

The Spirit for All



Call to worship: Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved

Hymn StF 391 O Breath of life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3bsgoPjcg4>

O Breath of life, Come sweeping through us,
Revive Thy church with life and power.

O Breath of Life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit Thy church to meet this hour.

O Wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in Thy tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore; for this we plead.

O Breath of Love, come, breathe within us,
Renewing thought and will and heart:
Come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
Revive Thy church in every part.

Revive us, Lord! is zeal abating
While harvest fields are vast and white?
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,
Equip Thy church to spread the light.

SoF 407 Elizabeth Porter Head.

Prayer We wait for you, Spirit of God

Prayer of approach

Spirit of God, breathing, blazing, blessing,
inspire our worship,
ignite our passion, inform our action.

We wait for you, Spirit of God.

Spirit of God, dancing, delighting, descending,
move through our lives,
melt our hearts, motivate our loving.

We wait for you, Spirit of God.

Spirit of God, opening, offering, outpouring,
reveal truth to us,
renew our faith, refine our discipleship.

We wait for you, Spirit of God.

Reading Acts 2:1-21 The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost

Festival time is party time. Covid was a time of limited parties, indeed the small group of people that indulged themselves in parties got themselves in trouble. At least one lost his job! Last year Covid was having less of an impact on our lives, and we had a great party to celebrate the diamond Jubilee of the Queen's reign. This year it's been party time again, first Christmas and then easter celebrations and then most recently the King's coronation. Lots of reasons to celebrate. Some of those parties will have been memorable, but many may have merged into the backdrop of our lives, giving a good feel, bringing a measure of happiness but not transformational.

Festival times for Jewish people, were also feel-good occasions. There was a regular pattern of festivals, three of which Jews were encouraged, if possible, to travel to Jerusalem. Jesus had travelled with his parents several years when growing up. When he was 12, he travelled with them to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. He loved the atmosphere and the learning and had significant conversations with religious leaders. He loved it and his parents didn't realise he had stayed behind until they were on the journey home.

Now 21 years later aged 33 Jesus had shared the Passover with his 12 disciples. Jesus has said some strange things at the Passover meal. He had given new meaning to bread and wine – representing his flesh and his blood – and then the most terrible day his disciples had faced happened – within 24 hours Jesus was dead on a cross.

If party times fade in the background of general wellbeing in life, disasters happening are sharply imprinted on our memories. We are more likely to remember traumatic events. I have vivid memories of where I was when President John Kennedy was assassinated. I have vivid memories of the Sunday morning when Princess Diana was killed in a road accident. I relive details from the boxing day Tsunami. The visual impact of passenger aeroplanes flying into the World Trade centre on 9/11 and the subsequent collapse of the twin towers is imprinted in my mind.

The death of Jesus in such a terrible way would have impacted those disciples. They were there at the arrest of Jesus in the garden but fled into the darkness. Peter had a bit of guts, he used his sword, until stopped by Jesus. He followed at a distance but when recognised by servants denied even knowing Jesus – and when Jesus looked at him Peter dissolved into remorse. Jesus had correctly foreseen his denial.

The disciples are broken and devastated, all they had hoped for gone. Even when they got news that Jesus was risen from the dead, many struggled to believe it until they had seen Jesus themselves. The next 7 weeks must have been strange for those disciples. Jesus suddenly appearing among them, sometimes through locked doors, sometime while walking. Sometime on the shore by the sea of Galilee when some of the disciples had gone back to work. The roller coaster of emotions continuing. When Jesus appeared there was great happiness, a barbecue breakfast on the seashore. Then he's gone again. This goes on for 40 days after the resurrection. Then one day he leads them out to the Mount of Olives, - Jesus gives them his last word of instruction, including a job to be done but told also to wait first for the promised Holy Spirit that would enable them to do this job. The length of waiting turned out to be 10 days, but the disciples had lost track of time they couldn't comprehend how it was going to work out. There would have been anxiety, would Jesus be true to his word, or would the authorities round them up and finally put an end to stories of resurrection. The news flashes that Jesus had risen from the dead and appeared to people were less frequent, the cover up by the High priest of the empty tomb, being just the result of the disciples stealing the body of Jesus and telling stories about resurrection was being believed. It is difficult for us to fully comprehend the see-saw state of the emotions of the disciple during this period.

But pilgrims were already on the way. The next festival, party time, was about to happen – Jerusalem would be buzzing with new pilgrims coming for the Pentecost festival.

God's timing is spot on – always has been – what a time and place to have a great impact on the known world. People from all over the Mediterranean, from the Roman empire were in Jerusalem – potential missionaries to take the good news of salvation through Jesus to world – fulfilling the words of prophecy written years before. Luke tells us in Acts that there were about 120 meeting together for pray in Jerusalem at this time and they were gathered together on that morning of the Pentecost festival.

Luke describes them as being all together, he describes a violent wind, not only the 120 but the early morning dramatic wind in Jerusalem is creating a commotion, there was heighten expectation – the prayer meeting, has blown all expectations. This is what Jesus had promised. The noise has brought people together, a crowd is growing, what is going on? It was not yet 9am and Jerusalem is buzzing. Peter steps out, empowered by the Spirit, remembers the quote from the prophecy of Joel and proclaims this is being fulfilled today. Peter and the other disciples are so eloquent and clear in their description of what Jesus has done – first there is incredulity – these are uneducated people from Galilee speaking, yet between them they know our native languages. In Jerusalem this was not normal – this was supernatural. Transformation was taking place in people's lives. Peter spoke with such conviction about God's Spirit being poured out for everybody, not just the priests. This was fulfilment of the prophecies and the promise Jesus had made.

If you think back to that first easter evening, Thomas had not been there when Jesus appeared, and he failed to believe the testimony of the other 10 disciples and the two women who had seen Jesus alive. Thomas a friend, a disciple of Jesus not believing his fellow disciples. Fifty days later, as a transformed Peter spoke about the salvation that Jesus offers, 3000 people believed. The church was born. Up till then it had been Peter and the 11 disciples, then the 120 who had seen Jesus alive over the 40 days, Now after one sermon 3000 people become believers and filled with the Spirit. This was a transformational day not just for the 12 disciples, nor just the 120-prayer team but for 3000 people, pilgrims from many countries.

Why was this transformational – God had chosen this time when so many pilgrims were in Jerusalem who would return home and spread the good news that God's Spirit was for all. That everyone could have direct access to God – it wasn't just through the priests. All these followers were given a new confidence to speak of Jesus, even in languages they did not know. Out of the despair, anxiety and confusion was born a new movement of God's Spirit. For some of us who have been touched by the Holy Spirit, we may remember in vivid detail how the Holy Spirit came upon us, but there are also those for whom the details have faded from memory, perhaps because we have continued to know his transforming work in our lives. But my guess is that all of us need reminding as Paul did with Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in us, (T Tim 1:6)

When Tom Stuckey was president of the Methodist Church, he wrote a book "On the edge of Pentecost" giving hope and encouragement that we were on the edge of new move of God's Holy Spirit – Are you open to the renewing, empowering work of the Holy Spirit. The world is waiting for our transformation by his Spirit by which the world itself will be transformed.

For your reflection.

- 1) What are the significant moments of Transformation in your life? Have you settled for the quiet life?
- 2) Read what happened next Acts chapters 3 & 4. Gather for prayer with a few others and pray for a fresh outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. Encourage each other to be open for what God wants to do in your life. He wants to bless you so that you may be a blessing to others.

Prayers Holy Spirit, coming as wind and fire, free and irrepressible, we pray today for all who long for change and for all who fear it. We think of the poor and the hungry, the homeless and refugee, the sick and the unemployed, the downtrodden and the oppressed - these, and so many others, who yearn for a new beginning, an opportunity to start afresh. May their prayers be answered and their dreams realised.

As you came at Pentecost, **come again today.**

We pray for those who see change as a threat: a sweeping away of everything that is tried and trusted; the imposition of unknown challenges and an uncertain future. May they rest secure in the knowledge that, whatever else may change, you will remain constant. As you came at Pentecost, **come again today.**

Holy Spirit, coming gently as a dove, we pray for all who long for peace, and all who have lost sight of what peace really means. We think of those in homes racked by tensions, families split by petty disputes, communities scarred by prejudice and intolerance, and countries torn apart by war.

May dialogue triumph over confrontation, and unity replace division.

As you came at Pentecost, **come again today.**

We pray for those who fill their lives with noise or activity, afraid of facing themselves in a time of quiet reflection, attempting somehow to mask their sense of emptiness; and we pray, too, for those who seek fulfilment in that which can never finally satisfy - wealth, possessions, power, success.

May they discover the secret of true contentment, the peace that passes understanding that only you can give.

As you came at Pentecost, **come again today.**

Holy Spirit, you changed the lives of the apostles and of countless people through history, just as you are changing our lives in turn, each renewed through your sovereign power.

Come now and change our world in all its need, so that it may enjoy hope and peace, healing and harmony, and so that all may come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.

As you came at Pentecost, **come again today. Amen.**

Hymn O God of Burning, Cleansing Flame

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qydwzaeVa0>

O God of Burning, Cleansing Flame:

Send the fire! Your blood-bought gift today we claim:
Send the fire today! Look down and see this waiting host,
And send the promised Holy Ghost;
We need another Pentecost! Send the fire today!
Send the fire today!

God of Elijah, hear our cry: Send the fire!
And make us fit to live or die: Send the fire today!
To burn up every trace of sin, To bring the light and glory in,
The revolution now begin! Send the fire today!
Send the fire today!

It's fire we want, for fire we plead: Send the fire!

The fire will meet our every need: Send the fire today!

For strength to always do what's right, For grace to conquer in the fight,
For power to walk the world in white: Send the fire today! Send the fire today!

To make our weak hearts strong and brave: Send the fire!
To live, a dying world to save: Send the fire today!
Oh, see us on Your altar lay, We give our lives to you today,
So crown the offering now we pray: Send the fire today! Send the fire today!

Send the fire today!

William Booth. SF 955 Adpt. Lex Loizides. © 1994 Kingsway's Thankyou Music

Spirit Blessing Sense the warm passion of the Spirit's flame.

Speak with the fervour of the Spirit's voice. Move with the music of the Spirit's dance.

May God's Spirit bless you, inspire you and confirm you in your calling as a disciple of Christ. **Amen.**