

WINCHESTER, EASTLEIGH & ROMSEY CIRCUIT
Service at Home for Pentecost Sunday
5th June 2022
prepared by the Revd John Archer

Call to Worship

We remember on this day the events of that day of Pentecost long ago, which so transformed the lives of the disciples. Different though we are, we are all God's people and we come together to worship, united in Jesus. He will give his Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

Opening Prayer

We remember how, in the space of a few moments, the disciples' experience was revolutionised, their expectations turned upside down, their attitudes changed for ever; one moment consumed by fear, the next radiating confidence, one moment uncertain of their future, the next sure of their calling.

You came to them through your Spirit and life was never the same again. So come to us we pray, breathing new fire into our hearts, new energy into our lives and new life into our souls. Move in us we pray, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Read pray or sing StF 293

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImFVg-Taoq0>

All heaven declares
the glory of the risen Lord;
who can compare
with the beauty of the Lord?
For ever he will be the Lamb upon the throne;
I gladly bow the knee, and worship him alone.

I will proclaim the glory of the risen Lord,
who once was slain to reconcile us to God.
For ever you will be
the Lamb upon the throne;
I gladly bow the knee, and worship you alone.

Noel Richards (b.1955) & Tricia Richards (b.1960)

Readings

John 20 : 19 – 22

Acts 2 : 7 – 11

Prayers of Confession

We have rejoiced again today at the gift of your Spirit, the way you breathed new hope, new faith and new life into your people. But we remember that not everyone responded so gladly to the Spirit's coming. From some there was scorn, ridicule and disbelief, suggestions that the apostles were drunk – even out of their minds.

Living God, forgive us that we too can be guilty of a similar response. Instead of welcoming the Spirit, we greet him with cautious and suspicious hearts. Instead of opening our lives to the Spirit's movement, we close our minds to anything which challenges our long held preconceptions. Instead of receiving your Spirit's gifts, we barricade ourselves against change. Save us from ever quenching, obstructing or frustrating the Spirit.

Lord have mercy and forgive us our sins.

Amen

Read pray or sing StF 391

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2gtGKZW2AA>

O breath of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your Church with life and power;
O breath of life, come cleanse, renew us,
and fit your Church to meet this hour.

O wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your 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 your Church in every part.

Elizabeth Ann Head (1850-1956)

Sermon A Tale of Two Rooms

I expect, like me, you have spent some time in your life in a waiting room - maybe at an airport or bus or train station or, more likely, a doctor's or dentist's waiting room - or it may have been going for an interview. They are usually associated for me with a degree of tension and maybe expectation. Our two readings refer to two waiting rooms.

1 John's Waiting Room

"It was late Sunday evening and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities."

This was probably the room where they held the Last Supper, which is thought to be in John Mark's mother's house. They were afraid that their turn would come next. They reacted fearfully at every tread on the stairs and every knock on the door.

The French writer John-Paul Sartre wanted to explore the agony of many human beings trapped in the midst of life. He wrote a play about hell and he gave it the title *No Exit*. Three people arrive in hell, which consists of a large sitting room with mirrors around the walls. There is no exit from the room and no pause in the action. The three characters are on the stage all the time since they are destined to spend eternity together without leaving the room. They pass the time reflecting on what has happened in the past, but they cannot use that to change their lives now. As they remain locked within the room the final line is, 'Let's go'. But they can go nowhere. For them hell is being tied to a past and present that cannot be changed. They have no prospect of a different future. All they have is mirrors – and that is hell.

It is one thing to be locked in a room with no exit. It is another thing to lock yourself in a room because you believe the world beyond the door is hostile and that if you leave the room you face certain death. The world may not get into your room but neither can you get out. In today's Gospel reading this is the scene. John writes to depict the condition of

the disciples following the death of Jesus. They have locked themselves in. This is an assembly that fear has gathered together. They are in a room that just mirrors their fears and provides no exit for them. It must have been hell. (On another occasion this situation could lead to a modern discussion about mental health.)

John, however, shows us that there is an exit from this paralysing fear, through the peace that Jesus brings. Into this room of trapped people comes Jesus with peace. As the risen Jesus breathes on them, the disciples breathe in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the breath they take on Easter Sunday evening that gives them all new heart. John, with his knowledge of the Jewish scriptures and history, will have thought back to the story of creation - '*And the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being*'. He will have remembered Elijah in the valley of dry bones: '*Come from the four winds and breathe upon these slain that they may live*'. Today we might think of paramedics giving mouth to mouth resuscitation!

2 Luke's Waiting Room

"When the day of Pentecost came all the believers were gathered together in one place."

Luke, in his book of Acts, demonstrates the effects of the Spirit in the ministry of the apostles. His story of the launch of this ministry is the story of Pentecost (the Jewish Festival of Weeks). All male Jews within twenty miles had to attend. It was a week of weeks (fifty days after Passover) - early June, better weather and bigger crowds. It remembered the giving of the Law to them at Sinai – God's covenant with his people. Luke makes Pentecost into a Christian feast when God renews his covenant through the power of the Spirit. People had come from the far reaches of the Roman Empire. All spoke Aramaic/Greek. They babbled in 'tongues' (still experienced in some Christian groups today).

It has now become the Feast of the Holy Spirit when people were offered a new opportunity to renew their relationship with God and to make a new beginning.

3 Disciples need the discipline of a waiting room

After they had seen the risen Christ on a number of occasions and completely believed in his resurrection, the disciples must have wanted to relaunch the campaign - to rush up the steps of the Praetorium and hammer on Pilate's door crying, "You've made a mistake! We've seen Jesus alive". They would get him to make a public statement from the palace that Jesus was alive; parade outside Caiphas' house in a protest march: "Annas Out! Caiphas Out! Sanhedrin Out!" But Jesus said, "Wait". *"I myself will send upon you what my father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you."* *"Set Barnabas and Saul apart for me to do the work to which I have called them."*

We still have to wait in the waiting room individually, and as a Church, until God calls. Adolphe Monod was a Parisian preacher who, in 1856, gave short talks from his death bed. In one he said, "We make excellent plans for our lives but they are our plans and self is the centre. The results are meagre for they were never God's plans for us". We need to remain in the waiting room until God's plans become evident. They are shown by circumstances usually. These each mixed with prayer will show us what we ought to do.

Archbishop Anthony Bloom said, "The Church should be like an Old English Sheepdog. He does not move until he gets the signal from his master but as soon as he does he goes all out all of the time."

Go back to Sartre's closed mirrored room. Only in the power of the Spirit can we see the exit. The Spirit empowers us to understand the past anew and see the future with hope. The Holy Spirit is the exit from the hopelessness of being locked into the past. The Spirit is the exit which leads us into the

streets and market places of our community where people may appear to walk free but many feel trapped in their lives. The Holy Spirit can reach these people through us. He has commissioned us. Let us renew our commitment today.

Read pray or sing StF 393

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EmkyT6uUZE>

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 in our eyes.

She dances in the fire, startling her spectators,
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;
and she is the key opening the Scriptures,
enemy of apathy and heavenly dove.

John L Bell (b.1949) and Graham Maule (b.1958)

Offertory Prayer

Heavenly Father accept our offerings. May they go where we cannot go. May they do what we cannot do. In Jesus' name. **Amen**

Prayers for our World

Spirit of God breathe into our lives, breathe into the Church, breathe into the world.

We are here Lord. You have brought us here and now we bring the world to you - our world where warfare never ceases, our world where millions battle with hunger, our world divided between the rich and the poor, between developed and underdeveloped, powerful and powerless. Come Holy Spirit blow down the barriers that divide us. Bring us to face those in the world who need our concern.

Spirit of God breathe into our lives, breathe into the Church, breathe into the world.

We are here Lord. You have brought us here as your Church. Your Holy Spirit has breathed into us and given us a message for the whole earth - a message of hope, of love and forgiveness, of joy and salvation, of peace. Come Holy Spirit fill us up with your love. Bind us to God, bind us together. Make each one of us complete in you.

Spirit of God breathe into our lives, breathe into the Church, breathe into the world.

We pray our prayers through the Spirit and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Read pray or sing StF 372

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HPKL1wOVXk>

Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path
illuminating.

Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become my inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with
loathing.

And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Bianco de Siena (d 1434)

translated by Richard Frederick Littledale (1833-1890)

Blessing

God of life,
may the promise of the sunrise be echoed in
our minds; may the warmth of the midday
sun flow through our hearts; may the peace
of the sunset touch our souls; and when life
seems dark, teach us to remember that even
then you are with us and that we will again
see your light.

May the blessing of God the Father, Jesus the
Son and the Holy Spirit be with us and those
we represent. **Amen**

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Acknowledgements

Some prayers based on "Prayers for all
Seasons" by Nick Fawcett and "Intercessions"
by Christine O'Dell.

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