**Today is Pentecost Sunday when we remember the gift of the Holy Spirit to those early followers of Jesus. A very warm welcome to this service, wherever you are using it.**

Please centre yourself in God’s presence in whatever way works best for you – a lit candle, a time of silence or, maybe, breathing in “be” and out “still”.

When you’re ready, I invite you to say the following service out loud and slowly, letting the words sink deep into your being. Don’t rush from one section to the other – take time.

**Hymn**

Father of everlasting grace,
your goodness and your truth we praise,
your goodness and your truth we prove;
you have, in honour of your Son,
the gift unspeakable sent down,
the Spirit of life, and power and love.

Send us the Spirit of your Son,
to make the depths of Godhead known,
to make us share the life divine;
send Him the sprinkled blood to apply,
send Him our souls to sanctify,
to bless and seal us with this sign.

So shall we pray, and never cease;
so shall we thankfully confess
your wisdom, truth, and power, and love;
with joy unspeakable adore,
and bless and praise you evermore,
and serve you as your hosts above:

Till, added to that heavenly choir,
we raise our songs of triumph higher,
and praise you in a nobler strain,
out-soar the first-born seraph’s flight,
and sing, with all our friends in light,
with everlasting love to rejoice.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

**Let us pray:**

Our God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, we praise you. Today, we especially remember the gift of the Holy Spirit who so powerfully turned the lives of the early followers of Jesus upside

down. We praise you for the creativity of the Spirit, present at creation and present in every new beginning, new opportunity and new insight. We praise you for the diversity of the Spirit’s ways with us and in us: for the mountain top experiences of wind and fire; for the tender experiences of the still, small voice. We praise you for the persistence of the Spirit who never gives up on us but nudges us to be courageous in the ways we explore the ministry of Jesus and bear witness to others. We praise you for the Holy Spirit’s perspective in our lives, reminding us when we wander off from you and from the needs of others; reminding us that in Jesus Christ there is forgiveness and new starts. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we praise you in the name of Christ. Amen.

**Read Acts 2:1-21 (printed at end)**

**Reflection**

When the Jewish Pentecost festival was underway in Jerusalem – a festival to mark harvest and the giving of the law to Moses – a bunch of people who were fledgling followers of Jesus, the crucified, risen and ascended one - were gathered together waiting, according to Luke, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles. This bunch numbered 120 people, he tells us, and they were waiting because Jesus had told them to wait. They were waiting for *power from on high* – though they probably had no idea what that might look like. How long had they waited? Did something happen and they wondered if that was “it”? How many false alarms before God’s power touched their lives and they became energized, vocalized and full of confidence? Energized to tell the Jesus story in a way that people understood, whatever their language, whatever their background, whatever their status. Well, we don’t know about the false alarms, but we do know that they were energized by God’s Spirit in quite dramatic ways.

So, they were waiting. I guess you, dear reader, are waiting, too. I don’t know if you’re

waiting to be energized by God’s Spirit, but I guess you are waiting never the less – waiting for a relaxation of lock down. Waiting to leave your four walls? Waiting to see your family and friends – and your hairdresser? Waiting to go back to your choir/music/scrabble/canasta/knit and natter/coffee morning/book club group. I’m sure you’re waiting, aren’t you?

Waiting is rarely easy, especially if we don’t know for how long we have to wait! It’s true in daily life and it’s true as we wait on God. The early followers of Jesus knew they had to wait, because they simply didn’t know what else to do. They didn’t know how their lives were going to be shaped or what their mission might entail or what on earth they were going to do or say.

During lockdown I’ve tried to cycle every day and, apart from when the wind would have blown me off my bike, I’ve managed to do so. And, do you know what? I can go further and further without getting out of breath – yes, you are right to sense a quiet glow of satisfaction here! However, put me on route to Bridport with all its hills and I’d be pushing my bike – I wouldn’t have the breath to get up the hills!

The word for Spirit in Greek can be translated spirit, or wind or breath and I think one of the important things about Pentecost is that it reminds us that it’s impossible to tell the Jesus story or live the Jesus way if we’re out of divine breath in our lives. The early followers of Jesus needed the divine breath, the divine spark in their lives. – and so do we, especially in these difficult covid-19 days.

The Biblical testimony is that God comes to us,

* **when we are consciously waiting for that divine breath, that divine presence.** It may happen in church – but it may happen on a walk or in the garden, or when we read services like this one, or listen to services on TV or radio, or when we simply sit in God’s presence….and wait. How open are we
* to wait in quietness for the flutter of God’s breath in our lives?
* **when we have no expectation of that divine breath, that divine presence** -we’re taken by surprise. It too may happen in church – but it may happen on the bus or in the hills or at the sink, or on a bike ride or in conversation with someone, or when we are told we matter or when we tell someone else they matter.

It’s all too easy to read the account of Pentecost with all it’s difficult place names and think it’s nothing to do with us today – that it’s all too far-fetched and out of this world to be of any relevance. And yet, it’s an account of how the Godhead keeps alive the Jesus drama, the Jesus way, the Jesus life by gifting us part of God’s very self -the Spirit – God’s breath.

I pray that you may know moments of sheer surprise and delight when you realize yourself to be held and energized by this God. I pray, too, that in the dreariness of enforced waiting, that affects all of us to one extent or another at the moment, we will find ways of using the waiting time to wait for the *power from on high* and recognize “it” as being the breath of God’s love, an invitation to live the life of Christ and, thus, to be witnesses to others *.* Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession from the Methodist Church’s website service for today.**

On all those who are sick, in body, mind and spirit, O Living God have mercy.

On those who are lonely or afraid, those who suffer from anxiety or whose souls are discomforted, O Living God have mercy.

On all those whose lives are dedicated to service; our NHS staff, the hospitality industry, our farmers and many others, O Living God have mercy.

On those who are never able to attend their place of worship, who suffer persecution and oppression and live in deprivation, O Living God have mercy.

On those who fear they are unworthy and unwelcome in church. Who do not feel included in your Kingdom, O Living God have mercy.

On those who do not know your peace, for whatever reason, O Living God have mercy.

*Time to add our own prayers of the heart, either spoken or unspoken.*

Everlasting God, whose very nature is love that has no end, hear our prayers. Help us to never make you in our own image but remain in awe of your mystery, the God who was, who is and who will always be. In the name of Christ, who shows us how to love, Amen.

**The Lord’s Prayer……**

**Hymn**

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 (1850-1936) **Let us pray**

May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you, and all whom you love, now and for evermore. Amen

## Acts 2:1-21

2When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush

of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.7Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

14But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.19And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. 21Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’