

Welcome to the joint worship for Christ Church and The Bridgwater Drive Church. Today we celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit to the early church, we also ordain and induct new Elders to Christ Church and celebrate the fact that we are back in the building, albeit still with restrictions. Welcome to those watching at home and to those watching at Bridgwater Drive. Next week the service will be live-streamed from Bridgwater Drive on the Christ Church Facebook page as usual, but from 10.30am, the service time there. Today we also celebrate the Lord's Supper, so if you are at home and wish to participate, please have bread and wine or juice ready. Here in the church we will be using the individually wrapped wafer and juice portions. We have permission to use all the previously recorded music in today's service. So, let us worship God!

Call to worship – Pentecost People sung by Rev'd Anne Sardeson

Come Pentecost People,
Behold God is here!
Enfolding creation
that's drowning in fear;
embracing in hope
all that we do not know;
the seeds in the ground
are the life that will grow.

Come Pentecost People,
behold, God is true!
God holds us and guides us
in all that is new.
Our comfort in sorrow:
awaken our heart
to see your great story
of which we're a part.

Come Pentecost People:
behold, God will be!
Amidst all the clamour
a Word that is free;
a Way that is waiting
in this time and place;
a Life that is living
in Ground that is grace.

© Anne Sardeson – Pentecost 2020

Opening Prayer (inspired by Ezekiel 37:1-14)

Compassionate God,
the wind of your Spirit is the very sign of life for all who long for you.
One breath from you and we are rescued from the arid valley of dry bones,
given muscles and sinews and joy with which to praise you,
and filled with the holy hope you grant to all your faithful children.
Let our whole lives be filled with the life-breath of the Spirit,
that what has lain dormant may burst into bloom,
and what looks to us to be death
may be revealed as but sleep
before the emergence of new life. **Amen**

Come Out! On the Breath of God, Service Prayers for the fifth Sunday of Lent, by the Rev. Elizabeth Dilley

Offertory

You are reminded to send in your gifts for the work of the church by cheque or bank transfer.
Holy One, receive our gifts by your grace.
Multiply and use them through the power of the Holy Spirit
to accomplish Christ's work of love in the world. **Amen.**

Hymn Enemy of Apathy (She sits like a bird) by John Bell, copyright © WGRG, c/o Iona Community, Glasgow, Scotland. www.wildgoose.scot. Reproduced by permission.

She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters,
Hovering on the chaos of the world's first day;
She sighs and she sings, mothering creation,
Waiting to give birth to all the Word will say.

She wings over earth, resting where she wishes,
Lighting close at hand or soaring through the skies;
She nests in the womb, welcoming each wonder,
Nourishing potential hidden to our eyes.
She dances in fire, startling her spectators,

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Waking tongues of ecstasy where dumbness reigned;
She weans and inspires all whose hearts are open,
Nor can she be captured, silenced or restrained.

For she is the Spirit, one with God in essence,
Gifted by the Saviour in eternal love;
She is the key opening the scriptures,
Enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.

**Bible readings: Acts 2:1-21
Ezekiel 37:1-14**

I'm sure you will be pleased to know that with the ordination and induction of elders today and the fact that the government guidelines say we should still try to keep worship services as short as possible, that I'll be doing a very short sermon! Of course, we heard the account from the book of Acts about the coming of the Holy Spirit to the early church which is what Pentecost is. But I was rather taken by the reading from Ezekiel and how it is a metaphor for exactly the time we find ourselves in now – creeping out of the shadows of lockdown and restrictions, gradually coming out into the light of a new start.

The talk of dry bone and graves will no doubt bring to mind recent images from the news of funeral pyres burning across India, but the prophet Ezekiel is not talking literally about raising the dead, and putting flesh on dry bones; it is a metaphor for a new start, for the people of Israel coming out of exile and re-establishing themselves back in their homeland. The context of the book of prophesy of Ezekiel is the exile of the Judeans in Babylonia. He predicts the destruction of Jerusalem, and afterwards turns to themes of renewed hope and regeneration. When we hear that the bones of the house of Israel were 'dried up' it is an ancient metaphor for being downcast in spirit and the idea of resurrection is the antidote to that. The ancient anti-depressant, if you will. God is going to bring the people out of their despair and out of their exile. God will put his spirit within them and take them back to their land and then they will know that God is God and that God has spoken and acted. The breath that God will breathe into them to make them alive is the same Hebrew word used for breath, spirit or wind used in Genesis when God created the world and breathed life into Adam. And that is presumably why this passage is chosen for Pentecost – not only did the Holy Spirit come to the early church, and to the disciples as the advocate in the absence of the bodily, human presence of Jesus, but God has breathed his spirit into us and creation since the beginning of time to make us alive.

The gospel reading for today comes from John chapter 15: "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning." The Holy Spirit is sent to help us witness to Christ Jesus, to share the good news in word and deed.

We have a new beginning today in many ways – Pentecost itself is a kind of new start, the gift of the spirit; we are back in the church building again after many months, we are ordaining two new elders

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and we are looking forward to a time in the not too distant future when restrictions may be relaxed enough for us to almost get back to 'normal' and for church activities other than worship to resume, alongside the start of building work, and other new projects.

The May issue of Reform spoke about the theme of exile and coming out of it and the many parallels between the biblical exile and our current situation of lockdowns and coming out of them. There was also an interview with the two General Assembly Moderators, in which one of them said: "The pandemic may be helping us to step back and ask what we really are here for and where God wants us to go next. Before all this, lots of people may have been stuck in a bit of a rut: 'This is what we normally do... This is what we always do.' This may be a good opportunity for churches to say: 'What is God calling us to do and to be now?'"

Or, as a church member recently said to me in the context of discussing a possible new project related to prayer – "The time to be a cautious church is over, gone, finished. It's time now to run with the inklings of the Spirit and be open to God taking us where God wants us to go." I for one say, AMEN!

Ordination and Induction of Elders including (please join in the words in bold):

Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church

With the whole Christian Church the United Reformed Church believes in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The living God, the only God, ever to be praised.

The life of faith to which we are called is the Spirit's gift continually received through the Word, the Sacraments and our Christian life together.

We acknowledge the gift and answer the call, giving thanks for the means of grace.

The highest authority for what we believe and do is God's Word in the Bible alive for his people today through the help of the Spirit.

We respond to this Word, whose servants we are with all God's people through the years.

We accept with thanksgiving to God the witness to the catholic faith in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

We acknowledge the declarations made in our own tradition by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ in which they stated the faith and sought to make its implications clear.

Faith alive and active: gift of an eternal source, renewed for every generation.

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union in which we give expression to our faith in forms which we believe contain the essential elements of the Church's life, both catholic and reformed; but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises, to change the Basis of Union and to make new statements of faith in ever new obedience to the Living Christ.

Our crucified and risen Lord, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

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Held together in the Body of Christ through the freedom of the Spirit,
we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts and uphold the rights of personal conviction.
For the sake of faith and fellowship it shall be for the church to decide
where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love and grow together in the peace of Christ.

We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state.
In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state,
but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head.
Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind,
and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

While we ourselves are servants in the world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians,
for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses
so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God
and praise him more and more for ever.

Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is: to God be eternal glory. Amen....

Renewal of Commitment

And now as elders and members of this church and congregation,
Let us confirm our commitment to each other and to the gospel.
Let us pursue what makes for peace and build each other up in love.

**We will grow together in humility, gentleness and patience;
we will nurture each other in faith; we will bear with one another in love;
we will make every effort to maintain the unity of the Holy Spirit
in the bond of peace so that we may faithfully proclaim the gospel of Christ.**

The God of peace will make us complete in everything good.

To whom be the glory for ever.

The Lord of peace will give us peace,
at all times and everywhere.

The peace of the Lord is with you,
And also with you.

Eternal God, accept this commitment made in your presence,
and give us grace to make it true, so that we may not fail in the end,
but give you glory and honour by the way we live
and through everything we say and do, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Hymn Spirit, lead us to the table (tune R&S104) recorded by Thora in 2020

Spirit, lead us to the table
where the feast of life is laid:
bread of hope and wine of healing,
freely for us all displayed.
Spirit lead us, Spirit feed us
with the food that Christ has made.

Spirit, help us here remember
selfless deeds by which we're cured:
secret pains and public torture,
all, for us, by Christ endured.
Spirit reach us, Spirit teach us
how this death our life secured.

Spirit bless us with your presence
as we eat and then depart,
that, replenished, fed and strengthened,
each may keep a Christ-like heart.
Spirit know us, Spirit show us
how to share your loving art.

Spirit, in the name of Jesus,
draw us closer, make us one:
all the guests around God's table
here united in God's own Son.
Spirit hold us and enfold us,
'til your healing work is done.

John Campbell, © Kevin Mayhew Ltd

Lord's Supper

Jesus calls us to the well, inviting us to drink of the Living Water, and the life eternal.
Jesus calls us out of the shadows, to be entirely known, and entirely filled with God's presence.
Jesus calls us all: all who were made in God's own image,
all who breathe the breath of God's spirit: the Spirit of Life.
Jesus calls us to the table, to the meal that nourishes our bodies
and binds our dry bones into one Body, living in Christ. Jesus calls us, here and now.
Come to this table, you who are beloved in Christ.
Come, not because you must, but because you may.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We thank you, Holy God,
For being a fool in the eyes of the world.
We thank you for abandoning control,
for creating a universe, new and strange.
We thank you for nurturing life, diverse, evolving, surprising and strange.
We thank you for calling a people who did not walk straight or know their limits.
We thank you for different bodies and desires
for different ways of thinking and speaking
for different ways of belonging and believing.
May our thanks cut a path through dividing walls to free the Spirit's song, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

One came who upset the rules: who accepted the grace of the outsider,
who looked for wisdom in those who did not count,
who took his food in the company of the rejected.
One came who walked a strange path: who did not think anyone was unclean,
who did not look for scapegoats, who refused to put a price on anyone's head.
The tables of the moneychangers he threw over. The tables of liberation he threw open.
On the night before he gave himself up, he ate and drank to the end of slavery.
He took the bread and broke it, and said: 'This is my body. Do this to remember me.'
He took the wine and poured it, and said: 'This is my blood. Do this to remember me.'
May the Spirit of creation take these earthly things and show us in their brokenness,
the life-giving plenty the end of all poverty, the body and blood of Christ.
This is the mystery of faith:

Christ has died

Christ is risen

Christ will come again.

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be ready to live for you
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. **Amen**

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this is remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of bread and wine

Prayer after communion

Source of life, and breath, and being, breathe into the dry dust of our existence.
Nourished in body by this bread and wine, may we strive for the nourishment of all bodies:
may we work to end hunger in this creation that provides amply for all.
Nourished in spirit by the Body which is within our own, may we strive for the incorporation of all:
may we work to break the barriers that divide us from one another and from you.
In the love that sustains us, and the Spirit that animates us,
may we give all thanks and praise to you, O God of all. Amen

Prayers of intercession (inspired by Ezekiel 37:1-14) © 2008, Brummhart Publishing (amended)

O God, who always listens to us, who breathes new life into us,
call us forward to resurrection.
We are surrounded by a world of dry bones, a world of death and despair,
a world where we lose hope in our structures, ourselves, and you.
We pray for this world in need of your Word:
for all the people in it especially the people of Gaza and all those in Palestine and Israel
experiencing violence;
for those who lay down their lives to protest against injustice in Palestine, Colombia, Myanmar,
Hong Kong and all places where injustice currently reigns stronger than peace and compassion;
for those who lead and can make a difference in these places and situations
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, who always listens to us, who breathes new life into us,
call us forward to resurrection.
We are surrounded by people with dried up lives,
people unable to see your life past their tears.
We pray for this world in need of your healing presence:
for those who are imprisoned or alone,
those who are ill or infirm, or grieving, who we think of in the silence...
Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, who always listens to us, who breathes new life into us,
call us forward to resurrection.
We are spellbound by those dry bones, terrified of the stink of death,
and often too dumbfounded to call forth life in your name.
Give us the strength and wisdom to call out injustice when we see it, to share what we have
with those in need, and to take what action we can to halt climate change.
We pray for your chosen people, your Church and today especially our
newly ordained and inducted elders.
We pray for the courage not just to follow you to death,
but to follow you to the New Creation.

O God, who always listens to us, and breathes new life into us,
Call us to follow in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who taught us when we pray to say:
Our Father who art in heaven . . .

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Hymn Pentecost Spirit, unsettling us all (tune – Lord of all hopefulness) recorded by Naomi in 2020

Pentecost Spirit, unsettling us all, you bring dislocation as part of our call;
you move us and change us and wrench us from home, yet, bearing your gospel, we're never alone.

Though we're in exile from what we have been,
God, keep us and hold us through things unforeseen;
do not let this absence* corrupt or corrode, but journey on with us and carry our load.

Fill with fresh blessing, new hope and new song each new generation that follows along,
that you and your people may be their true friends, supporting, sustaining, 'til life's journey ends.

Written by John Campbell for a blessing service of the great-grandchild of a couple who migrated from Jamaica. *changed from 'city' to make it more appropriate to our current times. © Kevin Mayhew Ltd

Blessing

Go and strive to bring forth new life.
Dream dreams, pursue visions and speak of God's goodness
in the words of those who would hear.
And may the God who breathed life into creation be your delight.
May Christ Jesus give hope to your dreaming,
and may the Holy Spirit, your advocate and supporter,
set your hearts ablaze with a passion for peace. Amen

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