

**Christ Church United Reformed Church, Rayleigh**

**Sunday 28 May 2023**

**Pentecost**

**Call to Worship:** “Praise the Lord, praise his name you servants of the Lord, who stand in God’s house, praise the lord

because he is good, praise the lord because he is kind. (Psalm 135).

The love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **(and also with you).**

**Hymn WF 34 : “Holy Spirit, living breath of God”**

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,

Breathe new life into my willing soul

Bring the presence of the risen Lord

to renew my heart and make me whole

Cause your word to come alive in me

give me faith for what I cannot see;

Give me passion for your purity;

Holy Spirit breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within

May your joy be seen in all I do,

Love enough to cover every sin

In each thought and deed and attitude:

Kindness to the greatest and the least,

gentleness that sows the path of peace.

Turn my strivings into works of grace;

breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation’s birth,

giving life to all that God has made,

Show your power once again on earth,  
cause your church to hunger for your ways.  
May the fragrance of our prayers arise;  
Lead us on the road of sacrifice,  
That in unity the face of Christ  
May be clear for all the world to see.

### **Children's time.**

Today is when we celebrate Pentecost, but what is Pentecost? Imagine the scene. The disciples are gathered together, praying. All of a sudden God's power was coming to them like a rushing wind, or flames searching out each disciple, God's power touching each one of them. Can you imagine the scene?

I must admit it is difficult to take it all in. Previously ordinary people suddenly all fired up ready to tell everyone about it. A totally different experience for these people from walking alongside Jesus, for example, as all the disciples had done throughout his ministry.

How can I illustrate this overwhelming event? What do you think is on the communion table? That's right it is a lamp. A lamp gives us light to let us see what we are doing or where we are going. Now would it help if the lamp knew what electricity was and how it worked?

Just knowledge will not bring it to life! However, if I plug it into a socket the electricity brings it to life giving the lamp the energy it needs and creates all kind of potential. That is exactly what is like to have God's spirit living in us and flowing through us although if we take this literally we might look a bit silly all lit up like the lamp. But surely we can be like the disciples all fired up and ready to tell other people about Christ. Now you may think we are just kids, what can we do? The answer is a lot! We could bring a friend to Sunday Club for example, or just tell a friend about coming to church. Just think what a difference being fired up and ready to talk about Jesus would make!

## **Prayer**

Let us all now bow our heads as we talk to our Heavenly Creator.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, Forgive our foolish ways, because we are all puffed up with our own importance – we fail to acknowledge that above all We are yours for you created each one of us in your image, we fail to acknowledge the gifts that you have given us – the gifts that make us an individual. We fail to acknowledge the greatest gift of all, your Son, Jesus Christ through whose death and crucifixion, if we proclaim Him our Saviour, we are still guaranteed everlasting life and the forgiveness our sins. We acknowledge that we are far from perfect, saying and doing things you do not like and leaving things unsaid or undone that we should have dealt with. Lord it is now in all our weakness that we need you most, even although you seem so far away. Yet we can still hear that quiet voice that shows you are beside us, not just now but all the time. Dear Father, still our hearts, give us your peace so that in the stillness and quiet in the midst of our daily lives, we can be at one with you.

### **and now we say the modern version of The Lord's Prayer:-**

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be your name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On earth as in heave

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

And deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever. AMEN

### **Hymn WF 81 “Purify My heart”**

Purify my heart, let me be as gold

And precious silver,

Purify my heart,

Let me be as old

*Refiner's fire,*

*My heart's one desire*

*Is to be holy,*

*I choose to be holy,*

*Set apart for you, my Master,*

*Ready to do your will.*

Purify my heart,

cleanse me from within

And make me holy.

Purify my heart,

Cleanse me from my sin

Deep within.

*Refiners fire etc,*

As the children go out to Sunday Club, let us say the Grace to them:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always,

now and for evermore.

### **Reading: Numbers Ch. 11 vv24-30**

#### **Talk 1**

I must admit, this is a first for me, taking about a reading from the book of Numbers.

I think that it is fair to say that this Old Testament book is neither well known nor quoted

from frequently, but nonetheless, I felt that the reading still connected with our theme of

Pentecost.

Some will think of testifying to the glory of God. Others will think of the old testament feast,

the fifty days after Passover, when people were to bring evidence of God the Father blessing them. They were to bring the first part of the harvest and celebrate it together.

After Jesus' ascension, Pentecost takes on a similar proof of God's work.

In John 12 verses 23 and 24 Jesus said "The hour has now come for the Son of Man to receive great glory. I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than

a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, it produces many grains." This Jesus was indicating that by his death a plentiful harvest of new lives would be produced. Pentecost is the proof that God's love makes a difference in lives. It is when we realise the word of God does and celebrate the new lives he has created. Pentecost is also the fulfilment of prophetic dreams such as the dream given to Abraham that through his seed, through one of his descendants, the world would be blessed. Other prophesies

in the Old Testament promised salvation, promised restoration, promised that God had not deviated from or abandoned his plan, a plan for his people. In verse 29 from our reading, Moses says: "Are you concerned about my interests? I wish that the Lord would give his spirit to all his people and make all of them shout like prophets" – Sound familiar? In this instance two of the leaders who had not been in the meeting with the other elders and Moses were also shouting like prophets. Joshua wanted Moses to stop them, but he had failed to recognise the work of the Holy Spirit. Surely we need more people to speak up, not based on their understanding, but on God's understanding. People who will speak as God would speak, who prophesy against sin, not to condemn but to remind us all that God will show them mercy. This is why Moses was all for every person being able

to prophesy. This is what Moses wanted – that the Lord would make all his people prophets by filling them with his Holy Spirit.

That is what Pentecost is all about, the struggle to see what God is doing, the life that has come to be, because of the planting of Jesus, the seed of Abraham in the ground. It is about us coming to God and saying “God you are amazing, look at what you are doing here! Look at what your love has planted and your mercy nourished, what the Holy Spirit is creating right here in our lives. **AMEN**

### **Hymn R&S 308 &309 “Spirit of the loving God”**

Spirit of the living God,  
fall afresh on me.

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.

Spirit of the living God,  
Move among us all;  
Make us one in heart and mind,  
Make us one in love;  
Humble, caring,  
Selfless sharing –  
Spirit of the living God,  
Fill our lives with love.

### **Reading Acts Ch 2 vv 1-21**

#### **Talk 2**

I was quite intrigued to learn why we celebrate Pentecost when we do,  
There were three great Jewish festivals - the Passover, Pentecost and

the Feast of the Tabernacles to which every male Jew living within twenty miles of Jerusalem was legally bound to come. Pentecost means “fiftieth” and another name for Pentecost was “the Feast of Weeks”.

It was so called because it fell on the fiftieth day, a week of weeks, after the Passover. The Passover was celebrated in April so Pentecost fell at the beginning of June. By that time travelling conditions were at their best, so at least as many come to the Feast of Pentecost as came to the Passover, hence the list of countries in this chapter; never was there a more international group in Jerusalem than at the time of Pentecost.

This feast was significant in two ways. Firstly historical significance, commemorating the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai; secondly it had an agricultural significance for at the Passover, the first crop of barley was offered to God; and at Pentecost two loaves were offered in at Pentecost in gratitude for the safe gathering in of the harvest. What really happened at Pentecost, we really do not know, except that the disciples had an experience of power – think back to the lamp that I used as an example – the power of the Holy Spirit flooding their beings as never before.

But what was this all about? The last third of the reading introduces us to one of the basic concepts of both the Old and New Testaments – that of the day of the Lord. The Jews never lost the conviction that they were God’s chosen people. They interpreted this to mean that they were chosen for special privilege amongst the nations of the world. They were always a small nation whose history had been one long disaster, think of the exile and the destruction of the temple and the countless attacks by their enemies. It Was painfully obvious that human means would never be the way to reach the status they deserved as the chosen people. Gradually it had dawned on them that what they could not achieve for themselves, God must do and hence they looked forward to a day when God would intervene directly in history and raise them to the honour they dreamed of. The day of intervention was the day of the Lord.

They divide time into two ages. Firstly the present time, utterly evil and doomed to

destruction; and then there was the age to come, which would be the golden age of God. Between the two there was to be the day of the Lord, which was to be the terrible signs of the new age, which some have likened to labour pains before a birth. It

would arrive suddenly, with no warning, like a thief in the night; it would be a day when

the world would be shaken to its very foundations, a day of judgment and terror. Now comes the great revelation!

Peter stands up and says to the Jews that in the form of Jesus that day had come.

That day about which they had dreamed for generations was here. Now, although this message was directed to the Jews as would be natural at that time, it is a message that has resounded down the ages for Christians too – in Jesus God arrived in person on the scene of human history, not just for one day, the day of the Lord, but for all time.

The promise that God had made to Abraham, that through his seed, one of his descendants, the world would be blessed. Let us rejoice in it, for he is with us always. **AMEN**

### **Hymn R&S 329 “There’s a spirit in the air”**

There’s a spirit in the air,

telling Christians everywhere:

“Praise the love that Christ revealed,

living working in our world.

Lose your shyness, find your tongue

tell the world what God has done:

God in Christ has come to stay.

live tomorrow’s life today.

When believers break the bread,

when a hungry child is fed,



praise the love that Christ revealed,  
Living, working in our world.

Still the Spirit gives us light,  
seeing wrong and setting right,  
God in Christ has come to stay  
Live tomorrow's life today.

When a stranger's not alone,  
where the homeless find a home,  
praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working in our world.

May the Spirit fill our praise,  
guide our thoughts and change our ways;  
God in Christ has come to stay.  
Live tomorrow's life today.

There's a Spirit in the air,  
calling people everywhere:  
praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working in our world.

## **Prayers of Intercession (Sue)**

### **Hymn R&S 295 "Breathe on me breath of God"**

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.

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
Until my heart is pure,  
Until with thee I will one will  
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
Till I am wholly thine,  
until this earthly part of me  
glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God,  
So shall I never die,  
But live with thee the perfect life  
Of thine eternity.

## **Blessing**

Behold the empty cross, not as a sign of sorrow, but as a sign of joy.  
Joy that our Saviour, Jesus Christ lives forever sitting at the right hand of  
His Father. Go out from this place secure in the knowledge that your  
Heavenly Father loves you, that your Saviour Jesus Christ will walk  
alongside you to guide you and that the Holy Spirit will strengthen and  
sustain you. The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to  
shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: The Lord lift up  
his countenance upon you and give you peace.