

# COMFORT in North Carrick

**Caring Observant Mindful Friendly Obliging Responsible Tactful**  
**Providing comfort to the people of North Carrick at a time of crisis**  
**Pentecost Sunday 31st May 2020**

From Rev John Lochrie, Locum Minister at Crosshill and Maybole Parish Churches

This year Pentecost or Whitsun is celebrated on Sunday 31st May

Pentecost is one of the three pilgrim festivals of the Jews. According to the Law they were to be celebrated in Jerusalem if at all possible. Since Pentecost, originally the barley harvest festival, was only seven weeks after the Passover many who had travelled a distance for Passover stayed on in Jerusalem for Pentecost. We should not be surprised, therefore, that the disciples were still there, still in the same Upper Room where they had shared the Last Supper with Jesus and where the Risen Christ had appeared .

That day, once again, the doors were locked for they were still very much afraid of the Jewish Authorities. But all that was to change and all because of a series of miracles. Luke has described the events of that day in the second chapter of Acts. A careful reading of this chapter makes it clear that we really do not know exactly what happened in the Upper Room. He tells us that something like flames of fire accompanied by a sound similar to the sound of a rushing mighty wind happened as the promise of Jesus was fulfilled and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Immediately their fear had gone. Now they went out into the street eager to tell everyone about the message entrusted to them by the Master. The miracle was that all who heard them were able to understand in their own tongue. An even greater miracle was to follow, for having heard Peter many demanded to know what they should do. That day, we are told, three thousand came to be baptised and the Church was born.



From then on the Holy Spirit has led and inspired the followers of Jesus. He has helped us to interpret the mysteries of Scripture and strengthened us to face the difficulties and trials of human life.

In many respects the presence of the Holy Spirit has, whether we realise it or not, helped us cope with the difficulties of the lockdown. Clear rules were laid down at the beginning to ensure that the virus could be kept under control.

Despite the problems keeping the rules has presented the vast majority have accepted them. We have kept apart from our loved ones; we have accepted that things like funerals cannot be as we would have wanted; that the support we can offer to the bereaved has had to be different. It has not been easy, but we recognise the importance of following the rules.

Let us be grateful that we do have the spiritual support of our faith; that the promise of Pentecost is, as Peter proclaimed, "to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

There may be signs that we are beginning to win against the virus, but the battle is far from over. We must hold fast and guard against relaxing too much too soon.

## THE DAY OF PENTECOST

(In Western Christianity, Pentecost was one of the days set aside for Baptism. It is believed that the term Whit Sunday derives from the custom of the newly baptised wearing white clothing, and from the white vestments worn by the clergy on such occasions).

In Jewish culture, Pentecost was a great festival. The word means 'fiftieth', as it fell on the fiftieth day after the Passover. Pentecost was an agricultural festival, and Jerusalem was packed with pilgrims from near and far at this celebration.

We can never say for certain exactly what happened at Pentecost. The scene described in Acts 2:1-13 is laden with symbolic images, and suggests that the disciples, gathered together in one place, experienced God's Spirit in a way they had never done before, and so profoundly that onlookers thought they were drunk!

Today, we may encounter God's Spirit in many places. The Spirit of God, as Jesus warns us in St. John's Gospel, cannot be tied to one particular location. In a conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus says the Spirit is like the wind—it blows where it wills, and it comes and goes as it pleases.

C.S. Lewis, the British poet, writer and robust defender of Christianity, became an atheist at the age of fifteen. His conversion to Christianity was most unconventional. He and his brother Warren set out one day for Whipsnade Zoo, near Dunstable in Bedfordshire. "When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did." On that motorcycle journey, he felt the Spirit's promptings!

Many would say that they have felt 'touched' or 'nudged' by the Holy Spirit in an unusual way, or in an unlikely place. It is possibly more often during worship that the Spirit makes its presence known most strongly. Such was the experience of David Livingstone, who, feeling touched by the Spirit in a village church at Blantyre, took the Christian Gospel to the African continent.

It may well be that the disciples had gathered for worship. Whatever their purpose, the Spirit of God is a transforming one. On the Day of Pentecost, they experienced a power that turned fearful men into fearless messengers of the Gospel. Let it be our prayer that Pentecost will happen again, and keep on happening, transforming our lives as it did the lives of those disciples, and letting God breathe on us, in us, and through us, now and at all times.

"Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
direct my heart's desire,  
till every earthly part of me  
glows with your holy fire."

**Rev Gerald Jones**



### Breathe on me, Breath of God

This Sunday is Pentecost when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Disciples following Christ's ascension, but sometimes we can forget that this was not the first time we hear about the Spirit.

In the very first sentence of the Bible in the Book of Genesis, the earth is described as a 'formless void' and that a 'wind from God swept over the face of the waters'. The Hebrew word used for this wind is ruakh (pronounced ru-ach, with the same ch sound as in loch). This is the same Hebrew word that is used for breath which helps us to understand what is meant by this wind from God.

Our ability to take a breath is what indicates that we are alive and in this way the Spirit of God sustains the world. At the very beginning, God's wind or Spirit is God's own personal presence upon the earth which brings about life and sustains all that is.

From this point on, we hear of the Spirit empowering people to do certain tasks culminating in Jesus who received the Spirit at his baptism. However, as we recall these different appearances of the Spirit in Scripture, we should be careful to remember that the Spirit is not just in the past.

The Spirit continues to work in our world, even in those places and times that seem as dark and chaotic as described in Genesis, pointing to Christ, sustaining us, and transforming lives.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love the way you love,  
and do what you would do.

(Edwin Hatch)

**Matthew Wyllie**

From Marguerite Hunter Blair, Chair of Our Lady and St Cuthbert's Parish Pastoral Council

This Sunday is Pentecost Sunday and we celebrate the power of the Holy Spirit in us all. When we get together as Christians we can use this power from the Holy Spirit to improve our lives and the lives of others in our communities. Galatians 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.

Pat and I brought up our family of five children in a village called Spa in Co Down, well known because it had a pretty good rugby club and golf course. But the area was also well known for having a particularly high incidence of young suicides. Twenty years ago, the local churches got together to do something about this and set up The Edge.

The Edge is a youth and community centre with a Christian ethos that aims to work with local churches, community groups and schools to empower young people and the wider community to achieve their full potential spiritually, mentally, socially and physically. Our neighbours, who are elders of the First Presbyterian Church, were at the forefront of this amazing project which is still going strong today.

We caught up with them last week to see how they were getting on during these challenging times. There is a house full of music and singing and Fiona and her son Mathew are going to be recording a version of the Gaelic Blessing by Sam Horner this week. I hope to send on a link soon.

I would like to dedicate the Gaelic Blessing to our wonderful parishioner, friend, and good neighbour—Nessie Connolly—on her 90th birthday this weekend. Happy Birthday Nessie!

MAY YOUR LIFE IN THIS WORLD

Be a happy one

May the sun be warm and

May the skies be blue

And may each storm that comes your way

Clear the air for a brighter day

May the saints and Saviour watch over you

As you make your way

Through this old world of ours

As you see the beauty of

The morning dew

As you smell those summer flowers

As you pass away the hours

May the saints and Saviour watch over you

As you spend your time

With your friends and your family

As you see the warmth and love they have for you

As you see the wars and hate

That others radiate

May the Saints and Saviour watch over you



***Nessie is pictured on the right of this Christmas lunch photo with some of St Cuthbert's parishioners***

### A message from Lynne at Maybole Parish church

After the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, the disciples went into a strange time of waiting. All their old routines had broken down; they knew they had a message to share, but they weren't sure what it was, and they didn't know what was going to happen next. This Sunday the Church in the West celebrates Pentecost.

In Acts 2.2 we read: 'Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting ...' (GNB) And the rest is history.

These are strange times too: believers can't meet in person, we've had to find new ways to worship and minister, and we too aren't sure what's going to happen next. But we're still Pentecost people, hopeful for the future.

As a teenager, I became involved in the work of the Church of Scotland's SUMMER MISSION and for the first three years was part of a team based in Maidens and Kirkoswald. (Perhaps that's why moving to Maybole felt so much like coming home). One of the immense pleasures about that experience, apart from sharing the gospel with all and any, was learning about my faith and sharing it with Christians from other parts of Scotland and beyond. One memorable young man, from Ireland, taught us this Christian song and it has been a "Pentecostal" favourite of mine ever since. It has a great tune!

"I Hear the Sound of Rustling" by Ronnie Wilson

I hear the sound of rustling in the leaves of the trees

The Spirit of the Lord has come down on the earth

The church that seemed in slumber has now risen from its knees

And dry bones are responding with the fruits of new birth

Oh, this is now a time for declaration

The word will go to all men everywhere

The church is here for healing of the nations

Behold the day of Jesus drawing near

My tongue will be the pen of a ready writer

And what the Father gives to me I'll sing

I only want to be His breath

I only want to glorify the King

And all around the world the body waits expectantly

The promise of the Father is now ready to fall

The watchmen on the tower all exhort us to prepare

And the church responds-a people who will answer the call

And this is not a phase which is passing

It's the start of an age that is to come

And where is the wise man and the scoffer?

Before the face of Jesus they are dumb

A body now prepared by God and ready for war

The prompting of the Spirit is our word of command

We rise, a mighty army, at the bidding of the Lord

The devils see and fear, for their time is at hand

And children of the Lord hear our commission

That we should love and serve our God as one

The Spirit won't be hindered by division

In the perfect work that Jesus has begun

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Since lockdown began we've celebrated the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord with great reverence and joy. Now we come to another real reason for celebration in these difficult times – the great feast of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, the people of God alive in Christ. The gift of the Holy Spirit enables God to be present with each and every one of us, no longer a specific gift for kings and prophets as in the Old Testament. Emanuel, God-with-us, comes in a new, enabling and very personal way.

The Spirit transformed the lives of those first followers of Christ in a very powerful and earth-shattering manner. Today when our world is reeling from the effects of a pandemic of epic proportion, the same Spirit remains with us as a source power and new life. The Spirit within enables us to face up to and to overcome whatever external pressures surround us. Given this inner strength we wait with patience, taking each day as it comes.

How much we are aware of and allow the power of the Spirit to lead and strengthen us depends on our own inner appreciation and awakening of this glorious gift. Drawing from the deep well of the Holy Spirit within, we can face whatever life can throw at us. We have confidence that to be led by the Spirit is to follow the path of truth, forgiveness, justice and peace. If together we enable the Holy Spirit to act in our 24/7 lives, we will be neither anxious nor fearful as we come to terms with our post-corona-virus world.

The good news is that the gift has already been given. It is waiting to be used. The future, as we prepare for it, and maybe even fear for it, can be influenced for by what we do now with this generous gift of God. Our faith, enlivened by the Spirit, can transform us as individuals, and we, together as Church, can transform our world. Once the gift of the Spirit is awakened and active within us God can do anything through us. St. Gregory of Nyssa reminds us what an immense gift we have received as he observes 'The Lord himself in prayer to his Father said "The glory which you have given me, I have given to them." (John 16;22). He truly gave such glory to his disciples for he said to them "Receive the Holy Spirit."'

Ellen Hawkes