

## **Call to Worship**

Come, Holy Spirit, **Wind of God, and breath of Life.**

Come, Holy Spirit, **Our Advocate, and our Comforter.**

Come, Holy Spirit, **Teacher of Wisdom, and Revealer of truth.**

Come, Holy Spirit, **Granter of forgiveness, giver of peace.**

Come, Holy Spirit.

**May we feel God breathing through our worship.**

**May we welcome the Holy Spirit today and all days. Amen.**

**Hymn:** 194 This is the day

## **Prayer of Approach and Confession and the Lord's Prayer**

Mighty God,

come to us through your Holy Spirit, we pray,  
filling us with your peace.

Give us a love for all and a desire to serve,  
humility of mind and gentleness of soul.

Nurture your grace in our hearts.

Mighty God,

come to us through your Holy Spirit, we pray,  
setting us on fire with love for you.

Fill us with a burning desire to work for your kingdom,  
and cleanse us of all that is impure  
and unworthy in our lives.

Kindle a flame of faith in our hearts.

Mighty God,

come to us through your Holy Spirit, we pray,  
breathing new life into our souls.

Fill us with energy and enthusiasm in the service of Christ,  
bring new dreams and new visions

sweep away all in our lives that keeps us from living as your  
people and help us to be the people you would want us to be  
Instill a sense of hope and expectation in our hearts.

Mighty God forgive us that we so easily limit your Spirit,  
receiving the blessing of the Spirit for ourselves and failing to  
pass it on to others.

Forgive us that we so easily quench the Spirit,  
resisting that which challenges and disturbs us.  
Forgive us that we are so often closed to  
the movement of your Spirit,  
shutting it out by the narrowness of our vision.

Come as the Dove, the Fire and the Wind, we pray,  
bringing your forgiveness, opening our lives to your peace, your  
power and the inspiration that you would give us.  
Open our lives and touch our hearts, we pray, in the name of  
Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray saying: 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. And  
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is  
the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever Amen.

**Bible Readings: Acts 2:1-21 (GNT) & Romans 8:22-27 (GNT)**

**Hymn:** 596 Breathe on me breath of God

### **Reflection**

Today is a day of celebration. On that day of Pentecost so long ago miraculous events happened that we see as the start, as the very first beginnings. the very first shoots of the church beginning to grow - as the Holy Spirit came to the disciples and they were fired up, energized, enthused, motivated, inspired, encouraged, galvanized, to leave their place of safety to come out from hiding and given the words to tell others about the love of God – and the great things that God had done and was doing...this was the birth of the church as we know it today.

In between the days of Jesus finally leaving them, when he ascended to the Father until this momentous day - they had been gathering quietly together – some think in that upstairs room where the last supper was taken. Perhaps they **were** trying to keep a low profile hiding away from any further persecution that may have come – but we're told that they frequently gathered together - the disciples and the women with Mary the mother of

Jesus and his brothers - in prayer. During this time they had had one meeting of the 120 followers of Jesus to decide who would take Judas' place and had chosen Matthias.

So on this very special day of Pentecost we are told that **all the believers** were gathered together in one place – in one house. All 120 of them!

Pentecost was originally a harvest festival – to celebrate the harvest of grains - and many folks would have been visiting Jerusalem because of the harvest. The word Pentecost comes from a Greek word meaning fiftieth. The Jewish Festival of Pentecost (called Shavuot, meaning 'weeks' in Hebrew) falls on the fiftieth day, 7 weeks, after the original Passover. On this day, according to Jewish tradition, God gave the Torah – the Law – the 10 commandments - to Moses on Mount Sinai. If you remember that story in Exodus 19:16-20 there is mention of fire and mighty thunder, God's presence is marked with fire on top of the mountain.

Here on this special Pentecost day God is experienced in a vision of fire and the booming noise of sudden wind as the presence of the Holy Spirit comes breathing through them and is experienced in such power that the followers all find themselves running to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all the strangers from many different lands who were visiting Jerusalem.

The Torah, the law was given to the people by Moses on the very first Pentecost 50 days after the Passover and the exodus of God's people from Egypt. The new law in Jesus Christ is celebrated on that Pentecost over a thousand years later as Christ brings fire from heaven and the wind the breath of God breathes new life into his chosen people once again – and brings that same new life to many more people chosen from many nationalities. God's word and God's love is now not exclusively for the people of Israel.

The chapter starts with the words, 'When the day of Pentecost came' in other versions it has 'When the day of Pentecost was fulfilled', this was the day of **the fulfillment of the promise of**

**John the Baptist** in Luke 3:16, when he said, ‘ I baptize you with water. But someone is coming who is much greater than I am...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire’.

**This is the fulfilment of Jesus promise** which Luke the writer of Acts has just reprised in Chapter 1 v 4 & 5, where we’re told Jesus ‘gave them this order: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my father promised. John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

This sense of fulfillment of promises reaches even further back when Peter stands up to speak to the crowd for he reaches much further back, to the prophet Joel’s 800-year-old announcement of a dramatic outpouring of God’s Spirit to restore Israel’s fortunes after a plague of locusts and drought (Joel 2.28ff). Israel’s hopes for a bright new future have arrived on this Jerusalem street at Pentecost, just weeks after the dark days and the suffering of the recent Passover.

This whole story talks of unity and diversity: the followers of Christ all being together and supporting one another, all being touched by the Holy Spirit and rushing out to share the message and the diversity of speaking to people from all over the known world and so convincingly that they too become disciples – in verse 41 we hear that 3,000 people were added to the group that day and they spent their time learning from the disciples, taking part in the fellowship and sharing in the meals and prayers.

This was the start of the church, there would be many setbacks ahead but the church survived them all. We are living through troubling times; through many setbacks. The pandemic and the fear it engenders has made us all retreat behind closed doors waiting for the promise of life to return to normal. Churches all over Scotland and our National Church has felt the impact that these long months have had when they were already grappling with falling numbers, resources and finances.

**BUT** there is the promise and we look forward to the fulfilment of the promise that soon we will be able to let go of our fear, soon

we will be able to go out in freedom once again, soon we will be able to start meeting and speaking and singing and sharing our joy with one another, soon we will be able to see the changes the spirit has brought through this long period of adaptation, soon we will be able to see where the spirit is leading us to new pastures and new ways of doing things that will stay with us and be the seeds of a new way of being and doing church.

Like those words of Joel, that Peter quotes, this is a time to dream dreams and see visions and to see all the new ways of taking God's message out into the world. The Spirit is with us and stirring us with new power and new energy and now ideas...now is the time to start looking ahead in hope and thanksgiving. a time to turn dreams and visions into plans and reality...the Spirit is moving in and through us...thanks be to God. Amen

### **Prayers for Others: by the new Moderator of the General Assembly, Lord Wallace of Tankerness**

On the day when we celebrate the Church's founding let us pray for her work across Christ's world, in places whose stories we know and in places we can only leave to the knowledge of the heart of God. And especially we remember those places where those who confess Jesus as their Saviour are still persecuted for His sake. May they know the emboldening power of the Spirit of Pentecost and the loving assurance of the Comforter.

We pray for the Church in our land of Scotland, for the Church of Scotland and all denominations that share her mission in cities, towns, villages and countryside and islands. Especially today we pray for those meeting in General Assembly. May they be guided by the Spirit and discern God's will for the Church's future and her witness.

We pray for those experiencing illness in body or in mind, and for those who practise the healing arts of medicine and nursing. We remember families and communities emerging from pandemic still feeling the pain of loss of loved ones May they experience God's love and comfort through our actions and our words. And as we pray for those who are feeling despair through the loss of employment or opportunity, we also pray that despite our

feebleness we, with the assurance of the Spirit, may bring hope through the practical resolve of a Church ready to play its part in the work of healing and renewal.

Let us pray that in this land and in the world the Spirit will inspire and raise up women and men, young and old, to dream dreams and share a vision of a world \*where oppression is defeated by justice, where anxiety is vanquished by hope, where creation is cherished and the earth's resources are harvested responsibly for a just sharing, where people everywhere will not be judged by the colour of their skin, or their gender or their creed or their orientation but by the content of their character. Where hate is overcome by love, and where the 'earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.' All this we ask through Christ Jesus, our Lord, Amen.

**Hymn:** 595 O Breath of life, come sweeping through us

### **Benediction**

As you go forth from this place,  
may the wind of the Spirit startle your senses  
and blow through your life;  
may the fire of the Spirit scorch your complacency  
and light your way;  
may the inspiration of the Spirit bring dreams and visions  
and the power of the Spirit the means to achieve them.  
And may the blessing of almighty God, the Holy One—  
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer—  
rest upon you and remain with you now and forever more.

**THREEFOLD AMEN**