

Pentecost Zoom Service: 31st May 2020

Welcome:

Welcome to our Pentecost Zoom Service

- It is good to get together in this way,
- So, we can be together as the people of God as we worship him
- So, we can enjoy some measure of fellowship
- Until we are once again able to meet in person.

Let us begin with a prayer.

Prayer:

Father God, thank you that you love us and desire us to come and spend time with you. Lord, this is an amazing privilege and we are overwhelmed that you love each of us so much.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you came to earth to demonstrate your love for us by dying for us. Thank you that you have called each of us to be yours. That each of us is precious to you and that you are interceding for us, even now, in Heaven

Holy Spirit, thank you that you live in each of us. That you are growing us to be more like Jesus.

On this special day when we remember your coming help us to know you in our lives. We ask this morning for an experience of you, not so we can feel good but so we are equipped to share your message of love and salvation.

Be present in our service this morning work in us your will

In Jesus name,

Amen

Reading: Acts 2:1-20 & 37-41. The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Worship: Jenny B (Holy Spirit, Rain Down)

Introduction: (Peter)

As I was preparing for this service, I thought it right I be totally honest with you

- I find Pentecost is one of the hardest Sundays to lead
- We read about the power of the Holy Spirit.
- The reality of God working in their lives
- We remember the supernatural natural gifts he brings
- And I feel so very inadequate.

My own experience of the Holy Spirit is so very limited compared to what we read

- As a younger Christian I attended some fairly charismatic churches.
- Where everyone was encouraged to be ‘Baptised with the Holy Spirit’
- And to speak in tongues
- So, I went forward and was prayed for.
- But nothing happened,
- So, they prayed harder
- But still nothing happened
- It was excruciating.

I was desperate to be able to say something unintelligible, but I had nothing to say

- It was all so very embarrassing
- In the end they gave up, but I felt like I had let them down

I have tried on several other occasions with similar results

- Although I learnt how to bring the prayers to an end without embarrassment
- After a while I would just buckle at the knees and lay on the floor for a bit.
- That at least allowed those praying for me to move on without feeling they'd failed.
- But I've struggled for years feeling like a second-class Christian.

Over the years I have come to understand things better

- But I felt it right to share this
- Because the Holy Spirit's purpose is to build us up, not to discourage us.
- Sometimes those lessons are hard for us, but we grow through them
- He is a very personal and each of us will experience Him in different ways
- Because we are individual and have different roles within the church
- So, the Spirit trains and 'grows' each of us differently
- Sometimes, looking back, we can see why it didn't happen as we wanted
- And we find our experiences useful to encourage and support others.

It is on this note that I am now going to invite 3 other people to share with us

- Something of what the Holy Spirit means to them.

Testimonies: What does the Holy Spirit Mean to you?

1. Jenny H
2. André
3. Tina

Jenny H

The Holy Spirit used to be called the Holy Ghost in the Apostles Creed (which I found unsettling as a child).

In the 70s there was a new 'wave of the Spirit' in which the gifts of the Spirit started to become more widespread (with some dubious exceptions) and there was a turning away from a Victorian 'vengeful' God to a more approachable God.

In lockdown there seems to have been many beautiful signs of spring. Whether it is the same as every other year or the early spring weather has caused a more stunning display or perhaps it is because we have more opportunity to observe, nevertheless it is obvious that God is not locked down. I believe that I am more aware of the Holy Spirit working in me and connecting me to God and that has caused me to see more clearly.

Selwyn Hughes quoted Romans 8: 26, where the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

It is an awesome moment when one senses that one is being prayed 'through'.

André

The Holy Spirit helps me to make decisions and to think about what God would want me to do before I do things. A lot of the time I act on impulse without thinking if God would want me to do something, so the Holy Spirit keeps me in check.

Galatians 5:17 says:

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

It is a gift from Jesus and it gives us gifts. I would say my gift is my musical ability and being able to use it for worship feels good. Because the Holy Spirit is a gift from God, I know that it is reliable and that I am never alone when I need comfort. It is comforting to know that when you don't feel valued, God values you enough to give you your own protector and to give you your own gift for you to use.

I can't remember a time where the Holy Spirit came unto me but I do feel different when I ask God for guidance and for the Holy Spirit to help me. The holy spirit allows me to exercise the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control.

Although I don't always act in the way God wants me to, it is good to know I have something to keep me on the straight and narrow.

Tina

Peter asked me to talk about what the Holy Spirit means to me and I wanted to give you a personal account of how I have experienced the Holy Spirit in my life and share my experience with you. I'm hoping that something that I share will connect with you and give you an opportunity to reflect on your walk of faith in a way that is personal to you.

Essentially for me, the Holy Spirit is ultimately knowing 'that God is in my every step, every breath, daily walk and daily talk.' He is in my very being and he knows my thoughts and actions before I know them myself. He is the constant in my life, when everything I hold precious in my life can come and go he walks beside me always. Even if I do not feel his presence...he constantly walks by my side and no matter what I face, I'm not alone.

Some time ago I wrote this short verse and it talks about my walk with God. It's a reflection of his guidance and where we would be in our lives without his Holy Spirit and grace. It's called 'The Walk.'

The Walk

There's a journey, a path, a lonely walk,

Without God, my Saviour, my daily talk.

If I stood here all alone,

Where would I turn, when I needed to be shown?

My Christ, my Saviour, my Father true.

Where would I be without you?

There is no answer, without you, I would be lost.

But for my life, your son paid the ultimate cost.

My walk, my journey, will be guided by your hand.

For one day, by your side, in heaven I'll stand.

I know that God has chosen me and he has chosen you and we are precious to him and perfectly made without error. But I also know it doesn't always feel that way and we have weakness, worries, troubles and anxieties. Although God never leaves us, at times he can feel far away. But I know in my heart that God is in my dark places. Looking back over the most difficult times in my life when I have gone through the hardest times and been most desperate, those are probably the times when I have felt closest to God.

I know God is in my dark places, weakest moments, worries and anxieties and probably like most people I'm good at praying but not so good at letting go of the worry after handing it over to God. I often still keep hold of it myself. But that's OK because a wise friend once told me....'Please Be Patient With Tina, God's Not Finished With Her Yet!'



She used a needle like a pencil and made me this bookmark. It's a constant reminder to me ...that we don't need to be perfect, because we are perfectly made – without error, in God's image, without mistake. When I began my walk of faith and was baptised over 20 years ago, I remember standing at the front of the church and sharing my testimony.

I remember sharing that in the early days, my relationship with God, was like a one-way telephone call. I would pray a lot and talk to God but I couldn't hear God's voice, I couldn't hear him talking to me. I had to learn how to listen and hear his voice.

Since giving my life to God, I have had experiences, where without question, I have known it is of God -with complete certainty. I have felt God work through me and guide me. I think we can all struggle with our own internal voice and question if it is our desire or God's. But when the Holy Spirit works through you – there is no question it is of God and you feel this completely. I have felt God's Holy Spirit many times in my life and believe that the Holy Spirit fills us when we are open to God's presence, listen and provide a space for him to come. We offer up our lives and put Jesus at the centre.

There have been many times that I have been in RCF, worshipping or listening to the spoken word and had a strong image of a clay jar – an empty jug. I believe that the message is really clear. The sole purpose of a jug is to pour into and pour out of. We are like this empty clay jar. We must provide a space for the Holy Spirit to come and pour into us so that we can be filled with the Holy Spirit and pour out to others. This is an image that has been laid on my heart many times since joining RCF and I think it's a message for us. To make a space for God to fill and pour out from.

When I think about the Holy Spirit, I think about God's presence filling us & gifting us. Isaiah 11 verses 2-3 identifies seven gifts of the Holy Spirit – wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of God. Prophecy, words, images they are all gifts from the Holy Spirit. We each have gifts whether that be to listen, guide, teach, counsel or talents and sometimes to just be with another is a gift and enough. There is no greater gift than to give of yourself and this is what makes the difference in another person's life. It is the simplest act that can make the biggest difference.

Being open to receive the Holy Spirit can feel scary and sometimes you can feel like Jonah and you want to walk/run in the opposite direction. God does test us and prompts us to grow and step out of our comfort areas to use us as a servant in the ways only he knows best. Growing does feel scary and all the time you grow there will be discomfort. Often it doesn't seem clear at the time but God knows and he has a plan for each and every one of us.

Sometimes it can feel all is good in our relationships with God and at times we can feel that God seems so far away and we can feel broken and in a dark place and what we have to offer feels small and we are not of value and not worthy - untouched by the Holy Spirit and without gifting and talents. We all go through these difficult times in our lives.

Every Christian experiences them. But my message to you is that even when you are broken and have many scars, you are beautiful and perfect in God's eyes and he knows your true value even when you may struggle to see it in yourself.

KINSukuroi/Kintsugi (the art of precious scars) is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the areas of breakage with lacquer dusted with powdered gold, silver or platinum. The repairs are visible — yet somehow beautiful. Kintsugi means "gold repair".



This traditional Japanese art uses a precious metal, to bring together the pieces of a broken pottery and at the same time enhance the breaks. It is made more beautiful for being broken. Kinsukuroi teaches that the object becomes even more refined thanks to its "scars". With this technique it's possible to create true and always different works of art, each with its own story and beauty, thanks to the unique cracks formed when the object

breaks, as if they were wounds that leave different marks. It teaches that broken objects are not something to hide but to display with pride. By the same token in your brokenness you are made beautiful to God and your own experiences leave scars that are unique to you and provide experiences and gifting that make you more beautiful.

I have experienced when God has laid something on my heart and I have been given a word for someone, or a vision or I have felt a strong need to go to a person and felt an overwhelming feeling of their struggling. I've struggled with the – 'Is this from God?' question. The human part of me, tries to walk in the other direction, rather than feeling comfortable to share and act upon it. But the Holy Spirit doesn't rest and God prompts so that he cannot be ignored and his will is done. We can't know the impact, but God knows. A single action can make a huge difference in someone's life and could be the word they were waiting on God to hear and confirm. I'd encourage you to be brave and step out of your comfort zone and when the Holy Spirit comes, act upon it and be a messenger for God!

I have felt God's Holy Spirit work through me when I did the pastel hands that are on the wall in church. It seems like such a long time ago we sat in church and they hung on the wall. But when I did those pastel hands, I literally held my hands in front of me and looked at them and prayed. I picked up the pastels and within the hour God did the rest. I don't think I could have done it myself.

When I have been prompted by God to write verses. I picked up a pen and God did the rest. Sometimes all we need to be is an empty vessel and God does the rest!

Finally, the times in my life that I have felt bathed in the Holy Spirit, where when I have made space for God for him to be 'TOTAL' – I handed everything over to him. God is in control and his Holy Spirit works through us. We just need to hand it all over to him in completeness and be an empty vessel for him to fill.

Conclusion:

The Holy Spirit is God

- He is not a resource for us to use but a person for us to know
- He will live in us and work in us to enable us to serve God
- As we read what happened to the believers after Pentecost
- Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Worship: Jenny B (All Who Are Thirsty)

Prayer

Holy Spirit of God you are the breath of creation,
The wind of change that blows through our lives
Opening us to new dreams and new hopes and new life in Christ.

Forgive us our closed minds which barricade themselves against new ideas,
preferring the past to what you might want to do through us tomorrow.
Forgive our closed eyes which fail to see the needs of your world, blind to opportunities of
service and love.
Forgive us our closed hands which clutch our gifts and wealth for our own use alone.
Forgive us our closed hearts which limit our affections to ourselves and our own.

Spirit of new life, forgive us and break down the prison walls of our selfishness, that we
might be open to your love and open to the service of your world; through Jesus Christ our
lord.

Amen

Communion:

On the night of his arrest, Jesus took bread, gave God thanks, and broke it, saying
“This is my body, given for you, Do this in remembrance of me”

In the same way he took the cup and said

“This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink remember
me”

Closing Prayer:

Loving God, we thank you that you have nourished us at this table.
We pray for those who hunger and thirst, that they may be filled
and may we, with them feast at the table of your eternal kingdom.
This we ask through Jesus Christ, who was and is and is to come,
And who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit
God for ever and ever, Amen

Jesus breathed on them and said “Receive the Holy Spirit”
Come Holy Spirit,
Empower us with your love and inspire us with your life.

Grace:

As we depart, know this:
In grace you were created
In mercy you have been sustained
In love you will be held forever. Amen

APPENDIX: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit – A Scripture Review of the New Testament.

What do we read in the New Testament about the Holy Spirit?

Beginning with Pentecost.

- 50 days after the resurrection
- 10 days after the ascension
- The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

Acts 2: 1-4.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

What do we Read about the Holy Spirit and what He does?

1. He brings power to witness. (Acts 1:8)
But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
2. He gives us boldness. (Acts 4:31)
After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.
3. He helps us know what to say to defend our faith. (Luke 12:11-12)
When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, ¹²for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."
4. Reminds us of the truth about Jesus. (John 14:25-26)
All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.
5. He makes us holy. (Romans 15:16)
He gave me the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
6. He lives in Us. 1 Corinthians 6:19
Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.

7. He is grieved when we are unkind. (Ephesians 4:30-31)
Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.
8. He gives us peace and Joy. (Romans 14:17)
For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,
9. Assists our conscience to help us know right from wrong. (Romans 9:1)
I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit.
10. Enables us worship Jesus. (1 Corinthians 12:3)
Therefore, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.
11. He helps us know we belong to Jesus. (Ephesians 1:13)
And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,
12. Helps us keep our faith (2 Timothy 1:13-14)
What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.
13. Helps us pray. (Romans 8:26)
In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.
14. He produces fruit in our life. (Galatians 5:22-23)
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
15. He gives spiritual gifts to Christians. (Hebrews 2:4)
God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Who receives the Holy Spirit?

- Everyone who is a Christian. (Acts 2:38-39)
Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

What gifts does the Holy Spirit bring?

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

1. Enabling us to belong to Jesus
 - See all the above
 - They are spiritual gifts too

2. Our natural abilities can be used for God when enabled by the Holy Spirit
 - Romans 12: 6
We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

3. Ministries – preaching etc should be gifted by the holy Spirit
 - 1 Corinthians 12:28
And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.

4. Supernatural abilities – Tongues, prophesy, healing, miracles etc
 - 1 Corinthians 12:8-11
To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

What is the purpose of the gifts?

1. To enable us to witness. (Romans 15:18-19 – RCF Motto Text for 2020)
I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done – by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God.

2. To encourage and build us up. (1 Corinthians 12:7)
Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

3. To enable us to fulfil our role in the Church (1 Corinthians 12:12, 24-27)
*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.
But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.
²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

What is our experience of the Holy Spirit?

1. Is He something we have experienced?
2. Does He make us excited or frightened?
3. Do we want to experience more or keep Him at arms distance?