, sometimes it feels like an inner warmth in our heart, like the one John Wesley felt on 24 May in London a couple of centuries ago, when he suddenly realised that God loved him personally.

Sometimes people are overcome by tears of joy, or joyous laughter. Some people experience a deep sense of being healed of wounds they have carried for a long time. Some of us might receive a picture or image in our mind's eye, which God uses to speak to us. Or the words of a Bible reading, or a hymn jump out at us in a new way and we realised that Holy Spirit is touching something in our hearts that he wants to show us.

So how do we receive this gift of the Holy Spirit? Well, it's simple really -we ask God – we ask with open hearts for Jesus to send us the gift of his Holy Spirit. We ask expecting that God will answer and we ask ready to receive. We might ask for a specific gift of the Spirit – more joy perhaps, or more peace, we might ask for healing of an old hurt or for the gift of forgiveness and grace - to be able to know that we are forgiven and to be able to forgive those who have hurt us. And God will answer. Jesus is always ready to speak to us through his Holy Spirit if we're willing to hear.

I wonder what God's Holy Spirit is saying to you today? How is the Holy Spirit calling you? How is the Holy Spirit calling us as the Church of Jesus Christ to follow him and share the good news of God's love in Jesus?

What opportunities is God already sending our way, how is he opening up channels where his Holy spirit can flow freely in and through us as a church community so that we can bless the community, we're part of?

#### **Prayers of adoration & confession:**

Lord Jesus, we adore you, and we bless you, because you didn't leave your disciples to manage on their own, worried & confused, but sent your Holy Spirit to breathe life and confidence and authority into their hearts.

**Come to our hearts today and transform them, fill us with the power of your amazing grace and your redeeming love, we pray.**

When we've ignored the prompting of your Spirit, urging us to act for justice and peace:

**Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.**

When we've used words as barriers instead of simply telling the story of your love and grace

**Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.**

When we've scorned those whose religious experience differs from our own:

**Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.**

When we've missed opportunities to talk about our faith and proclaim your word:

**Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.**

When we've hurt others, neglected our discipleship and lost our way:

**Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.**

The Spirit of God is with us now, reminding us of Jesus's promise that when we confess our sins to God, we will be forgiven.

So know that you are forgiven. **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

#### **Pentecost Intercessions:**

Loving living God, whose Spirit helps us in our weakness and guides us in our prayers, we pray for the Church and the world in the name of Jesus Christ.

As tensions rise in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world, we pray for those who have lost loved ones. We pray for wisdom and compassion among leaders trying to bring calm and mediate problems with insight and skill; for a willingness to stand in the others' shoes and for a lasting peace.

**Give us the courage to make a difference and send your Spirit to bring new life.**

We pray for those for whom life is a struggle to survive, in this land and elsewhere, and for those who work to offer help and support. May there be a fair sharing of resources so that all people can thrive and fulfil their potential.

**Give us the courage to make a difference and send your Spirit to bring new life.**

We pray for people who live with illness, sadness, despair or loneliness, and for those who care for them. Help us all to be compassionate listeners and good friends to those who need us.

**Give us the courage to make a difference and send your Spirit to bring new life.**

We pray for ourselves and our churches on this Pentecost Sunday, asking that your Spirit will bring new life to us, renew and revive our faith, and equip us to be agents of hope, joy and peace in our world. May we bear the fruits of your Spirit, may your living water flow freely through us as we seek to be channels of your blessing to those around us.

We pray in the precious name of Jesus our Saviour **Amen**

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

##### **SONG: STF 384**

Holy Spirit, rain down, rain down.  
O Comforter and Friend,  
How we need Your touch again.  
Holy Spirit, rain down, rain down.  
Let Your power fall,  
Let Your voice be heard,  
Come and change our hearts,  
As we stand on Your word.  
Holy Spirit, rain down.

No eye has seen, no ear has heard,  
No mind can know what God has in store.  
So open up heaven, open it wide.  
Over Your church, and over our lives.

(Repeat)

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#### **Closing Prayer:**

**May we shine with the warmth of the Spirit's flame,  
speak with the passion of the Spirit's voice,  
move with the music of the Spirit's dance,  
And may God's Spirit bless us, fill us, inspire  
and confirm us in our calling as a disciple of  
Jesus Christ. Amen**