



## EMMANUEL CHURCH – MORNING WORSHIP 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2020



Make some space at home to read and pray through the following, if possible, on the morning of Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May.  
If you are able, watch this small service via the Emmanuel Church website: [www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk](http://www.emmanueleastbourne.org.uk).

**Gathering Words:** “God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will (Acts 2: 17-19) prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below”

**Prayer:** We praise you, Almighty God for your wonderful and giving nature. You never cease to pour out your Spirit upon all people: black and white, rich and poor, vulnerable and strong, male and female, child and adult. We praise you for your graciousness – we who are so often undeserving. Yet your grace and mercy and love are more powerful than our weakness and wastefulness. Accept our praises. Accept our prayers. Accept us. In the name of Jesus Christ, whose Spirit is with us. **THANKS BE TO GOD. AMEN.**



**Reading:** Acts 2:1-12 ‘The Coming of the Holy Spirit’

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?’ <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ <sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’

**Address:** ‘God’s Spirit: Cosy or Chaotic?’

**Prayers and The Lord’s Prayer:**

*There are two Pentecost pictures on this order of service. What do they say to you of the nature of God’s Spirit? One of a dove – gathering, beauty, clarity of lines and image, uniting different figures and faces, joining, warmth. The other containing all manner of shapes and colour, a barely discernible cross shape, chaos and confusion even. A bird is visible bottom left, but no hovering dove, but black and spikey.*

*Spend a few moments in prayer, remembering those in need of peace and presence; those in need of change and transformation. Those in need of a fresh challenge. What is your greatest need?*

**Blessing:** May the power of the Spirit challenge us. May the peace of the Spirit comfort us. May the presence of the Spirit enable us to live in love and service in the name of Christ. And may the blessing of God: Father, Son, Spirit be with us evermore. Amen.

## Address: 'God's Spirit: Cosy or Chaotic?'

In *The Hobbit*, the powerful and sometimes mischievous wizard Gandalf tries to get Bilbo Baggins interested in joining a significant, exciting, and dangerous quest. He says, *"I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone."* Gandalf says. Bilbo replies *"I should think so – in these parts! We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!"*

(p.6 *'The Hobbit or There and Back Again'*, JRR Tolkien, London: HarperCollins)

Whether you've read the book or watched the films, you know what happens next. Within 24 hours Bilbo has signed up, he's out his round green front door and on an adventure facing orcs, trolls, goblins, magic rings and even a fire-breathing dragon. I hope you're impressed that I've just summarized about 3000 pages of Tolkien in one sentence – no mean feat!

The way God's Spirit is described in Acts is powerful, dramatic and exciting. It's also a little bit scary too – there's a rush of a violent wind, tongues of fire, and something miraculous happens with languages and understanding. It's as if the Spirit is a little bit wild, unpredictable, and even disturbing. Fire and wind can often be all these things, and the imagery is used deliberately by Luke, the writer of Acts. In the Fourth Gospel, the imagery for the Spirit is sometimes water – something else that can also be hard to control.



These verses to be honest could shake us up a bit. It makes me realize I often pray for God's Spirit of peace to be upon those who are in need of rest or relief. I often pray for God's Spirit of comfort to be with those who grieve or mourn. I often pray for God's Spirit of calm to be for those who suffer from anxiety or depression. Perhaps as a church we need also to be ready to pray for God's Spirit to be among us, but shaking us up, challenging us, disturbing us from being too cosy and comfortable like the Hobbit with his armchair, books and home comforts. Andy Melvin wrote about this in the magazine too just recently.

Come to think of it, in recent years, I think God's Spirit has shaken us up rather! We've moved, transferred, come together, squashed and squeezed, planned, changed, knocked-down and looking ahead. It's been amazing, really. As a church we have a mission to toddlers and parents, families, older people, those who are homeless or hungry, and more besides. Last week Beryl decided we needed to go back to gathering food together for the Eastbourne Foodbank – and she's set it up for Monday mornings, made sure it's safe, and now as a church we're helping those in this need again. God's Spirit hasn't shaken us up to stop and get comfy and put our feet up – but so that our life as a church, as a people, is always seeking to be active and engaged in the world around us.

In the next month or so, I wonder what the future will hold for us all? If the lockdown eases bit by bit, we'll be able to start planning for how we as a church will be when we can gather again. But there might be various changes we have to cope with – some imposed on us, some of our choosing. It's too early to say what will happen but I do know that as well as the moments of peace and calm and comfort that God's Spirit brings – often that we sorely need – that we should also be prepared for God's Spirit to bring some unpredictability and disturbance – in the best sense of the word.

In the days ahead, may God's Spirit unite, challenge and change us. May she lead us forward into the places God would have us be, and to the people she would have us minister to. Amen.