



Newcastle City Temple Connected

Reimagining Church Together

Dear [Your Name]

You are cordially invited to a party!

When: Today - Sunday 23rd May 2021

Where: In your own home

Why: To Celebrate the Church's Birthday



Today is Pentecost.

Today is a holy day that celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit 50 days after Easter. Pentecost is regarded as the birthday of the Christian Church and the start of the Church's mission to the world.

So why not grab a cuppa, cut yourself a slice of cake - sink down into a comfortable chair, open up your Bibles and read how it all began in Acts Chapter 2.

Whilst, as has been the pattern now for the past 10 months, it's good to greet you in this way, but oh how I wish we could celebrate together in the physical sense.

It was at Pentecost back in 1994 that I first came into contact with The Salvation Army, a small corps in Haverhill, Suffolk, and as the saying goes - the rest is history. Actually I don't want to confine that date to history - you see it is good for me to be reminded of the events that unfolded and the emotions felt, because they are instrumental to who I am and where I stand today. It is good for us to re-read the events of Pentecost as recorded by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles - to place ourselves within the scene; to allow our senses to explore the sights and the sounds, to hear the truth of the Gospel being proclaimed in our own native tongue and dialect - and to feel the Holy Spirit's fresh anointing on us.

There's a beautiful contemporary worship song written by Russell Frager that says;

Holy Spirit rain down, rain down.
Oh 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

Holy Spirit rain down

https://youtu.be/d-SI_HRWooA

We've seen quite a lot of rain this week. But back in the early 1990s myself and a friend from university attended Greenbelt - a huge ecumenical Christian festival, which at its peak attracted in the region of 20,000 worshippers. The first year that we went we were hugely blessed with good weather. Not quite knowing what to expect, on the 1st day we made the journey from Sheffield, a journey which should have taken just over 2 hrs but due to the bank holiday traffic on the M1 took just short 6. We arrived early afternoon, hot and sweaty, desperately in need of a cool shower, but no such luxury was to be had - instead we had to pitch our tent in the stifling heat and then stagger to one of the communal stand pipes and queue with our bucket and bottles for some tepid water. We just about made it back to the tent in time - when the heavens opened. For a few glorious minutes we stood with thousands of others in the open air, and with our arms raised, as the refreshing rain poured down upon us. It was truly invigorating—an experience which would be more than equalled in the days which followed as we stood with the gathered crowds, in front of the main stage, to be led in worship by the likes of Amy Grant & Michael W Smith. From a physical drenching to a spiritual quenching, one which more than satisfied our spiritual thirst as the Holy Spirit Rained down upon us - God provided just as we needed.





Friends,

Can I encourage you today, instead of saying 'Rain, Rain Go Away!' to call upon the Holy Spirit to rain down upon you, upon His chosen people, upon our Corps, The Salvation Army and the wider church; that we might know His power and embrace His purpose for us—as we seek to partner with Him, in building His Kingdom here on earth.

¹When the holy day of Pentecost came 50 days after Passover, they were gathered together in one place.

²Picture yourself among the disciples:

A sound roars from the sky without warning, the roar of a violent wind, and the whole house where you are gathered reverberates with the sound. ³Then a flame appears, dividing into smaller flames and spreading from one person to the next. ⁴All the people present are filled with the Holy Spirit and begin speaking in languages they've never spoken, as the Spirit empowers them.' (Acts 2:1-4) *The Voice*

Build Your Kingdom Here (Rend Collective)

Build Your kingdom here
Let the darkness fear
Show Your mighty hand
Heal our streets and land
Set Your church on fire
Win this nation back
Change the atmosphere
Build Your kingdom here
We pray

Come set Your rule and reign
In our hearts again
Increase in us we pray
Unveil why we're made

Come set our hearts ablaze with hope
Like wildfire in our very souls
Holy Spirit, come invade us now

We are Your church
We need Your power in us

<https://youtu.be/YcSWpVKKMcs>

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit

Come Spirit like rain, refresh, renew, revitalise.
Come Spirit like fire, embolden, enlighten, enable.

Come Spirit like a mighty wind, move, challenge, enkindle.

Come Spirit like wave, move, tear down, lift up.

Come Spirit, come Breath, draw us close, make song, bring intimacy.

Come Spirit, come Love, make one, make justice, make peace.

Come Spirit, come Kingdom, come Love.

— written by Martin Brown, and posted on the CAFOD website.

HOLY SPIRIT FIRE

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...
— ACTS 2:3-4 NIV

Have a great week, don't quench the Spirit!

Every Blessing
Major Liz Hancock



SUNDAY 23rd May 2021

Theme: PENTECOST - THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Bible Text: Acts 2:1-41

Suggested Songs: O God of burning cleansing power <https://youtu.be/2q4wELvbA8k>
His provision https://youtu.be/fPmKFN_xqw4

Suggested Band Piece: Euphonium Solo - That's The Spirit by Derick Kane <https://youtu.be/bfNOyxIsE3k>
Suggested Songster Piece: I dare to be different <https://youtu.be/bMhz0NulaR4>

Jesus had promised the disciples before the ascension that the Spirit would come to them, and that this counsellor would come to give them power. It had been ten days since the ascension and the disciples were waiting in the upper room. And we can only begin to imagine the conversations which went on there. Those who know me best will know that, I'm not a very patient person – so I know that I would find it really difficult to sit and wait and do nothing, and I dare say that some of the believers probably felt the same. Some may have wanted to quit, others filled with an urgent expectancy – would no doubt have been pacing up and down, hoping that whatever was going to happen would happen quickly. Others may have been a little anxious – perhaps even fearful of what may happen, others may have been starting to doubt, but others remembering Jesus' post resurrection appearance amongst them and also recalling His final words – would doubtlessly have had the faith to wait. The believers would have reacted during this time of waiting in accordance with the spirit within. That personal spirit which controlled the way they lived and behaved, thought and felt.

When the great moment finally arrived – we learn from Acts, that the Spirit arrived by itself from out of nowhere, and so when the Spirit descended upon the disciples – it is quite possible that they were going about their daily tasks.

Some may have been praying, others perhaps eating, some may have been preparing the next meal, others resting...and regardless of how well prepared they thought they were, I dare say, that the sudden arrival of a sound like the blowing of a violent wind and the sight of tongues of fire – would have nonetheless taken them by surprise.

But what a marvellous surprise it was – for when the Holy Spirit came it came in great power, filling them with wondrous gifts which would enable them to fulfil the Lord's command to spread the word of God throughout the world.

And so this is what I want us to think about... the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came and entered the souls of those people on Pentecost and collided with their own spirits. We all have our own spirit within us, and it is the spirit within us which drives us, empowers us, embarrasses us, frightens us, causes trouble for us, a spirit which wants only what is good for me, myself and I. We have a spirit which is defiant, which takes pride in itself, which wants to be in control, which wants to be independent, which wants to control the self. But it is precisely this spirit within us that the Holy Spirit comes to and wants to change.

When we look at the account given in Acts chapter 2 of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost we note two major changes...

The first is what happened directly to the disciples. We know from the scriptures that the early disciples already believed in Jesus as their saviour, but they were still very confused about all kinds of different things. I think it is fair to say, that at this point, they still didn't fully understand Jesus' mission, why He had come to earth, and perhaps as a result they were not over confident about sharing the Gospel with others. I mean how they could be, if they didn't fully understand it!

But then Pentecost came. The disciples were together, when the sound of a blowing wind came down from heaven. What seemed to be tongues of fire settled on their heads. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in foreign languages they had never learned before.



Continued...

A crowd gathered, people from all over the world, and that crowd listened as the disciples preached the Gospel. The Apostle Peter stood up and addressed the crowd – he gave a beautiful sermon that God the Holy Spirit inspired him to preach, a sermon that converted 3000 people in one day.

And so, do you see the changes that took place at Pentecost? No longer were the disciples confused. Now they understood the plan of salvation completely. No longer were they timid. Now, they were confident, speaking publicly. Look at Peter – two months earlier he was so afraid that he denied Jesus three times. Now he was speaking to the crowd with confidence and understanding that he had never had before.

In explaining the first change, I've already touched on the second, and that was that after Peter had addressed the crowd at Pentecost, 3000 people came to faith and were baptized.

We don't know much about these people, but we do know that Jerusalem was packed with people, because of the Festival of Pentecost. Back then, Pentecost was an agricultural festival – God had told the Jews to gather in Jerusalem 50 days after Passover to celebrate the harvest. Jews from all over the Roman Empire came. 3000 of them who were not Christians, who did not believe in Jesus Christ, were changed that day. Their whole way of looking at God, at themselves, at the world, at eternal life – everything had changed. The Holy Spirit was the one who converted those 3000 people. These people now knew how to get to heaven. These people now knew that they were at peace with God. These people now knew that Jesus was their Saviour.

And so there is a sense in which Pentecost can be summed up in one word, and I believe that word is change. We see the change that took place in the disciples, and the change that took place in those 3000 people – and our world today needs change. There are so many people who do not believe in Jesus Christ, so many people who do not know the way to heaven. And there are so many Christians today who are like the disciples prior to that Pentecost – people who are confused, weak, timid, lacking the courage to tell others of Christ and so, we need the Holy Spirit to come to us, and change us.

The problem is so often we don't like change do we – we kid ourselves that we don't need to change that we are alright as we are.

And yet as a church and as individuals there is much that could be changed – that ought to be changed, that must be changed if we are to be true to ourselves, true to our calling, true to Christ.

And so the question is – are we prepared to change?

The disciples had a choice – they could either run for their lives, or wait in the upper room, similarly we have a choice too... we can either quit as soon as the going gets tough, give in to temptation, refuse to compromise, think only of self, stand in the way of progress; or we can pray that the Lord will pour His Holy Spirit upon us will and enable us to be the liberated people that God wants us to be.

We can only change by allowing the Holy Spirit to have unreserved access to our lives, so that by His power we can be transformed. Paul in Romans chapter 8 writes about the transforming power of the Holy Spirit - and I encourage you this week to take some time to read that for yourselves.

One pastor once wrote:

"Once in a while the Spirit comes. Sometimes he stings the soul, sometimes he sakes it, sometimes he troubles our conscious, sometimes he soothes it, sometimes he heals our pain, sometimes he just helps us to endure it. He lifts the clouds just long enough for us to glimpse the City that was not made with hands in order that we can go back and take up our cross and follow him."



Continued...

The Spirit has been with the Church since the first Pentecost, so that it could enter our spirit and enable us to be the kind of people God intended for us to be. Each day we need to renew ourselves and allow God's Holy Spirit to replace our pride full spirit so that we can bear His cross in this world.

The Salvation Army's 7th Article of Faith reads as follows...

'We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.'

Other words for regeneration include...renewal, rebirth, revival, renaissance (or reawakening), rejuvenation and restoration; and the Holy Spirit works constantly with our spirit so that our lives may be transformed, be made new and rewarding.

For me, one of the rewards of being regenerated by the Holy Spirit is Christian service - to have and know the privilege of being a co-worker with Christ.

Someone has said, 'true transformation results in a transformation of the heart that loves God and desires to know him better every day. When we are delivered from the bondage of sin and ushered into the kingdom of God where there is freedom, we delight in the things of God. The more you know God, the more you will love him, and the more excited you will be about the his kingdom. The more you love him, the more you will want others to know him. The more you experience his presence and power, the more of it you want. This is the way to live. We have been forgiven. We have inherited eternal life. We have experienced eternal love. We are holding nothing back because we have discovered life. We have found the pearl of great price, and it is worth more than everything else we have seen or possessed. Because of this we are excited about life and we are excited about the wonderful God we serve. And, we are willing to do whatever it takes to have more of him.'

And so I pray that we will each want to claim the convicting, regenerating, sanctifying, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit for ourselves - and that God will use us to draw others to Himself for His Kingdoms sake.

A Benediction for Pentecost

May the love of God create in you new life.

May the power of God transform your old habits into new hope.
and

May the Spirit of God grant you wisdom and vision,
emboldening you to proclaim the good news of God's love to all.

Amen.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

Tuesday 25th May 11am - Coffee Morning via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/94036559399?pwd=TKZmSS9jWtNzTGU1NW5mY2JoNFIRUT09>

Meeting ID: 940 3655 9399 **Passcode:** Coffee

Thursday 27th May 7pm - BM Bob Dare's House Group (Spirit LYFE Session 3)

Sunday 30th May 10am - Morning Worship via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/97311064719?pwd=VXJxWEFBVGVU1WFpPSjk2UUFWNWlvdz09>

Meeting ID: 973 1106 4719 **Passcode:** Worship

Monday 31st May - BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY

