

## Prayers of concern

Holy Spirit, God-in-action throughout creation: we lift up your damaged and hurting world to you today. We pray...

Equip people in positions of power and authority, so that they may act wisely, justly and righteously.

Equip people in possession or control of wealth, so that they may use it wisely and fairly.

Equip people of knowledge and understanding, so that it may be used wisely to the benefit of all.

Equip those who bring aid to others, so that what is offered may match the needs to be met.

Equip us, your Church in this time and place, so that we may work effectively for your good pleasure.

Equip us, with all your people to be good-news communities in a bad-news world.

Lord, please hear the prayers we make in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## The Lord's Prayer

## **Our Father...**

## Hymn

[StF 391 / H&P 777](#): 'O breath of life, come sweeping through us'

## A closing prayer

God of all truth and power and grace

**May the boldness of your Spirit transform us into the likeness of Jesus**

**May the gentleness of your Spirit lead us in your ways of justice and peace**

**May the unity of your Spirit bind us together in fellowship**

**May the gifts of your Spirit equip us to serve and worship you**

**May the fruit of your Spirit be always visible in our lives**

# **District Worship for Pentecost 31 May 2020**

*Prepared by William Offler, District Local Preachers' Secretary*

## Introduction

[Acts 2: 1-13](#)

## Hymn

[StF 388 / H&P 305](#): 'Let every Christian pray...'

## A prayer for today

Spirit of God,  
flickering over our heads,  
illuminating our faces, inspiring our thoughts:

**Give us now, we pray  
words of joy and hope.**

Spirit of God,  
filling our hearts with hope, steadying our nerves with peace,  
comforting our lives with love:

**Give us now, we pray  
words of joy and praise.**

Spirit of God come to us now –  
surging through the darkness of our lives,  
sweeping over our weariness:

**Give us now, we pray  
words of joy and praise.**

Spirit of God,  
at this time of Pentecost may  
**the sparking light of faith,  
the rushing wind of hope,  
the joyful sound of praise,  
echo round your world  
and through your Church.**

## Prayers of confession & reconciliation

**When we forget your Holy Spirit's presence**

**God forgive us and renew us**

**When we hide your Holy Spirit's fruit**

**God forgive us and renew us**

**When we ignore your Holy Spirit's gifts**

**God forgive us and renew us**

**When we fear we can say nothing**

**God forgive us and renew us**

**When we believe that we can do nothing**

**God forgive us and renew us**

**We pray in Jesus' name. Amen**

## Bible Reading

[John 20:19-23](#)

### A reflection on the Bible passage

I expect that the first story from the Bible that comes to most of us when we think of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' followers is the passage from Acts 2: the day of Pentecost, the violent wind, the tongues as of fire, the explosion of the disciples into the street to proclaim God's good news. But we have also this account from St John. What are we to make of this? Some have suggested that this story represents a different tradition of the coming of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' first disciples, as we might also see a different tradition to [Matthew 28:16-20](#). Others including Mr Wesley have linked the two accounts, seeing the events of Easter evening as some kind of foretaste, or 'earnest' of what was to follow.

What does our passage from St John tell us? Unsurprisingly, the disciples were lying low. We don't know what they were expecting, although they had been told that Jesus had been seen alive (v18). What had happened to Jesus might happen to them, and so they had locked the door: but what might have kept out the Jewish religious authorities or the Roman political authorities couldn't keep Jesus out. And Jesus gets in to all kind of situations even though we humans try and keep him out...

Actually, locking the door would have been futile, for if the authorities had wanted to get in to arrest the disciples they would simply have broken it down. There would have been shouting, splintering wood, violence, maybe bloodshed. But when Jesus came, he 'came and stood among them' and the first thing that he said was 'Peace be with you' (v19): words they really needed to hear at that time. And then Jesus offered them evidence of his identity as he 'showed them his hands and his side' (v20). We may learn here at least two very important lessons about our Lord Jesus.

First, that although he sometimes has to act quite dramatically to attract our attention as in the case of Saul and indeed here in 'just appearing' he doesn't use the 'shock and awe' tactics that the world sometimes favours. He appears and speaks peace into fear, confusion, lost identity.

And secondly, is that Jesus identified himself to his disciples by 'his hands and his side': through his wounds. Over the centuries, Jesus has been portrayed in many ways, in art and though the words of prayers and hymns. Sometimes, in seeking to be faithful to Scripture but also reflecting less worthy ideals we have emphasised the glory and power of the Risen Christ, and forgotten those wounds. Yet in the vision of glory in Revelation 5, the one described as a conquering lion is also the Lamb 'standing as if it had been slaughtered' (vv5-6). The King of kings and Lord of lords still carries the marks of what he allowed humankind to do to him. When we are offered or offer a picture, a version of Jesus, we need to ask 'where are his wounds?' And if we as his community are somehow in St Paul's terminology 'the Body of Christ' may we expect to somehow echo those 'scars that speak of sacrifice'...?

Then there is the commission (v21). Through the disciples, God's work in Christ continues: 'so I send you' Jesus told them then and there and also us here and now. But how might this be possible, for them or for us? We human beings simply can't do God-stuff in our own power or by our own abilities. That was so of the first disciples and is so of us today. We need help from outside us, beyond us. And so Jesus followed up his commission as he 'breathed on them and said to them "Receive the Holy Spirit"' (v22) For this 'breathing' takes us back to the second creation story in [Genesis 2:7](#) and the idea of God's breath 'making alive'. The disciples are alive in a new way as the Holy Spirit lives in them and among them and so doing Jesus' things in the world moves from mission impossible to mission possible.