

Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit

Service at Home 24 May 2026

Pentecost, The coming of the Holy Spirit

prepared by Pat Fry

As you prepare to worship on this amazing, wonderful, but mysterious day of celebration in the Christian year, take time to relax, take time to listen to your breathing, slowly, in.... andout...

If you can, place both feet squarely on the ground and rest your hands on your lap, palms upward, a gesture symbolising your readiness to receive from God. Keep a moment of stillness before you read on.

Prayer of Approach

Here, now, Gracious God, may I know something of the presence of your Spirit, your gift to each of us, to calm and reassure, to challenge and to strengthen, to enable us to follow your call in our particular circumstances. Amen.

Hymn 372 Come down O Love Divine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edK3Vv7Qwo4>

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 illuming

Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be
and lowliness become mine 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

Bianca da Siena d1434, trans. Frank Littledale 1863-1890

Prayer of Confession

It's easy to sing a beautiful hymn, but so hard to take it's meaning to heart and make it my own.

Forgive me when I find it hard to hold on to the promise of your Spirit's presence, and to live by the light of your teaching. Help me to know that I can be sure of your love and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen

Gospel Reading: John 14.15-21, 25-27

This is what the disciples were waiting for, in that upper room where they had taken refuge after the Crucifixion, and had become their meeting place in Jerusalem after the resurrection and Jesus' Ascension.

You can find the story in Acts Chapter 2, but I am going to quote here from a retelling of it by the Christian writer and broadcaster, Frank Topping. *1

The disciples receive the Holy Spirit

Peter

*It isn't easy to recapture
the waiting time.*

*Children remember their birthdays
and days of festive celebration,
but they forget the restlessness
of the night before,
the edgy excitement
that turns minutes into hours.*

*They forget the prickly unscratchable itch
deep inside, that makes waiting
so excruciatingly unbearable.
You could say that like children
we were restive, fidgety,
on the edge of expectancy,
and not a little apprehensive.
Truly we were both eager and afraid..
We longed for the time to pass.
He had said "Before many days"
but no-one knew how many.
So we waited... fingers tapping, impatient
for the coming of the Paraclete.....*

*When it came it was sudden.
A roar of wind so loud
speech was wasted effort.
But our eyes spoke our terror
as we realised the sound was within,
not outside the room!
The walls were bathed in such a glow
as if a fire raged.
And then we saw the flames,
at least they looked like flames
like tongues of fire
dancing on our heads!
And then gone.
As if recalled
by a finger snap.*

*And we began to speak
in other tongues,
not a babble
but a flow of words
in languages we did not know
yet understood!*

*The sound had roused the people
and they clamoured in the street.
People of every nation –
Parthians and Medes,
travellers from Mesopotamia
from Egypt and Syria.
Visitors from Rome,*

*Greeks, Jews and Arabs,
and all understood.*

*And me, Simon Peter,
the horny-handed Galilean,
more at home hauling nets
than standing in a pulpit
began to preach with such power.....”*

And you know the story so well, how all in that multi-national crowd understood, as Peter spoke of their experience that day, proclaimed Jesus as Lord and King, inviting all to seek forgiveness, be baptised, and receive the Spirit..... and three thousand were baptised. Truly seen as the birthday of the Church.

Reflection

The Pentecost story is amazing – an out of this world experience of the Holy Spirit coming into the world, into real life people, flawed human beings, people like us.

But we can be left feeling that it is so awe-inspiring, so remote, so far from our everyday experience that we find it hard to engage with, to see how it can relate to our living in this difficult twenty-first century, within the confines of our present circumstances.

And this is where it is helpful to turn to a much-lived passage from the letter to the Galatians. It speaks of the presence of the Spirit in more ordinary everyday ways, in day-to-day living

Bible reading: Galatians 5: 22-26

Ponder these fruits of the Spirit slowly; think how people showing these qualities have impacted on your life. ... and give thanks to God, the source of all good.

Think of the effect if these things are missing.....

Recognise these are profoundly precious gifts, perhaps overlooked, undervalued, taken for granted, but wonderfully life enriching, even life changing.

Prayer of Response*2

Holy Spirit, Spirit of the living God,
breathe in us on all that is inadequate,
unworthy or fragile, so that your living
water may spring even from our hurts,
and our valley of fears may become a place
of wellsprings,
May your continued presence breathe in us
and through us, transforming our lives
Through the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Hymn383 Holy Spirit, Gift bestower

<https://youtu.be/iaN5iG2Olcg?si=VrUnCyAHNIptgKN4>

This is a modern hymn, perhaps unfamiliar to you, but it is deeply moving, and set to a lovely widely known traditional Welsh lullaby. It uses the word “us” assuming being used in gathered congregations, but as you are sharing these words with other people unable to attend worship, let that “us” help you feel your kinship with others using the sheet.

Holy Spirit, gift bestower
breathe into our hearts today.
Flowing water, dove that hovers,
Holy Spirit guide our way.
Love inspirer, joy releaser
Spirit take our fears away.
Reconciler, peace restorer,
move among us while we pray.

Holy Spirit, Christ proclaimer,
wisdom bringer light our way;
Fire that dances, wind that whispers,
Holy Spirit come today.
Ease disturber, comfort bearer,
move among us while we pray,
Truth revealer, faith confirmer,
rest within our hearts today.

Church Hymnary 4th edition 2005

Reflection

There is a beautiful series of Quaker tapestries at their museum in Kendal. One is a representation of the work of the Spirit. It shows a shaft of bright white light passing through a prism, and being diffused in all directions in an array of all the colours of the light spectrum.

It's a wonderful image of how the Spirit shines through God's people in so many different ways – creative gifts like art, music, dance and drama; qualities of life listed in our reading from Galatians, practical service in many different ways throughout the world. And also in quiet ways that don't hit the headlines, but make a difference.

My elderly aunt, a lifelong prayerful Christian, (in her mid-nineties) had lost the use of her legs and was in a small, rather dreary nursing home. She encouraged the staff by the way she said thank you, with real feeling, for the care they showed her, and the way she managed not to grumble about the discomfort she was suffering and the restrictions imposed by her disability. I have no doubt that was the work of the Spirit in her.

As we give thanks for the gift of the Spirit, we look out and offer prayer for our troubled world.

Prayer for Others and Ourselves *3

On this day we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,
we recall the birth of the Church, new possibilities growing from the embers of hopelessness.

We look for signs of hope in a broken world.
We pray for green shoots to emerge where growth seems impossible.

We see the devastation of the natural world.

We see the horror and brutality of war.
We hear arrogant brandishing of power.

We hear self-centred power hungry politicians ignoring the needs of the poorest,...

Our rational minds begin to doubt you.
Help us to hold on to faith in your good purposes.

Out of the devastation of your death on the Cross you showed us another way.

Where love, care charity and hope seem absent, be present we pray by your Holy Spirit.

Where medical staff, aid workers, carers, adoptive and foster-parents, all who work for good, feel exhaustion and frustration give them your strength to continue.

In quiet bring to God your particular fears, concerns, hopes and dreams.....

When we face fear, loss or pain,
when we don't know which way to turn,
or feel lost and alone,
guide us back to you by the presence of your Spirit. Amen

Bring your prayers together in the Lord's prayer, using whatever form is appropriate for you. Our Father.....

Hymn 398 There's a Spirit in the air

https://youtu.be/YsvUXGnPck4?si=Md_RZv95MLxgC2kI

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 tomorrows 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
telling Christians everywhere
praise the love that Christ revealed
living, working in our world.

Brian Wren b.1936

Blessing*4

The love of the faithful Creator,
the peace of the wounded healer,
the joy of the challenging Spirit,
the hope of the three in one
surround and encourage us today
and for ever Amen

1. Frank Topping, The Impossible God
2. Prayer from Sri Lanka (URC)
- 3 adapted from Tim Searle, United Church Winchester Penetecost 2025
4. Kate McIlhagga Word in the World compiled Donald Hilton 1997

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