



**Lockdown Worship at Home—31 May 2020**  
**Pentecost Sunday**

**Theme: “All fired up”**

Dear Friends of Currie Kirk. Please get in touch with the Kirk Office (451 5141) if you need anything. We have friends willing to listen, shop, walk a dog, fix a garden. Website: <https://www.curriekirk.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/CurrieKirk/>

**Call to Worship**

Come faithful believers, sing praises to God  
who comes to us with a rush of a mighty wind and fills us with living fire  
God who out of love for us sent Jesus to live among us  
We are God’s people: we are redeemed; for God has called us  
Come Holy Spirit and find us in our wilderness  
Lead us forth into your wondrous love.  
Praise be to the God who binds us together as one by His Spirit

**Opening Prayer**

Come Holy Spirit  
Enter our lives. Free us from all fear.  
Give us strength to carry on.  
Give us hope and joy sufficient for each day.

Come Holy Spirit  
Give us power to be the church  
Impart your gifts to us  
That we may be the body of Christ’s presence in the world

Come Holy Spirit  
Forgive any pride, prejudice or state of heart which divides us  
Enable us to be builders of understanding and makers of peace

Come Holy Spirit  
And in this real time of separation and isolation  
Help us still, to rejoice with one another’s joys  
and weep with one another’s sorrows  
To sense our oneness together  
And with all God’s people in Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen

**The Scripture Readings are taken from John 20: 19-21 page 1090 (NIV); and  
Acts 2: 1-18 page 1093 (NIV) and 32-39 page 1094 (NIV)**

## Meditation

Today is Pentecost. This is one of the biggest celebrations in the Church. It is just a shame that we cannot be together, because on Pentecost, God created real community amongst people of all backgrounds and languages, bringing them together. Jesus was crucified at the Jewish Passover in Jerusalem. Fifty days after Passover, the Jewish people again came from far and wide to Jerusalem for the Harvest Festival of Sheviot.



This Holy day was the day God's Holy Spirit came upon the disciples just as Jesus had promised.

Before he left to ascend to the Father, Jesus had appeared to his disciples, breathed his peace upon them and promised that he would not leave them orphaned—he would send his Holy Spirit as their helper and he would be with them and in them. They had waited and prayed and then the day came. That day, the disciples were so fired up by the Holy Spirit that Luke, the author of Acts found it hard to describe . . . he uses phrases like “a strong driving wind”, “mighty tongues of fiery flames”—empowering them with energy to share the news of Christ in all languages. Whatever it felt or looked like, by the grace of God's Holy presence and power, these frightened disciples suddenly became bold apostles, empowered and equipped to share the Good News to peoples well beyond the reach of Jerusalem. Pentecost is often referred to as the “Birthday of the Church”.

There is a cheeky story of two firemen who were talking in front of a large church which had gone up in flames, being destroyed by a fire. One fireman, a church member, was devastated to see his church going down in flames. He spoke in a voice which could be heard above the voice of the second fireman. He said, this is the first time I ever saw you near this Church. His pal retorted, “this is the first time I ever saw a church on fire!”

Here in Scotland, we like to think we are people of common sense and so, we don't often show it when we are all fired up . . . but we can, and do recognise the radiant joy of being together in faith. We know how the Holy Spirit can bring to one and all that sense of courage, confidence, purpose and peace. The disciples were so fired up that day, so ecstatic and exuberant that some people thought they were drunk. They were not drunk on human joy but on Divine energy and blessing—the sort of power that can only come from a heavenly place. We read how people were captivated and how they flocked to hear the apostles share the good news, to pray, break bread and it was beautiful.

I am also aware that reading this wonderful scripture might be difficult, even painful—for the story is in stark contrast to the life we are currently having to live. Recently, a friend of mine, Professor Phil Zeigler shared on-line that the Church needs to recognise the need to lament in Lockdown. In his words, he says:

*“We hear how those first Christians gathered ‘daily . . . and met together constantly to share their lives in common, to pray, to break bread and share meals with ‘unaffected joy’. We read that being together they knew and felt each other's needs and practiced a radical generosity of sharing all that they had with those in their midst who needed it. They were together—a life together gathered around the apostles, a life together whose purpose was the assembled praise of God, a life together whose very sinews were corporate prayer. . . . We have known something of this common life together in the Christian congregation. And we will, God willing, know it again. But in this interval, when, for the good of us all we foreswear our life together as we must, we feel the loss of what has been set aside.”*

Phil Zeigler is right. Whilst many of us are fortunate to be safe, and have done our duty to protect people and the NHS, there needs to be time to lament our sense of loss. The Covid virus has brought pain, and bewilderment to many, who have lost loved ones or livelihoods. Many of you have had significant birthdays when you could not see your loved ones. Some have cancelled weddings or anniversary celebrations. In quarantine, we have learned to say, “Happy Quaranniversary!” But it isn't the same—because we are not together. Babies have been born yet you cannot see your little ones, hold them, or help out. I felt for the Muslim communities during Ramadan; Whilst fasting and praying during the day, they also had to fast from the all-important fellowship and togetherness of shared evening meals and Eid festivities.

In Currie, we miss the Snack Lunches, the Guild, the BB, and the banter doing the dishes or on the cleaning teams. We miss worship and sharing our jokes, pastoral concerns and prayers. We miss the walks, the Sunday Fun Club, the Day Care and the minibus, and all the goings on in our life of shared faith and togetherness. It was all so uplifting and good, even if it was hard work and a lot of baking and soup-making, driving and helping involved.

Phil Zeigler is not wrong—it is ok to lament what we miss. Phil is also a scholar of Deitrich Bonhoeffer. You may know that Bonhoeffer was a German Christian who rebelled against the Nazi regime. Whilst most German churches cooperated with the regime, his underground Church movement created its own Seminary.

Bonhoeffer would later be imprisoned and executed. I thank Phil for sharing this extract from Bonhoeffer's writing. . . Bonhoeffer wrote this, after the final suppression of his underground seminary by the secret police in 1938, whilst reflecting on the common life he, and the seminarians had once known and enjoyed:

*'It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and sacrament. Not all Christians know this blessing: the imprisoned, the sick, the scattered lonely, missionaries of the Gospel in foreign lands stand alone. They know that visible fellowship is a blessing . . . The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength . . . Christians should feel no shame . . . when they yearn for the physical presence of other Christians. It is easily forgotten that the fellowship of Christian brethren is a gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God that any day may be taken from us, that the time that still separates us from utter loneliness may be brief indeed. Therefore, let those who until now have had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of their hearts. Let them thank God on their knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brothers and sisters.'*

Bonhoeffer reminds us that at its heart, the Church is God's creation, not a human creation. God desires that we share and care and pray together in community. People from all walks of life are always welcome and that is the sign of our unity in Christ. God continues to inspire the life of the Church.

Fortunately, our lockdown is not the result of such repression or tyranny. It is voluntary, our way of playing our part to protect others. Although Covid has created unease and uncertainty, we have faith that we will be together again one day soon. Lockdown is beginning to ease. We don't know when it will be safe enough, but we look forward to that celebration when we will praise God together in the Kirk again.

In the words of my friend Phil Zeigler again: *"Our lament for the common life of worship and service, now held in abeyance can and should spur us to treasure and honour all the more, when, in time, we are able to take it up again."*

Before Pentecost, whilst the disciples themselves were locked away, waiting and afraid, they spent time in prayer. God was with them throughout. The Holy Spirit is still our power, of Christ's presence with us. There is a lovely story of Harry Emerson Fosdick, former minister of Riverside Church in New York. He was standing by the rail admiring Niagara Falls. The man standing next to him commented, "You know, right there is the greatest unused power in all the world." Fosdick, in his kind manner replied gently, "I am afraid I have to disagree with you. The greatest underused power in all the world is prayer." We will be together again soon. Meantime, despite being physically apart, are together in Christ and in his Spirit. We continue to pray for one another, to share our joys and our sorrows.

In the meantime, whilst physically apart, it has been moving to hear how so many communities near and far have shown such neighbourliness, generosity, kindness and care. People have shopped and sewn and donated and created on-line networks of support. The virus has not stamped these things out, but, if anything, has revealed how much human goodness prevails in times like this. Currie lives up to its motto, "the Community that Cares." On the Church of Scotland worship materials is a lovely reading:

How does the Spirit move?

Like a breeze in the wind, The energy of God that changes us  
She is the power of transformation.

How does the Spirit work?

By imagination, alive in our ideas and dreams,  
Unfolding visions for the future To inspire and infuse us.

What does the Spirit sound like?

Like a shout of protest and the laughter of children playing in the streets  
Like the song of creation and the chorus at dawn

What does the Spirit do?

She shapes a circle that brings us together. Making us one in friendship and care:  
A Community, a unity, a family of love.

# Pastoral Prayer

God of wondrous love, who has the power to create the whirlwind  
And the wisdom to speak to our hearts in the still small voice,  
Bring us your love today.  
You have touched our world and never left us in despair  
You have held us in grief or sorrow  
And you have never deserted us.  
You paid us a divine visit and that visit has never ended.

We pray Lord God for your world  
We know that war and tyranny, famine and sickness  
Are not conditions under which you intend for your people to live  
Your compassion is upon all who suffer  
Your spirit wails and mourns for them  
Give strength to the weak and assure them you hear their cries.

May your Spirit of comfort  
Be near to all who are sad or lonely  
Give strength to those who carry heavy burdens or are weary on life's journey  
And speak peace to calm troubled minds or hearts.

In these quiet times of isolation or shielding  
Lift us from our own weariness  
Renew us by the power of your spirit  
Blow away any cobwebs in our lives and ignite us with your fire --  
That we may find energy to celebrate the life we have  
To remember the good and to give thanks for the beauty  
To know with assurance that as your children,  
We are called to new life, new hope, new vision  
As one people Praising you  
For you, Lord God move us to be more fully human with one another  
You answer the prayers that are only half-formed  
You enrich our experiences in unexpected ways  
And you accompany us in hours of daylight and the dark.

Be with us as we pray and breathe your Spirit of love upon us as we share our Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

