

## Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.  
God is ever present, around us and within us,  
we worship together in God.

Today is Pentecost and also a time of celebrating the Queen's 70-year reign. Our first hymn is one of two hymns that made it onto the Queen's top ten pieces of music.

**Suggested hymn** Praise my soul the King of heaven.

Listen [here](#)

### Prayer

God of all time and no time, all places and no place, today we celebrate the presence of your Spirit in creation. Through your Spirit we are bound as one for now and all time, and in your Spirit we work as church, drawn together in a specific time and place to follow the way of Jesus and be love in the world. We give thanks for the witness of Jesus and the stories which have inspired and led us to understand in new and exciting ways. We give thanks today for the story of Pentecost and the awareness of the power of your Spirit to enable miracles transform lives.

Great creator we praise you for the wonders of the world in which we live and the inspiration of the universe we have only begun to explore. We give thanks that your love embraces all creation and holds humanity in its grace. Your forgiving love is our example as we build relationships, and rebuild relationships hurt by our actions and words, your mercy is our challenge when we forget your love and rely on our own abilities.

On this Jubilee weekend we give thanks for the life and witness of Elizabeth our Queen in faithfully serving this country through the past seventy years with grace and compassion.

As we rest in your love may we be receptive to the challenge, courageous in our dreaming and planning and compassionate in our relationships with others. May our lives overflow with your love and our hearts always praise you as followers of Jesus.

Our Father....

**Reading** Acts 2: 1-21

**Suggested Hymn** There's a Spirit in the air

Listen [here](#)

### Reflection

This weekend marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Queen's coronation, and whilst she is slowing down through age, she remains committed to serving as best she can. Faith has seen her through some terrible times and has obviously been an important aspect of her life. Seventy years is a long time, and the world has changed considerably in that time, music has gone through change, technology has brought change and science has brought change and in all of that we see evidence of the action of the Spirit.

The Christian celebration of Easter coincides with the Passover celebration. Pentecost is a celebration which occurs in the Jewish calendar fifty days after the Passover, and it was during the celebration of Pentecost that we are told the disciples experienced the revelation of the Spirit. The spirit had been around since before the beginning of time, people had experienced the spirit of God in many and various ways. Luke's account in Acts of the happenings at the time of Pentecost, following the crucifixion of Jesus, could be about an awareness of the connection each of us has to the source of all being, which Christians refer to as God.

I have often seen Pentecost as a reversal of the story of Babel in Genesis, it is a strange story in which God acts 'out of character' to our modern understanding but it does explain why different countries have different languages which is probably why the story was written. Pentecost is a reminder of the core message of Jesus, in God we are one in the Spirit where Babel is about a separation. At one time we were aware of our connection, we instinctively understood each other through our connection within creation, and language was not a barrier. Power and prestige, the need to control, drove us apart. Jesus reminded us that we are one with each other and creation, one with God, the source of all being, and that love and not fear was the building block of a community the place where all people could reach their full potential, experience life in all its fullness.

The disciples had heard this message, and at Pentecost the circumstances were such that suddenly they were aware of this in a completely new way. Their hearts were opened and they were overtaken by the moment.

Faith in the presence of God is a comfort but the Spirit is often challenging, bringing the message of change. When we sense change is needed, we often refer to that sense as the Spirit, but do we always heed the message. Change can be unsettling, and we can resist. In the film 'Chocolat' the motif of the Spirit is embedded in the story with the arrival of Vianne and her daughter Anouk bringing change to the community, having blown in on the wind. Many welcome the change and embrace Vianne, and we witness new relationships forming and broken relationships being mended. However, the mayor is very resistant, we see him forcefully closing the church doors against the wind and he is antagonistic to Vianne, until the end of the film when he too succumbs to the Spirit and is a changed man.

Many other films depict the action of the Spirit, that essence of change and an opening of a person to a different way of being. In the original Star Wars film, we are introduced to The Force, and we see Obe wan Kenobi teaching Luke to embrace or connect with the Force to enable him to be more effective, let the Force be with you. Perhaps it should be with the Force and not against the Force, be with the Spirit and do not resist the Spirit. Luke's companion Hans is sceptical, resistant to the idea of the Force and prefers to rely on his own abilities, it does not always go well. The surnames of the two characters are a subtle message Luke Skywalker connects with the Force whilst Hans Solo remains very earthbound. I wonder which character the church depicts to the world.

Another film with a Spirit motif is The Wizard of Oz. it is the wind that whisks Dorothy away to Oz where nothing is the same and yet everything is the same. It is an adventure which sees her changed as she experiences the familiar in an unfamiliar way. She meets characters who she wants to help and as they journey together they build a relationship of trust in each other but through it all Dorothy wants to return home to Kansas and her family and the end of the film sees her once more at home in her own bed and we are left with the question was it a dream or did it really happen in some alternative time scale. Whatever the answer the Dorothy we see at the end of the film is different, she has a new lightness of Spirit, and she sees people differently, we sense that the experience has opened her eyes.

The Spirit shines in the world and if we are prepared to accept it, we will see things differently and we will be different people. The Spirit brings a lightness and an enthusiasm turning obstacles into opportunities. We learn to trust in something that can only be glimpsed, a shadow drawing us round the corner to something we might have missed, a flash of light that attracts our attention, an idea reflecting at the edge of our mind, an invitation to explore and discover the height and depth, the width and variety of life in God.

The disciples through an experience during the Pentecost celebration began to see things differently and through that found a confidence they did not know they had. It is a confidence we can all have through the experience of remembering we are one and connected to the source of all being in a tangible and exciting way. A spiritual life helps us to see better, to glimpse God in the world but also

to see where we can be the presence of God for others, where we can be the change and make a difference. The spirit is about freedom and courage and when we recognise our oneness and act in love we can show others how to feel The Force and change their lives.

This can seem a daunting task, and I am sure Peter never imagined he would stand up in front of crowd and speak of prophecy, but he did and it was the start of what we came to understand as the Church which is why Pentecost is sometimes referred to as the birthday of the church. However, we must not tie it up so neatly that we forget what it is really about, the power to make a difference which is what the disciples did following their experience at Pentecost. We do this together just like the disciples, using the gifts and skills we have to build relationships and help mend relationships both with people and creation, for we are one in God's love.

Going with the Spirit is more exciting than fighting against it which often leaves us tired, out of sorts and frustrated. When we meet to worship maybe we should spend time sharing where we have glimpsed the Spirit and follow the yellow brick road to see where it leads us. Our buildings are a gift from God and the Spirit can and does work through the building if we allow the Spirit to work through us and use our building to offer others a glimpse of God in a variety of guises. A picture of creation in all its beauty, a story of a random act of kindness, a poem that lifts the heart to wonder, an opportunity to give and be a part of something bigger than ourselves. As we celebrate Pentecost it is a sign of new beginnings and as we emerge from Covid we are invited into a new world with new opportunities and a new way of doing and being inspired by the Spirit of God. Where will this Pentecost take us?

**Suggested Hymn**      We are one in the Spirit

Listen [here](#)

### **Prayers**

Previous knowledge coalesces  
in an erupting vapour  
not dissimilar to a firework display.  
Thoughts unrecognised become clear  
in an evolving moment of knowing.  
Crowds, voices  
fade into an eerie silence  
only to be replaced  
by words spoken from deep within.  
Sentence by sentence  
cosmic knowledge unfolds  
in a tumultuous outpouring  
of full humanity and oneness.

Eternal God,  
When we choose to hide away, afraid,  
shock us;  
join the dots of our fragmented vision  
that we may be released from fear  
into the wonder of love.  
With a cascade of spiritual fireworks  
illuminate the signs of the kingdom  
in the world around us and lead us out  
into a new way of freedom  
and love for all your people.  
May love be our courage and love be the key  
to living life in all its fullness,  
living as one with you and all people

learning to live in the power of the spirit  
which is the knowledge of love.

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Loving God, when we are tempted to believe that there is no good news may we be open to your Spirit to and glimpse the presence of your love in the world around us. Where we see need may your Spirit show us opportunities to make a difference and embolden to use our gifts and skills to be the change.

**May love be our courage and love be the key as we learn to live in the power of the spirit.**

As we witness the horrors of war provoked by fear and injustice may we invoke love and justice through our words and actions. As we worship, we offer our prayers of concern for all people whose lives are being torn apart by war, for the people whose lives are dominated by injustice bringing hunger and illness, unfair wages and a sense of frustration. Through generous sharing may our actions offer hope and love to those in need.

**May love be our courage and love be the key as we learn to live in the power of the spirit.**

We pray for our country and the government elected to lead and be the decision makers. May a spirit of wisdom be at the heart of government and through a sense of responsibility and accountability may members of parliament be guided in their actions. We pray for the Queen and her family at this time of celebration, giving thanks for the dutiful service of the Queen over seventy years and praying for her health and happiness. May her life of faith and service be a model for those who follow and a model for our own life of service to the world following the way of Jesus.

**May love be our courage and love be the key as we learn to live in the power of the spirit.**

We pray for our churches, separate and yet together in your love. As we face a new future may your Spirit challenge and inspire us to bigger dreams and bolder decisions. May we seek to reach out to the community around us may we be creative in our actions and look for new opportunities by recognising the obstacles that challenge relationships. Recognising the Spirit in the challenges we face as church may we discover new ways of connecting and using our gifts to be a place of love and friendship for everyone.

**May love be our courage and love be the key as we learn to live in the power of the spirit.**

We pray for our families and friends, the people we care for and who care for us. May we always be loving in our words and actions, showing a different way to be and to live. We pray that those who have not yet recognised your presence will be enabled to see you and know you through the lives we lead, and we give thanks that even though they have not yet seen you they are held in your love, as are all people.

**May love be our courage and love be the key as we learn to live in the power of the spirit.**

As we move into another week, we pray that we will be open to change and ready to see differently following the way of Jesus. Amen.

**Our offering to God.**

As we worship together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously and sharing the message of hope that is God's love. Amen

**Suggested hymn**      Great giver of courage, fresh influx of love

**Blessing**

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.