

## A service for 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020

**Bible Reading:** Psalm 104: 24-34, 35

**Hymn:** **Touch the earth lightly** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-js8Ko2qU1I>

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|---|---|
| 1. Touch the earth lightly,<br>use the earth gently,<br>nourish the life of the world in our care:<br>gift of great wonder,<br>ours to surrender,<br>trust for the children tomorrow will bear. | 3. Let there be greening,<br>birth from the burning,<br>water that blesses and air that is sweet,<br>health in God's garden,<br>hope in God's children,<br>regeneration that peace will complete. |
| 2. We who endanger,<br>who create hunger,<br>agents of death for all creatures that live,<br>we who would foster<br>clouds of disaster--<br>God of our planet, forestall and forgive!           | 4. God of all living,<br>God of all loving,<br>God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,<br>teach us, deflect us,<br>Christ reconnect us,<br>using us gently and making us one.                  |

*Shirley Erena Murray (b1931)*

### **Prayers**

Loving God, we are constantly amazed that you come to us in new and exciting ways. On this day we remember how your Spirit came and empowered ordinary people to become the Church.

We would pray like a diverse crowd gathered in Jerusalem and demoralized disciples in an upper room, come Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit of God come to us now. Speak your peace to our hearts, send us your power, and your comfort that we may hear your call to us today and live as your people, today and always. Forgive us when we forget you are there, and we struggle on in our own strength. Renew us and inspire us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Our God is a gracious forgiving God. Jesus tells us we can start again. Our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen

**Bible Reading** **Acts 2: 1-21**

We seem to be living through a time of celebrations during May this year, people across this land celebrated the seventy fifth anniversary of the end of the second world war on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May, during the last few days we have celebrated the eightieth anniversary of Operation Dynamo the rescue of over three hundred thousand British and French troops on a flotilla of small boats, remarkably the task began on May 26<sup>th</sup> and was completed by the 4<sup>th</sup> June. These are big events in the life of our nation and ordinarily we would hold street parties and mass gatherings to celebrate.

The events of Pentecost almost two thousand years ago is one of the biggest, most amazing acts that the New Testament Church has seen in its history, Christ was born in humble stable, unseen by most, he was nailed to a tree, witnessed by a handful of people, he rose from the dead and seen by some, his closest friends gathered around him as he ascended into heaven all small events witnessed by small groups. Things were very different on the day of Pentecost, The spirit comes in wind and fire, the Spirit does not whimper down on the gathered people, they had waited for generations for this moment and when it comes, it come in an incredible way. The believers spill out into the street, singing and dancing and celebrating, this is fun, this is exciting, and it is witnessed by thousands.

*Consider:*

- *How often do you get so excited by the Word of God, that you want to shout it from the rooftops? Try to call to mind some occasions when you have God at work in your life.*
- *How would you like to see the Church react when some day in the future we can spill out of our Church buildings, filled with the Spirit and rejoicing as we share the Joy of knowing that we are filled with his love?*
- *How will you respond personally, when this is behind us and life can move forward in new ways, armed with all that we have learned about God, the world and ourselves simply by living with this experience.*

**Hymn: Breath on me breath of God** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=elu0nuPX4Us>

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.
2. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Until my heart is pure,  
Until with Thee I will one will,  
To do and to endure.
3. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Till I am wholly Thine,  
Until this earthly part of me  
Glows with Thy fire divine.
4. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
So shall I never die,  
But live with Thee the perfect life  
Of Thine eternity.

*Edwin Hatch (1835-1889)*

**Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12: 3-13**

Methodist Minister only ever serve an agreed term in any appointment for a maximum of five years, following that term of office, there can be an agreed extension of up to a further five years depending on the will of the Circuit and the minister. The process was launched during last week, Diane Smith's and my appointment in this circuit come to an end in August 2021, so over the coming weeks there will be conversations which will lead to a decision being made this summer about what Diane and I will do next year. I have always found these conversations to be a strange experience because our expectations of ministers tend to be fairly high and ideally we would really like what we can never have and in the end we have to accept whatever we get, flaws and all.

As St Paul writes to the Church in Corinth, he is trying to explain that for the Church to be the most effective it can be, we need to rely on the fact that different people bring different skills, gifts and graces to the table. Clearly Paul recognises that none of these gifts hold any greater importance than another, but the combination is what makes the whole work, but critically he believes that all these things are gifts from God, through the power of the Spirit.

*Consider:*

- *Think about somebody you know well and have done for some time. What Spiritual gifts do you recognise in that person, that you have valued in the past or even now at this strange time?*
- *What do you believe are the Spiritual gifts God has given to you that maybe others are missing during this time?*
- *Do you feel that your gifts are being used in the life of the Church and if so how?*

**A time of prayer**

After each bidding, "come Holy Spirit", you are invited to say, "renew the whole creation."

On our world and its pain and uncertainty, come Holy Spirit.

On our nation, our Queen, and our government, come Holy Spirit.

On the city, town, or village in which we live, on those who keep us safe at the moment, come Holy Spirit.

On those who are frightened, unwell, alone, and especially those who are in the grip of Covid-19, come Holy Spirit.

On our church, on other churches we share with and the Church throughout the world, come Holy Spirit.

On each of us, right now, come Holy Spirit. Amen.

***The Lord's Prayer***

**Hymn: Come down O love divine** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a5T\\_511look](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a5T_511look)

1. Come down, O Love divine!  
seek out this soul of mine  
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.
2. O let it freely burn  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
and let your glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round the while my path  
illuminating.
3. And so the yearning strong  
with which the soul will long  
shall far surpass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace  
till we become the place  
in which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

*Bianco da Siena (1434)*

**Gospel: John 20: 19-23**

One of my greatest fears in the current situation is that I am now spending most of my time in the house. I speak with people frequently on the telephone or by using video conferencing, but it seems a long time now since I met somebody face to face and chatted. I force myself to go out of the house most days for a short walk with Karen, but I haven't been in a shop for some time now and my concern is that the more we lock ourselves away the more difficult it will be to go out when all of this is behind us.

You might be quite surprised to see these two very different accounts of the disciples receiving the Holy Spirit, the first, this one recorded in St John's Gospel is on the evening of Easter Day when the Disciples are locked away behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. This account is very personal, it is for the ten of them, bearing in mind that by now Judas is presumably not part of their number and we know because of later verses that Thomas is absent, this is just for them, the inner circle.

The events we read earlier in the Acts on the Apostles is a very public affair, this is for the Church of Christ and this makes me think that for all of us there are two sides to our faith, our own personal relationship with Christ, the faith that is private, in our heart and minds, behind closed door. The other side is our public sharing of that faith and I believe that the personal relationship feeds our public witnessing, I wonder whether one can survive without the other? Maybe our personal faith feeds the public way that we express our faith by our living.

*Consider*

- *What do you find feeds your faith, poetry, prose, music, song, the beauty of nature, pictures, touch, textures, silence, noise, solitude or company, where are you fed?*
- *What is the public face of your witnessing for God? Do you find it easy or difficult talking about faith? Is it more comfortable doing rather than saying? Which do you feel is more effective? Or are both of equal importance.*
- *Remember that the disciples who were hidden away behind closed doors were given prophetic words to speak once filled with the Spirit, how might you be filled*

*Pray*

*Spirit of the living God,*

*Fall afresh on me.*

*Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.*

*Spirit of the living God,*

*Fall afresh on me.*

**Hymn: May the God of hope go with us every day** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OliVvTBjzVM>

May the God of hope go with us every day,  
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.

May the God of justice speed us on our way,  
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

*Praying, let us work for peace,*

*singing, share our joy with all.*

*working for a world that's new,*

*faithful when we hear Christ's call.*

*Spanish Traditional*

**A prayer of blessing**

May God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, go with us now. May God's Spirit be on us, on those we love, and on those for whom we should pray, this Pentecost day and always.