

Morning Worship

A campfire is the central focus, burning brightly with orange and yellow flames. The fire is contained within a circle of dark, smooth stones. The background is a soft, blue twilight sky over a green field. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

31 May 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Morning Worship here at the Parish churches of Coxley with Godney, Henton, and Wookey. Although we are currently apart due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus) it is hoped that following this liturgy knowing that others in the benefice will be doing so at the same time might help provide a spiritual connection between us.

It is suggested that alongside this liturgy you have a means to listen to the suggested hymns which have links to videos with lyrics within this document. There is a mixture of traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs. If you do not know the tune then why not listen to the hymn/song and worship through reading the words alone.

The service is designed to be used easily by one person. If there is more than one person participating, either one can lead with others joining in with the responses in **bold** OR everyone present may join in with all the words.

The sections in *red italics* are rubrics: these explain what needs to happen at various points.

Materials in this booklet are drawn from *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* which is copyright © The Archbishop's Council of the Church of England 2006; *New Patterns for Worship* copyright © The Archbishop's Council of the Church of England 2002. All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version.

MORNING WORSHIP

GREETING

Praise God! For even though we are apart the Lord is in our midst!

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory.

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Lord is here!

His Spirit is with us!

Though we find ourselves isolated
in homes, apartments, and residential places,

**we look out our windows and remember,
the heavens declare the glory of God,
all creation rejoices in our creator.**

Psalm 19:1

Though we cannot reach out and touch
our friends and neighbours,

**we rejoice that Christ is in our midst,
he is with us always, until the end of the age!**

Matthew 28:20

Though we have to stand at a safe distance from others,
giving space to those who pass us by,

**we recall we are all made in the image of God,
connected to one another,
connected to God.**

Genesis 1:27

HYMN: O BREATHE OF LIFE COMING SWEEPING THROUGH US

[Listen here](#)

CONFESSION AND WORDS OF COMFORT

The Spirit of the Lord fills the world
and knows our every word and deed.
Let us then open ourselves to the Lord
and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

**Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you.
We are not worthy to be called your children.
We turn to you again.
Have mercy on us,
bring us back to yourself as those who once were dead
but now have life through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

A period of silent reflection follows

Hear the words of comfort, our Saviour Christ says to all who truly
turn to him:

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

PRAYER FOR PERSONAL RENEWAL

Be with us, Spirit of God;
nothing can separate us from your love.

Breathe on us, breath of God;
fill us with your saving power.

Speak in us, wisdom of God;
bring strength, healing, and peace.

Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Let us praise and bless God for ever.

COLLECT

Let us pray that the Spirit will work through our lives
to bring Christ to the world.

A period of silent prayer is kept.

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
ignite in us your holy fire;
strengthen your children with the gift of faith,
revive your Church with the breath of love,
and renew the face of the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

HYMN: CONSUMING FIRE

[Listen here](#)

THE WORD OF GOD

Hear what God is saying to his people according to the Acts of the Apostles.

2 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

THE SERMON

By Revd David Thomas

The men and women who followed Jesus in Galilee and then went with him to Jerusalem could never have predicted what was to happen to them. They saw him heal all manner of diseases, they saw him attract thousands to his talks, on one occasion five thousand who had to be fed, and they saw him acclaimed in triumph when he entered Jerusalem. Then they saw him arrested and executed, and strangest of all they saw him raised from the dead and taken up to heaven.

Over the years with Jesus, they had more or less become one household. After Jesus had left them, as Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles, they comprised the eleven disciples, a few women, Jesus' mother Mary and his brothers. Now they remained in their upper room, waiting in what you could call self-isolation, uncertain about what might happen next, but acutely aware of the danger that lay all around and of the need to distance themselves from anyone who was not of their number.

We are in a position to begin to imagine their feelings and thoughts in this confusing time. Ordinary people from the provinces, they had been attracted by a unique personality, had witnessed the most unlikely happenings – miracles, resurrection, ascension – and had now been left to fend for themselves, marked by their association with the young preacher from Galilee and targets for those who had killed him. Keeping ourselves in lock-down, not knowing whether the next stranger will infect us, we can maybe appreciate some of those first Christians' fears and forebodings. How long was their self-isolation to last? How dangerous was it to get close to people outside? Would their world ever be the same again? Was it all a bad dream? If they had begun to despair and give up hope, it would be quite understandable.

Then on the fiftieth day after the Jewish festival of Passover, when Jesus had been executed, change came, their lock-down ended, and they were directed towards a new way of living. They described their experiences on that day as like being battered by a strong

wind and burnt by an interior fire so that flames appeared on their heads. Whatever actually happened, they acquired unprecedented confidence and vitality. They went outside their lock-down room and talked to anyone they could. Amazingly, people understood them, no matter where they came from or what language they spoke. The more scornful among their hearers said they were drunk – a sad situation because it was only 9.00 am. Others were deeply affected by what they said, and according to Luke an incredible three thousand were baptised after hearing Peter's explanation of their experiences as followers of Jesus (Acts 2:1-13).

Pentecost is rightly called the birth of the Church. It was on that day that God's work in Christ achieved its climax, as the Holy Spirit gave new life to the huddle of poor souls without any idea of what to do. With the new confidence they found they went out, at first in Jerusalem but then throughout the country –the deacon Philip went to preach in Samaria (Acts 8:5-8) – and in a few years they were establishing new communities all over the Mediterranean world, including the capital Rome, where Peter and the new recruit Paul both worked. Some of them went even further. Bartholomew is traditionally recorded in Armenia, and Thomas along the eastern trade routes in India. Within a century or two from that Pentecost day, Christianity came to Britain.

One defining characteristic of Christians in those first years, before there were church buildings or the trappings of an institution, was this impulse to witness to other people about what they believed. This witness often took the form of preaching, and under Paul it took the form of explaining in words and writing to Jewish communities in the eastern Mediterranean about how Christ was the fulfilment of the Jewish faith. It also took the form of showing regard and care for one another, particularly the vulnerable and infirm. This was such an evident characteristic that one Roman pagan in North Africa around the year 200 remarked in amazement: 'See how these Christians love one another'. This quality stood out in a society where there was little sense of social welfare, and such an organisation as the NHS

was inconceivable. It is no exaggeration to say that care for the other, both within the Christian community and outside, is a second defining characteristic of Christianity.

The two characteristics, the urge to witness and the urge to put others first, in many ways separate Christianity off from the faith out of which it sprang. Many people reading this sermon will be following the story in the Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah about re-establishing the Jewish community in the years following the destruction of the state. This was when the great world empires of the day destroyed the capital Jerusalem and its Temple, put an end to the nation and its culture, and carried them off from the land they believed God had given them. No wonder the Psalmist complained, 'How could we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' (Psalm 137:4), as the enslaved people searched for ways to preserve their identity and religion away from their homes and the Temple with its sacrificial rituals.

When the people were eventually allowed to return, the answer to this pressing question of how they could be a distinct people with their own culture and ways came in a simple and very effective form. It was to return to the Laws of Moses and to base the conduct of the community on that. So, Ezra is recorded reading the book of the Law to the gathered people in a communal act of remembrance and commitment. They were to return to the ways first prescribed for them when they had gathered centuries ago at Mount Sinai, and had been given the Ten Commandments and the whole body of the Law. After this time of return from exile, the Law became the foundation of the Israelite community, and study of it was regarded as the highest of the virtues – 'How I love your law! It is my study all day long' (Psalm 119:97). So much had this become the case by the time of Jesus, that scholars who tried to follow every single instruction in it had identified as many as 613 separate legal regulations. It was they, known in the Gospels as Pharisees, who opposed Jesus and his seemingly lax ways, and incurred his anger by appearing to place the Law even above human welfare. They attacked Jesus for

healing a man on the sabbath because the Law said that the sabbath was for rest and no work was to be done, not even the good work of healing a man's withered arm (Luke 6:6-11).

It could be said that whereas Judaism, the faith that emerged among the Jewish people during the first century after the Temple had been destroyed by the Romans, is founded on the study of the Law of Moses, and so on a relationship with God that is governed by a written text, Christianity is founded on the encounter with Jesus through the activity of the Holy Spirit, and so on a relationship with God that is governed by a human personality. The one has a fixed objectivity to it, the other is constantly moving and developing; the one takes the believer into exploring God's intention for this particular nation, his 'chosen people', the other can lead to constantly fresh understandings of Jesus' example of serving others both inside and outside the Christian community. Judaism tends to direct its followers inwards to dwell on the right way to interpret and apply a text; Christianity tends to direct its followers outwards to discover where God is present and active in his world.

Most of us remain in lock-down, and the churches remain largely shut. But before long there will be changes. It is then (as now) that the decisive change that took place when the Holy Spirit stirred the first Christians should be borne in mind. At the time of the first Pentecost men and women responded in such ways that the quality of their living and speaking was noticed by everyone. We can pray now for ourselves, as we do at the end of every Eucharist:

Send us out in the power of your Spirit

To live and work to your praise and glory!

HYMN: SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD

[Listen here.](#)

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

INTERCESSIONS

Use the silence between each prayer to bring before God your own concerns around that topic.

We pray for God to fill us with his Spirit.

Generous God,
we thank you for the *power* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask that we may be strengthened to serve you better...

Silence is kept.

Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *wisdom* of your Holy Spirit
We ask you to make us wise to understand your will...

Silence is kept.

Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *peace* of you Holy Spirit.
We ask you to keep us confident of your love wherever you call us...

Silence is kept.

Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *healing* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to bring reconciliation and wholeness...

Silence is kept.

Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *gifts* of your Holy Spirit
We ask you to equip us for the work which you have given us...

Silence is kept.

Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the *fruit* of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to reveal in our lives the love of Jesus.

Silence is kept.

Lord, come to bless us
and fill us with your Spirit.

Generous God,
you sent your Holy Spirit upon your Messiah at the river Jordan,
and upon your disciples in the upper room:
in your mercy fill us with your Spirit.

**hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy forever.
Amen.**

THE 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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

HYMN: SHINE JESUS SHINE

[Listen here.](#)

DISMISSAL

For fifty days we have celebrated the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over the powers of sin and death. We have proclaimed God's mighty acts and we have prayed that the power that was at work when God raised Jesus from the dead might be at work in us.

As part of God's church here in Coxley, Godney, Henton, and Wookey, I call upon you to live out what you proclaim.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, will you dare to walk into God's future, trusting him to be your guide?

By the Spirit's power, we will.

Will you dare to embrace each other and grow together in love?

We will.

Will you dare to share your riches in common and minister to each other in need?

We will.

Will you dare to pray for each other until your hearts beat with the longings of God?

We will.

Will you dare to carry the light of Christ into the world's dark places?

We will.

Filled with the Spirit's power,
go in the light and peace of Christ. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.