**COVENANT COMMUNITY ONLINE SERVICE**

*Presenter: Revd Dr Calvin T Samuel*

**Pentecost Sunday**

**Sunday, 31st May 2020**

**~ Be Filled with the Spirit ~**

**WELCOME & INTRODUCTION**

Good Morning. Welcome to this covenant community online service on the day of Pentecost. My name is Calvin Samuel and I’m Methodist minister for the towns of Rochford and Rayleigh in the County of Essex.

**HYMN : ﻿Holy Spirit, rain down, rain down** (StF 384)

Holy Spirit, rain down, rain down

O Comforter and Friend,

how we need your touch again.

Holy Spirit, rain down, rain down.

Let your power fall,

let your voice be heard,

come and change our hearts,

as we stand on your word.

Holy Spirit, rain down.

No eye has seen, no ear has heard,

no mind can know what God has in store.

So open up heaven, open it wide

over your Church and over our lives.

*Russell Fragar*

**SONG : There's nothing worth more**

There’s nothing worth more

That will ever come close, nothing can compare,

You're our living hope

Your presence Lord

I've tasted and seen, of the sweetest of loves  
Where my heart becomes free  
And my shame is undone  
Your Presence Lord

*Holy Spirit, you are welcome here  
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere  
Your Glory God is what our hearts long for  
To be overcome by your presence, Lord*

There's nothing worth more…

I've tasted and seen, of the sweetest of loves…

*Holy Spirit, you are welcome here…*

Let us become more aware of your presence  
Let us experience the Glory of Your Goodness

*Holy Spirit, you are welcome here…*

*Katie Torwalt & Bryan Torwalt*

**PRAYERS**

We gather today as one body

from the many places where God gives us shelter for this season.

Let us pray. **Come Holy Spirit**

**fill the hearts of your faithful people,**

**and kindle in us the fire of your love**

*A candle is lit and you are invited to light a candle at home, saying:*

**We light this candle as a symbol of our faith and hope.**

**For our future as a covenant community;**

**our future as a people; our future in this pandemic.**

**We trust in the alchemy of the Holy Spirit**

**to bring her dream to life here amongst us.**

**Gather your people, O God,**

**that your dream for us may come true. Amen.**

Faithful God,

you fulfilled the promise of Easter

by sending your Holy Spirit

and opening the way of eternal life to all the human race.

Keep us in the unity of your Spirit,

that every tongue may tell your glory;

through Jesus Christ our Lord

who is alive and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and forever. **Amen**

**SCRIPTURE**

Pentecost is that moment in the life of the Church when we celebrate the gift of God’s empowering Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is good news for the church and indeed for the world. When our hearts are set ablaze by the power of the Holy Spirit, that which had previously been beyond our capacity even to imagine can become part of our daily experience. When the Church truly is empowered by the Holy Spirit all things are possible.

Let’s listen to the words of Scripture as the promise of Pentecost is fulfilled.

**Numbers 11.24–30**

*So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.*

*Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, “My lord Moses, stop them!” But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!” And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.*

**Acts 2.1–17a**

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

*Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.”*

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**THE SERMON**

What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? At Pentecost we see the Church at its best: living with diversity, taking risks, changing lives, inspiring passionate discipleship. Pentecost provides a lens through which we can see the Church not just as it is, but as it could be, indeed as it ought to be through the Spirit’s power. Yet to speak of the power of the Spirit or being filled with the Spirit is often to identify ourselves as charismatics or Pentecostals. However, Pentecost is that moment in the Church’s life which reminds us we’re all Pentecostal, because we all need the power of the Spirit.

Now some of us have experienced the filling of the Holy Spirit, some have spoken in tongues. Nonetheless, the question must be asked, ‘Why are so few Christians in our day accused of turning the world upside down as the first disciples were? Why do so few Christians today lead lives that demand an explanation? My answer is that most Christians have yet to experience what it means to be filled with the Spirit as they were. This leads us back to my opening question. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

The phrase filled with the Spirit occurs only 10 times in the NT, 3 times in Luke (referring to Jesus), 6 times in Acts and once in Ephesians. So it’s not a very common phrase in the New Testament.

### what it does not mean to be filled with the spirit

Perhaps it is best to begin by saying what it does NOT mean to be filled with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit it does not mean that we get more of the Holy Spirit. All talk of God, all theology, is necessarily couched in metaphor, because human language can no more adequately describe God than it can adequately describe the beauty of a sunrise.

To say I’ve fallen in love doesn’t mean I fell into a puddle called Love. To describe someone as twisted with hate doesn’t mean they are physically twisted. To say you’re drowning in debt doesn’t imply that debt is a liquid, does it? These are all metaphors, picture language, vivid comparisons between unlike entities, but we use those phrases because they accurately portray human experiences. So it is, when we speak of being filled with the Spirit, we use metaphorical language to describe vivid human experience.

### Not more of him but more of us

1 Cor 6 verse 19 declares: Do you not know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Every Christian has the Holy Spirit within them. What I am about to say might surprise you, but that is all the Holy Spirit you’re ever going to get. We never get more of the Spirit because the Holy Spirit has already been given. This is what we celebrate at Pentecost.

So to be filled with the Spirit is not to get more of the Spirit. Rather, we are filled with the Spirit when the Holy Spirit gets more of us, when we offer ourselves fully to God so that all that we are, all that we have and all that we aspire to be is rooted in God.

### life in the Spirit= Life of faith

Having said what it doesn’t mean, what then *does it mean* to be filled with the Spirit? First, life in the Spirit is a life of faith. We are saved by grace. We come to God not by works but by grace through faith. Similarly, to be filled with the Spirit we ask God in *faith* to fill us.

Jesus directed his disciples to wait for the promise of the Father and then to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the Earth. That is what they did. They watched Jesus ascend to heaven. Then, perhaps a little reluctantly, they returned to the upper room and waited and prayed in faith, not knowing exactly what the promise of the Father would entail. Life in the Spirit is a life of faith, in other words, a life of trust in God.

### Life in the Spirit = life of SURRENDER

Second, life in the Spirit is a life of surrender. In these disciples, locked in a room for 10 days, we see an extreme example of surrender. They had totally surrendered themselves, their ambitions, their plans, their very lives to God. It was only then, having given more of themselves to God that they were enabled to experience more of God and be filled with the Spirit of God.

Lots of Christians confuse surrender with recommitment. Recommitment is wonderful thing, and we need more, rather than fewer, Christians who recommit themselves to God afresh. However, recommitment will not lead us to being filled with the Spirit. Why? Because recommitment means we are going to try harder, be more faithful, more disciplined, better behaved, more focussed. Recommitment is all about what we are going to do.

Surrender, in sharp contrast, is about what God is going to do. Surrender is to say, Lord work in me. Surrender is to take on those famous words of Paul in Galatians 2.20: I am crucified with Christ therefore I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. Surrender is what we see in Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane on the night on which he was betrayed: Lord if it be possible let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.

### FRUIT & Branches

God brings out the fruit of the Spirit in us when we surrender, not when we strive. Have you ever seen a tree forcing out fruits? Never!! They relax and it just happens naturally. Jesus says, I am the vine you are the branches. Abide in me and you will bring forth much fruit.

Only when we have done all of this are we poised to enter the Spirit filled life; and that is the problem. There is a huge problem a Spirit filled life: it’s very costly, because it requires us to surrender our very selves and lives to God. None of us like to say not I but Christ in me. We want to have some measure of control over our own lives and yet we want the benefits of the Spirit filled life. These two things are mutually exclusive. We can either control our own lives or be filled with the Spirit, but we can’t have both.

So what is it going to be? Is it going to be life in the Spirit or is it going to be life in our own hands? We are no longer waiting for the Spirit as they were in the upper room. In truth, the Holy Spirit is waiting for us. She is waiting for us to recognise that genuine and authentic Christian life is not possible without her enabling power. The Holy Spirit is still waiting, not so that you can get more of her but so that she can get more of you. The Holy Spirit is waiting, for you to surrender your life. When we do so, we discover that it is given it back to us, refreshed, revived, renewed and fruitful.

So I’d like to challenge you this Pentecost, to take the risk of daring to surrender yourselves to God so that the Spirit may do in us what She wills. Let us open ourselves to the adventure of the Spirit. Amen.

**HYMN : There must be more than this**

There must be more than this

O, breath of God, come breathe within  
There must be more than this  
Spirit of God, we wait for You  
Fill us anew we pray  
Fill us anew we pray

*Consuming fire, fan into flames  
A passion for Your name  
Spirit of God, would You fall in this place  
Lord, have Your way, Lord have Your way with us*

Come like a rushing wind

Clothe us with power from on high  
Now set the captives free  
Leave us abandoned to Your praise  
Lord, let Your glory fall  
Lord, let Your glory fall. *Tim Hughes*

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

**You are the burning heart of being,**

**Ablaze with love and freedom.**

May all we hold in prayer

Be held in this never ceasing gift of life.

May we carry that light, that flame, that miracle

Into every place of death and despair.

**You are the burning heart of being,**

**Ablaze with love and freedom.**

*In silence we bring before God the people, places and situations on our hearts today: ourselves & our own family/friends; our local church, local area; our district & region; our whole country; the whole world.*

**THE PEACE**

We are the Body of Christ.

**In the one Spirit, we were all baptized**

**into one body. Let us therefore keep**

**the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

The peace of the risen Christ be always with you.

**And also with you.**

**PREPARATION OF THE TABLE**

We gather as God’s people, in our different places,

around this table of our communion.

We bring bread, knowing our need to be fed,

And aware that many are hungry.

We bring wine, knowing our need for joy,

And aware that many are lonely.

We bring ourselves, trusting that you will take and share

Our time, our talents, and our treasures,

And make them enough. **Amen.**

**THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER:**

God of all creation, we give you thanks

For the story of your love and faithfulness.

You recall your people again and again

By your unpopular prophets

To the vision of radical justice that you set before us.

We thank you for your Holy Spirit that sustains all things,

Inspiring us with dreams for the future

And enflaming us with passion for your world.

We thank you for the embodiment of your justice and love

In your Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

The crowds came out to see this Jesus,

yet at the end they turned on him

as those in power sought to destroy his challenge.

On the night Jesus was betrayed

A circle of friendship and learning gathered around a table

to celebrate the freedom of your people.

Jesus blessed you for the food;

he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said:

This is my body, given for you all.

Jesus then gave thanks for the wine;

he took the cup, gave it and said:

This is my blood, shed for you all

for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this in remembrance of me.

And so, with these fragile things, this bread and this cup

we celebrate the strangeness of the cross and resurrection.

We hold together the mystery of dying and living,

Of sacrifice and empowerment,

Of communion and community.

Send your Spirit on us now

that we may feed by grace on Christ

with opened eyes and hearts on fire.

May we and all who gather around your table

offer ourselves to live for you,

anticipating with joy and gladness

the feast at your table in heaven which will have no end,

when we will see you face to face

and know your embrace

overcoming all our distancing. **Amen.**

We draw all our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus gave us in its modern form. The words will appear on your screen:

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your Name,**

**Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**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 forever. Amen.**

*Communion is shared in the minister’s home; you may like to eat something in your own home too as a sign of our unity even while we are apart.*

**POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

May we who have shared in the reality of our communion

without being physically present to one another

know the reality of your presence with us always.

May we who are living in this time of brokenness and separation

know your wholeness in our hearts and in our communities.

May we who hunger for a time when we may be together again

feed a world hungry for love and justice. **Amen.**

**CLOSING**

Our final song today is the same as last week. Pentecost is an encounter with a God who calls us out of our comfort zone to places where our feet may fail. Pentecost is an invitation, indeed, a challenge, to the Church that we no longer play it safe. Lockdown is a space, I believe, in which God is speaking to us, the Church, calling us to explore new horizons, take risks, and sometimes to fail in so doing. But unless we listen, take risks, try new things, occasionally fail, we will never become all we were created to be.

**HYMN: You call me out upon the waters**

The great unknown where feet may fail  
And there I find You in the mystery  
In oceans deep my faith will stand

*And I will call upon Your name  
And keep my eyes above the waves  
When oceans rise, my soul will rest in Your embrace  
For I am Yours and You are mine*

Your grace abounds in deepest waters  
Your sovereign hand will be my guide  
Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me  
You've never failed and You won't start now

*So I will call upon Your name…..*

Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders  
Let me walk upon the waters Wherever You would call me  
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander  
And my faith will be made stronger  
In the presence of my Saviour (x2)

*I will call upon Your name….*

*Joel Houston, Matt Crocker & Salomon Lighthelm*

**THE BLESSING**

The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,

give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

and strengthen you to proclaim the word and works of God;

and the blessing of God,

Spirit, Son and Father,

remain with you always. **Amen**

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