

Order of Service for 5th June 2022 - Pentecost Day

Reasons to Celebrate

Welcome

Welcome to Hearsall at Home on this day of celebration as we mark the seventy-year reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and as we rejoice in the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day.

Let's come to worship God.

Call to Worship

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8: 14 - 17

We sing a song of celebration...

Song (WT 65) **Come on and Celebrate**

Come on and celebrate
His gift of love, we will celebrate
The Son of God who loved us
And gave us life.
We'll shout Your praise, O King,
You give us joy nothing else can bring,
We'll give to You our offering
In celebration praise.

Come on and celebrate, celebrate,
Celebrate and sing,
Celebrate and sing to our King.
Come on and celebrate, celebrate,
Celebrate and sing, celebrate and sing to our King.

Bible Reading

Acts 2: 1 - 12

The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?' **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? **9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!' **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?'

God's Spirit does so many things in our lives and in the world. We celebrate the gift of the Spirit in our next song, *Peace like a river...*

Song (WT345) **Peace Like a River**

Peace like a river, love like a mountain,
The wind of your Spirit is blowing everywhere.
Joy like a fountain, healing spring of life,
Come, Holy Spirit, let Your fire fall.

Offering

Lord, for the gift of your Spirit and for all the happy gifts of life on earth, we give you our thanks. Please accept our own gifts of our time, talents and resources and bless your world through them too. Amen

All-Age Talk

Reasons to Celebrate

What a tough time we're all going through! Wars, inflation and climate change are just three of the threats to global, national and personal peace. Those concerns will be with us all when we awake tomorrow, but today; today is a day of joy and celebration. Even in the darkest times, celebration is vital for the soul.

So, what things are we celebrating today? I can name three:

- the historic service of a loyal queen;
- the local happiness of two weddings in our own church family;
- and the gift of the Holy Spirit to us all.

Queen Elizabeth II celebrates seventy years serving as our monarch. And we celebrate her! Our queen's qualities have been exactly what our nation has needed. She has been steadfast, loyal, dignified and reliable through seven decades of often turbulent change. In her person she embodies so much of what makes this nation great. She is a woman of stature on the global stage and yet, in her public role, so many of her achievements have come through discretion, through saying little and through saying what she does say with care, intelligence and grace. In this, she is a great role model for all of us who may seek to lead. Effective leadership comes first of all in who we are as people, then in how we hold ourselves, in our self-restraint and in the consideration with which we speak. In this world we experience war and economic turmoil; nevertheless, we celebrate!

A young couple got married at Hearsall on Tuesday! She is a member of our church; he is a member of the Salvation Army. And on Saturday 11th June, I myself will marry Léonie, an Anglican lady. Baptists, Salvationists, Anglicans marrying each other - what a wonderful thing to celebrate. When she was sick with the cancer that took her life at the start of 2018, my first wife Ruth made it very clear to me that I should remarry. As she faced up to her imminent death, she was able to encourage me so that a day would come when I might celebrate a marriage once more. That was real love and real faith in action. We marry across denominational divides. We marry after the sadness of death and difficulty. In this world we experience sadness and setbacks and bereavement; nevertheless, we celebrate!

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival, when the first of the fruits was offered to God. It also became a festival to celebrate the renewal of the covenant with God. At the time of our reading from Acts, many Jews who lived in different parts of the Mediterranean world had come as pilgrims to Jerusalem. The city would have been busy and noisy and excitable with the arrival of so many travellers. Jesus' disciples had been constantly praying together in an upper room, including Mary the mother of Jesus and various other women. They were all together when something extraordinary happened. There was a sound that was like the sound of a violent wind. There was a visual phenomenon that looked like tongues of fire resting on each disciple. Each one spoke in a different language. Many individuals in the crowd gathered for the festival heard the disciples speaking in their own particular language; in their mother tongues. Peter later explained that all this was the Holy Spirit, God's presence, being poured into the lives of ordinary people. In this world we experience chaos and noise and confusion; nevertheless, we celebrate!

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I wonder how you go about celebration. Well, often food and drink is involved. Platinum pudding may be served up and down the land today. A cake will be shared at my wedding next Saturday. And today, well, St Augustine called Pentecost Day the birthday of the church, so it would be quite fitting to celebrate Pentecost with a birthday cake.

So what does the church's birthday - Pentecost Day - tell us about the church itself? First of all, it tells us that **everyone in the church is directly in communion with God**. Peter's Pentecost speech goes on to quote the minor prophet, Joel, who said that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit on everyone: sons, daughters, young men, old men, male servants, female servants - everybody!

When he is discussing an issue about marriage in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul defends his point of view by saying "I think that I too have the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 7:40) And any believer can say as much, as they share their view. An individual who prays and worships also has the Spirit of God, so we should listen to everyone.

Because in the church, everyone matters. Everyone is filled with the Spirit of God; everyone's spiritual perception is important. No one, strong individual should be allowed to dominate the direction of a church. Believers together form the priesthood. This theology is the foundation of the Baptist church meeting, where we listen to everyone, so that together we may hear Christ speak. Everyone's voice matters. Your voice matters too! Everybody matters!

And on Pentecost Day, the gift of the Spirit enabled everyone to hear the glory of God proclaimed **in their own language**. This underlines the fact that the Christian church is by nature diverse. Some nations pass laws against the speaking of local languages. Some religions insist that their holy book must only be read in its original tongue. They fear something must be lost if the sacred text is recast in another language.

But Pentecost underlines that, for Christians, diversity is no threat to unity. God speaks all languages from Icelandic to Finnish, from Swahili to Mandarin... This linguistic diversity lays the foundation for a cultural diversity in the church too, because language is intimately connected with culture. So, Pentecost reminds us that church life takes many forms, and we learn a great deal from sharing in different cultural expressions of worship.

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A church inspired by Pentecost - if you like a Pentecostal Church - is a church in which everyone matters, each one's spiritual experience is respected, and everyone is different. And yet in valuing each other in all our diversity, Christ is with us! No one's got it together; but together, we've got it!

This is very much a church equipped to serve Britain today. As a cost of living crisis looms, how can we bring that sense that everyone matters, that diversity is good, and that celebrating life together is not just for today, but will even sustain us in times of challenge? Anthony de Mello told the story of the Soup Stone... and I read this story directly now from *One Hundred Wisdom Stories*, by Margaret Silf.

The Soup Stone

A woman in a village was surprised to find a fairly well-dressed stranger at her door,

asking for something to eat. 'I'm sorry,' she said. 'I have nothing in the house right now.'

'Not to worry,' said the amiable stranger. 'I have a soup stone in this satchel of mine; if you will let me put it in a pot of boiling water, I'll make the most delicious soup in the world. A very large pot, please.'

The woman was curious. She put the pot on the fire and whispered the secret of the soup stone to a neighbour. By the time the water began to boil, all the neighbours had gathered to see the stranger and his soup stone. The stranger dropped the stone into the water, then tasted a teaspoonful with relish and exclaimed, 'Ah, delicious! All it needs is some potatoes.'

'I have potatoes in my kitchen,' shouted one woman. In a few minutes, she was back with a large quantity of sliced potatoes, which were thrown into the pot.

Then the stranger tasted the brew again. 'Excellent!' he said, but added wistfully, 'If we only had some meat, this would become a tasty stew.'

Another housewife rushed home to bring some meat, which the stranger accepted graciously and flung into the pot. When he tasted the broth again, he rolled his eyes heavenwards and said, 'Ah, tasty! If we had some vegetables, it would be perfect, absolutely perfect.'

One of the neighbours rushed off home, and returned with a basketful of carrots and onions. After these had been thrown in too, and the stranger had tasted the mixture, he said in a voice of command, 'Salt and sauce.'

'Right here,' said the housewife.

Then came another command: 'Bowls for everyone.' People rushed to their homes in search of bowls. Some even brought back bread and fruit.

Then they all sat down to a delicious meal while the stranger handed out large helpings of his incredible soup. Everyone felt strangely happy as they laughed and talked and shared their very first common meal. In the middle of the merriment, the

stranger quietly slipped away, leaving behind the miraculous soup stone, which they could use any time they wanted to make the loveliest soup in the world.

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A happy, healthy, well-functioning church inspired by the day of Pentecost might be a little bit like that stranger with his soup stone. We haven't got unlimited practical help to offer, but can we bring people together, and share our conviction and experience that everyone matters, that everyone has a voice, and that it's okay to be different?

Life is coloured by grief, poverty, death, relationship breakdown, busy-ness, war and climate change. Nevertheless, we celebrate, for we have each other, and in one another, we have the presence of Christ himself.

Let today be that day of celebration... Yes, we celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of our Amazing Queen! We celebrate here at Hearsall a couple of lovely local weddings; you've probably got other lovely family things you may be celebrating... and we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, who brings us all together, values each one, and ours as life as something which flows through the community, out and beyond, bringing life to all.

Yes, it's a tough old world out there right now. Nevertheless, we celebrate!

Let us pray...

Prayer of Thanksgiving (including prayers by Jan Berry & Michael Fooler)

Loving God, we give thanks for the life and service of our Queen, Elizabeth II, in this year of her platinum jubilee. For the stability and wisdom she has brought to our nation, to the commonwealth and to the world at large, we give you our thanks. And we pray that she may know peace and blessing from you, the God whom she serves.

Loving God, we thank you for the marriages we are celebrating at Hearsall in this season. Grant all who are married joy on their wedding day and a life of commitment and love together.

And we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit to us all.

Exuberant Spirit of God,
bursting with the brightness of flame
into the coldness of our lives
to warm us with a passion for justice and beauty
we praise you.

Exuberant Spirit of God,
sweeping us out of the dusty corners of our apathy
to breathe vitality into our struggles for change,
we praise you.

Exuberant Spirit of God,
speaking words that leap over barriers of mistrust
to convey messages of truth and new understanding,
we praise you.

Exuberant Spirit of God,
flame
wind
speech
burn, breathe, speak in us;
fill your world with justice and with joy.

Come, free, abundant Spirit of God; fill this place with the wonder of your presence; fill our hearts with your love; fill the whole Church with the power of Christ. Come in all the mystery signified by wind and fire, beyond human definition, not held in the grasp of anyone, or any thought, or any programme. Come, sovereign Spirit, and move our hearts to awe and wonder.

Breathe on me breath of God, fill me with life anew. We sing this prayer together...

Hymn (BPW282) **Breathe on me, Breath of God**

Breathe on me, breath of God,
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will,
to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
till I am wholly thine;
until this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God,
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.

Prayers of Intercession Roger Woodward

Ever-loving God, we come before you to share with you the thoughts of our minds
and the hurts of our hearts.

We pray for our world and its people. So many situations we cannot understand or
comprehend.

We pray for those who govern around the world; for those who have power over
others.

We particularly think of the world leaders who are struggling to find a resolution to
the awful situation in Ukraine. May they use their position to bring about peace and
an equal sharing of resources, and to reconcile those who are divided by war, race
or creed.

We pray for the people of Ukraine whose homes have been destroyed and who have
fled from what was once a secure and comfortable place, to a place of insecurity and
fear. Help us to welcome all refugees into our community with open hearts and
minds.

May we be the peacemakers in our own communities.

Silence

We remember those parts of the world affected by climate change and for whom, because of drought, there will again be no harvest, and hunger pains are part of everyday living.

Father, what should we do?

Silence

As we are called to share the message of the gospel in the communities around us, give us a sensitivity towards those with whom we share the good news, and help us to think outside of the box in which we are trapped. Open our hearts and minds to new ways of being church. Whenever and however we share your love, may we know your presence and power.

Speak to us Father.

Silence

We pray for those for whom life is a struggle each day, for those who do not know where the next meal is coming from, for those who do not know if they will have work this week, for those whose anxiety has been heightened by the increase in fuel costs, for those who are ill, in pain or are lonely, for those for whom the light at the end of the tunnel seems a long way off.

Let us think of any we know who are facing such challenges at this time. Could we be the answer to their prayers?

Silence

Father, speak to us that we may know where it is that you are calling us to share your loving care and healing power, not only this day but every day.

Amen.

May the wind of the Holy Spirit fill our sails as we sing, *Jesus be the centre...*

Song (WT 222) **Jesus be the Centre**

Jesus, be the centre,

Be my source, be my Light, Jesus.

Jesus, be the centre,

Be my hope, be my song, Jesus.

Be the fire in my heart,
Be the wind in these sails,
Be the reason that I live,
Jesus, Jesus.

Jesus, be my vision,
Be my path, be my guide, Jesus.
Jesus, be the centre,
Be my source, be my Light, Jesus.

Be my source, be my Light,
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;
And the love of God;
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all, evermore.
Amen

Sung Blessing

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you
Wherever he may send you;
May he guide you through the wilderness;
Protect you through the storm;
May he bring you home rejoicing
At the wonders he has shown you;
May he bring you home rejoicing
Once again into our doors.