**Thatcham URC – Worshipping Together**

**A Short Reflective Service with Communion**

**Pentecost Sunday – 5th June 2022, 10.30am** **and Gift Day**

**Celebrating the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee**

**Welcome and Introduction**

Welcome to our Reflective Service today, here at church, online or read at home. It’s good to be together again and we also celebrate Communion together. Today is Pentecost Sunday, but we are also celebrating today the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee – 70 years since she acceded to the throne.

We are reflecting on the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which followed Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension. It was a very significant event for Christianity and the Church.

We are also, of course, reflecting on the significant faith of the Queen that she recognises is guided by the Holy Spirit. We shall take a brief look at what The Queen herself says about her faith. It is no secret that the Queen’s faith in Jesus Christ and her love of the Bible are of central importance to her. So, as we are gathered now, we worship God. and give thanks for the Holy Spirit and the Queen’s 70 years of faithful service.

**Call to Worship: From Psalm 143** **Confidence in God**

***8****Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.* ***9****Rescue me from my enemies, Lord, for I hide myself in you.* ***10****Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.* ***11****Lord, preserve my life.* ***12****for I am your servant.*

Central to this Psalm is David’s willingness to trust God. And as he prays he confirms his commitment to the Lord: ‘I am your servant’. Like David, our confidence in prayer is founded on confidence in the character of God as revealed to us in Christ. Jesus is God’s eternal son who trusts and obeys his heavenly Father, and we trust and obey the same heavenly Father through him, by the Holy Spirit that leads us.

**Hymn: R&S 104: Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven;  To His feet thy tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, who like me His praise should sing: Praise Him, praise Him, Praise the everlasting King.  2. Praise Him for His grace and favour To our fathers in distress; Praise Him still the same for ever, Slow to chide, and swift to bless. Praise Him, praise Him, Glorious in His faithfulness. | 3. Frail as summer’s flower we flourish, Blows the wind and it is gone; But while mortals rise and perish God endures unchanging on. Praise Him, praise Him, Praise the high Eternal One!  4. Angels, help us to adore Him, Ye behold Him face to face; Sun and moon, bow down before Him; Dwellers all in time and space, Praise Him, praise Him, Praise with us the God of grace.  *H F Lyte (1793-1847)* |

**Prayer of Thanks, Praise and Confession, and The Lord’s Prayer**

**Gracious God**, how great is your love for us! We gather with praise and thanksgiving in our hearts. On this day of Pentecost we praise you for the power of your Holy Spirit, equipping each of us for our life's work. Your Spirit of truth heightens our senses, fills us, strengthens us, reminds us of all we have been taught and enables us to do so much more than we could ever do on our own.

We celebrate especially the wonderful work of our Queen, who has put loyalty before her royalty throughout her reign. And who, day by day, has served you, her God and Christ her King with humility, resilience and grace. We give you thanks for Her Majesty The Queen – a leader, a mother, a servant. We give thanks for her example of loving faithfulness and service to you and to her people. **Amen**

**Prayer of Confession**

Let us be enlightened by some of the words of Queen Elizabeth, from her 1984 Christmas message.

*‘Above all, we must retain the child’s readiness to forgive, with which we are all born and which it is all too easy to lose as we grow older. Forgiveness lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It can heal broken families; it can restore friendships and it can reconcile divided communities. It is in forgiveness that we feel the power of God’s love.’*

**Merciful God**, we approach you asking for forgiveness, and ask that the power of your love may be known for our healing and reconciliation. We have not always sought justice or loved kindness towards others. We have sometimes over-protected our privacy and not opened our hearts to others. When we fail to live as Spirit-filled people and negative emotions or scepticism infiltrates, forgive us, we pray.

May we, with the readiness of a child, forgive others, and not withold forgiveness. Those who have caused us division and pain, those who been intolerant or prejudiced, those who knock down that which we try to build up – open our hearts to forgive. Use us to restore harmony that all may humbly walk with you. This we pray in the name of Jesus, who heals. **Amen**

**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**

**Dedication of our Offerings**

**Almighty God**, we give thanks to you for all your gifts and provision for us. And in our thanksgiving, we offer our gifts, including those of our Gift Day today representing our love and commitment to you. Please accept our offerings, and we pray they may be used well for the sake of your kingdom here, through the work of your church, to be a blessing to others. **Amen**

**Video: New Anthem for the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee**

**‘Rise Up and Serve’**

**Bible Reading:**

**Words from John 14 and Acts 1&2 *(abridged)* concerning the Holy Spirit**

**Jesus promises the Holy Spirit**

***12****Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.* ***15****‘If you love me, keep my commands.* ***16****And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever –* ***17****the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

***25****‘All this I have spoken while still with you.* ***26****But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

*‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.* ***5*** *In a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit;* ***8****you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.’*

***The Holy Spirit comes***

***1****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 declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’* ***12****Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’*

***14****Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen carefully to what I say.* ***16*** *this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:* ***17****‘“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people’”. And so it began.* ***Thanks be to God for his word.***

**Reflection: God had come to live within his people**

In the space and time allowed for in a short reflection like this I cannot do justice to both Pentecost and the Queen’s Jubilee. So I am just going to reflect on a few best points from each.

In the first half of the Bible reading from John’s Gospel, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit. This was before his crucifixion and resurrection. The idea of this teaching is that Jesus goes and the Spirit comes. Consequently, the believer will enjoy even greater intimacy with God than when Jesus was physically present. Jesus is promising that the Holy Spirit will come and live within each believer.

The Holy Spirit is called the Paraclete, which when translated is counsellor, or advocate, helper and comforter. This literally means “the one called alongside to strengthen or help”. The Holy Spirit is God’s helping presence. He is ‘another’ – just like Jesus, so the disciples will be not left as orphans. God will continue to be present with them through the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit comes the gift of peace – a peace the world strives for, negotiates, discusses but, alas, can never achieve. Jesus said, ‘my peace I give to you’.

Following Jesus’ Ascension, 40 days after the resurrection, the disciples were now waiting in the city as Jesus had told them to – waiting until they would be clothed with power, the same power Jesus had: the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised this would happen before he was crucified and again just before he ascended. It was now 50 days after the Resurrection, it is the festival of Pentecost, and Jerusalem was buzzing with visitors from all over the known world. The last great act of the great Easter drama was about to happen.

In the second half of the Bible reading from the Acts of the Apostles, it is Pentecost and the Holy Spirit comes upon the believers. The coming of the spirit is associated with the sound of rushing wind and the sight of fire. The effect is that the 120 believers gathered together were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke in tongues or dialects, so that the different language groups in Jerusalem heard them disclosing the wonders of God in their own languages. The crowds were bewildered, utterly amazed, perplexed. Galileans didn’t speak other languages. ‘What does this mean?’ they said.

The focus of these verses is that God has come to live within his people. The Holy Spirit had come upon the church, and he enabled effective witness to the crowds. He is the Spirit, after all, who Jesus said would empower for witness. The significance of this event was to dignify and distinguish these Galilean believers as messengers from God. By the end of that day 3000 people had joined them.

In looking for a connection between Pentecost and the Queen and her Platinum Jubilee, the link is easy and it is more than a coincidence that Pentecost and the Platinum Jubilee are on the same day. It is the Holy Spirit and his activity in her life and faith. The Queen has often spoken of the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit during her reign to equip her for her role, and to prepare her spiritually and emotionally.

In the Queen’s coronation service in 1953 there was a sacred ceremony carried out under a canopy and thus screened from view. It was the anointing with oil. The sacred act symbolically sets people apart for service and pours out the life and power of God. She was to become a life empowered by the Holy Spirit for an extraordinary role. At the coronation she was reminded that she was not alone in this monumental task. The archbishop quoted the book of the Acts of the Apostles, where Jesus says ‘you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witness everywhere’.

In the book, *The Servant Queen, by Mark Greene & Catherine Butcher 2002,* the Queen is quoted as saying: ‘I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give of my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God. I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.’

At the beginning of her reign, she pledged that to her dying day she would be God’s anointed servant. The Queen asked people around the commonwealth to pray for her, that, ‘she may faithfully serve God and her people’. We thank God that the Queen has been God’s anointed servant and has faithfully served God and her people. She has described herself as a servant Queen who serves the servant King. **Amen**

**Hymn: R&S 530:** **Living God, your joyful Spirit**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Living God, your joyful Spirit breaks the bounds of time and space, rests in love upon your people, drawn together in this place Here we join in glad thanksgiving, here rejoice to pray and praise: Lord of all our past traditions, Lord of all our future days.  2. As your bread may we be broken, scattered in community; we who know your greatest blessings called to share Christ’s ministry. May we gently lead each other, share our hunger and our thirst; learn that only through our weakness shall we know the strength of Christ. | 3. Lord, when we grow tired of giving, feel frustration, hurt and strain, by your Spirit’s quiet compulsion, draw us back to you again. Guide us through the bitter searching when our confidence is lost; give us hope from desolation, arms outstretched upon a cross.  4. Living God, your power surrounds us, as we face the way Christ trod, challenge us to fresh commitment to the purposes of God: called to share a new creation, called to preach a living word, promised all the joys of heaven, through the grace of Christ our Lord.  *Jill Jenkins (1937 - )* |

***We come now to celebrate the Sacrament of Communion***

We are brought together as we remember. Let these symbols of bread and wine help to make Jesus real to us in his body and blood. A body that was broken for us and blood that was shed for us. In this sacrament, we are made one with him — delivered from the power of death into his Kingdom of life and love.

**Almighty God**, we remember that Jesus was born of Mary; he lived our common life on earth; he revealed your love as a Father; he showed us the way to live; he suffered and died for us; on the third day you raised him from the dead; and he is present with us now through the Holy Spirit. In his presence, and in the company of all your people, we are grateful to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. **Amen**

**On the night before the crucifixion**, when evening came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, *‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’*

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you, for the forgiveness of sins.’* When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane.

**Hymn: Here is bread, here is wine**

Here is bread, here is wine, Christ is with us – He is with us;

Break the bread, drink the wine - Christ is with us here.

Here we are, joined in one, Christ is with us – He is with us;

We’ll proclaim, ‘til He comes – Jesus crucified.

*In this bread there is healing. In this cup there’s life forever;*

*In this moment, by the Spirit, Christ is with us here.*

*Graham Kendrick © CCL No 2249*

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sharing – The Bread**

We give thanks to you, O God, that from the earth you cause the grain to come for the making of bread. We praise you for Jesus, the bread of life, whose body was given for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and **this bread**, that the bread which we break may be to us the communion of the body of Christ, and that we may be made one in him. As of old you fed your people in the wilderness, so feed us now that we may live to your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When Jesus had given thanks, he broke the bread and said:

***‘Take, and eat: this is my body given for you. Do this, in remembrance of me.’***

***The Body of Christ broken for us.*** *(let us take the bread and eat)*

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sharing – The Wine**

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit. We bless you for Jesus, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and **this wine**, that the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him we may bear fruit that lasts. As we share the sufferings of Christ, so give us grace that we may know the power of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When Jesus had given thanks, he gave the cup to his disciples and said:

***‘Drink this, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, in remembrance of me.’***

***The Blood of Christ shed for us.*** *(let us take the wine and drink)*

Thanks be to God for these gifts beyond words, the bread of life, the cup of salvation,

this lasting memorial. **Amen**

**Gracious God**, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life, and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

**Prayers of Intercession**

**God of love, we thank you for the Queen’s Jubilee.**

As we reflect on the Platinum Jubilee celebrations across this country today and during the past week, we pray for the Queen. Thank you for her 70 years on the throne and for all she means to so many people across this nation and worldwide. Thank you for her love for you and her willingness to share her faith. We pray for your blessing on her that she may continue to fulfil the promises she has made with generosity and joy. May she continue to be blessed with your divine guidance and find strength in her faith. As the celebrations come to an end, draw close to her. May she know the ongoing power of your Holy Spirit.

God of love, be with our Queen on this Jubilee weekend. **Holy Spirit, hear us.**

**God of love, we thank you for this Pentecost Sunday.**

As we recall the events of that first Pentecost, may we be people who know the power of the Spirit in the everyday. As we remember the disciples in the upper room, may we be people who come together to pray and seek your will in this world. As we recall the Spirit falling as tongues of fire, giving the disciples new words and new languages, may we be people who communicate well with others, able to explain your love and compassion for them and those they love. Help us to read the Scriptures and learn more of its truth about the Holy Spirit .

God of love, be with us this Pentecost Sunday. **Holy Spirit, hear us.**

**God of love, we thank you for the church.**

Pentecost is a time to celebrate the birth of the church, and so today we pray for our own church community. We pray for our leaders, members and for all who are part of our wider church family, thinking of those who need your comfort and strength at this time.

We think also about the worldwide church, particularly where the church is struggling with persecution. Renew your people in their faith and refresh and strengthen them with the power of your Spirit. Turn the hearts of those who persecute our brothers and sisters to Jesus Christ, we pray.

God of love, bless your church across the world. **Holy Spirit, hear us.**

**God of love, we thank you for our world.**

However, we think in particular of the conflict in Ukraine, and once again ask for peace to come quickly. We continue to pray for those traumatised by war, and for those who have lost loved ones and for all those now living as refugees. We pray for all those who have had to flee from Ukraine that they will find safety and peace in the neighbouring countries. By the Holy Spirit empower the work of all those governments, agencies and charities that are finding them new homes.

On this Pentecost Sunday, we are also thankful for the world we live in as it is. At the start of June, and with the summer months ahead, we pray that your Spirit will again bring hope; and that we, as your church and your people, would be bearers and witnesses of the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

God of love, bring your Pentecost hope and power to our world. **Holy Spirit, hear us.**

**Hymn: R&S 603: Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided, Urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way, Sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided: Lord of the years, we bring our thanks  today.  2. Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us, Speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze, Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us: Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise. | 3. Lord, for our land in this our  generation, Spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care: For young and old, for commonwealth and nation, Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.  4. Lord, for our world when we disown and doubt him, Loveless in strength, and comfortless in  pain, Hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him: Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign. |

5. Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -  
Self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
Past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

*Timothy Dudley-Smith (1926- )*

**The National Anthem: God save the Queen**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| God save our gracious Queen, Long live our noble Queen, God save the Queen! Send her victorious, Happy and glorious, Long to reign over us, God save the Queen! | Thy choicest gifts in store, On her be pleased to pour, Long may she reign! May she defend our laws, And ever give us cause, To sing with heart and voice, God save the Queen! |

Thank you for joining us today, here at church, online or reading at home. It has been good to worship together, to celebrate the activity of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and in the life of the Queen as we celebrate her Platinum Jubilee.

**Closing Words**

In 1939, words taken from a poem by Minnie Louise Haskins were shared by Princess Elizabeth, then 13 years old, with her father, King George VI. She thought they might be helpful. It is claimed that, ‘It was the lines from that poem that stirred and strengthened the hearts of millions at that terrible time.’

These were the words that Princess Elizabeth shared:

*“I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, ‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.’ And he replied, ‘Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way.’”*

**Closing Prayer**

Let us put our hands into the hand of God and go out with confidence and joy, awakened to the treasure within and around us, to bring transformation, challenge and hope to the world. And may the abundant blessings of God: Source, Saviour and Spirit be ours today and always. **Amen**

**And so, to you, our dear Church Family and Friends**

Let us bless one another as we say to each other together:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with you all. **Amen**

