

Abbey Baptist Church, Reading

WORSHIP SERVICE 10.30 A.M. JUNE 8TH 2025

Leading: Jill Bird Preaching: Jim Thomas

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk. Facebook @ Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



Pentecost Celebration

We celebrate today as if it were the first days of creation – stars being thrown into space, beautiful flowers and all other pure wonders.

Father we celebrate and worship you

We celebrate today as if it was the day Jesus was born – we welcome you Lord of all creation to our world as fully man.

Jesus we celebrate and worship you

We celebrate today as if it was Palm Sunday – Jesus you rode triumphantly into Jerusalem as one day you will also ride back into our world in victory

Jesus we celebrate and worship you

We celebrate today as if it was Easter day – Jesus you overcame death on the cross for us and rose in glory

Jesus we celebrate and worship you

We celebrate today as we are there at Pentecost. Holy Spirit, we welcome you afresh into our hearts as you come in love and power.

Holy Spirit we celebrate and welcome you

Song

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

1984 Kingsway Thank You Music

Family time: Excited about the Holy Spirit

Song with offering and then the young people will leave for their classes

We are marching in the light of God x4

We are marching, marching, We are marching Oh Oh We are marching in the light of God x2

We are living in the love of God x4

We are living, living We are living Oh Oh We are living in the love of God x2

We are moving in the power of God x4

We are moving, moving We are moving Oh Oh We are moving in the power of God x2

African origin. Author unknown.

Before we continue let's stop and just think about the word **HOLY**. He is a Holy Spirit. If we want him to fill us then he wants us to be a clean and holy body for him to dwell in. How has our life been this week? Our words, our thoughts, our actions, our laziness, our selfishness. Father we are sorry and say make me clean and purify me so I am fit to receive your Holy Spirit to the full. Amen.

First Bible Reading: Acts 1.1-8, Acts 2. 1-4

Second Bible Reading: Acts 2. 14-21 and 41-47

Holy Spirit, we welcome You. Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Move among us with holy fire, As we lay aside all earthly desires,
Hands reach out and our hearts aspire.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You. Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Let the breeze of Your presence blow, That Your children here might truly know
How to move in the Spirit's flow.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You. Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Please accomplish in us today Some new work of loving grace, we pray -
Unreservedly - have Your way.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

CHRIS BOWATER © 1986 SOVEREIGN LIFESTYLE MUSIC.

Sermon: Today is Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit came and filled God's people.

As well as the traditional Pentecost reading (Acts 2) we read for Acts 1, as I thought it useful to see what was happening before Pentecost. Did you realise Jesus was still around at the start of the book of Acts?

Dr Luke (the writer) was not an original disciple of Jesus – he was a great friend of Paul and a key missionary in the early church. Now he is an old man, and he is writing his book (and it has 2 parts). Part 1 – which we call “Luke” records the life and death of Jesus (his teaching, his miracles and his impact on the world) Part 2 -which we call “Acts” is all about how the impact of Jesus’ resurrection changed history and changed the world.

And yet he chooses to start with Jesus’ final words (immediately before being taken up to heaven) His final command on earth is in the book of Acts, and it is “WAIT” (verse 4). We think of the book of Acts as full of action, and courage and heroism, but the first instruction in the whole book is WAIT – **wait, wait for the Holy Spirit**. Else you will do it in your own strength -and that is not going to work!

Now let's be honest. Some of us are too comfortable as Christians. We don't like to take risks. But for others of us, we are always looking for the next change. We never like to sit still. Maybe WE need to hear Jesus say to us (as he said to those first disciples). “Don't leave home yet, but wait for my timing” Because as I've learned the hard way many times in life and in ministry, the right thing at the wrong time, is still the wrong thing! King David says in Psalm 23 “don't be like the horse and do not be like the mule” (the horse rushes ahead, the mule lags behind). Rather (as Paul says in Galatians 5:25) “walk IN STEP with the Holy Spirit”

Jesus goes on '**John baptised with water but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit'** What does it mean “baptised with the holy spirit?” One the one hand – you can't be a Christian without the Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:9 “anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ”)

But then (as you read in the book of Acts) you see people – already Christians – being FILLED with the Holy Spirit (4:8 – Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit 13:9– Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit 13:52 – the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit)

But in my opinion, it's not about "how much of the Holy Spirit have you got?" (do you have 70% or 80%). It's more about "how much has the Holy Spirit got of ME?!" Am I truly "baptised" in the holy spirit (surrounded / filled) Or are there areas of my life that are still "off limits" to God. Areas of my life where I have said to God "don't go there!" You see – what the disciples are about to discover is that life in the Spirit is all or nothing. It's not just about what we do on a Sunday

In fact, I would dare to suggest, that it has very little to do with what happens on a Sunday. Because shock horror- the Holy Spirit didn't turn up at 10.30 on Sunday morning! Ever more shock horror – he didn't even come to church! The disciples were at home (v.4 they were "eating a meal". But you get the point – this is not a 'Sunday Christianity' thing. Because you can do "Sunday Christianity" without much help from the Holy Spirit. God wants to fill us with his Holy Spirit – at home / at work / in every part of our lives.

Just look at the difference the Holy Spirit makes in the disciples' lives. Before they were filled with the Holy Spirit, there was Thomas saying, "until I see the holes in his side I will never believe" Worse! There's Peter – who denied he even knew Jesus saying "Jesus? I've never heard of the man" The whole lot of them were hiding like cowards behind a locked door, (always looking over their shoulders in fear) given up hope (have you ever felt like that?) But what a difference when these same men were filled with the Holy Spirit. They never sat in a locked room again (even when they were put in prison they escaped!) When filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter preaches so powerfully that 3,000 people are saved in one day!

Do you need the power of the Holy Spirit in your life? Your family? Your work? Your church? Or do we get so used to doing things in our own strength, we don't even notice if the Holy Spirit is not there. He doesn't want them to be in any doubt that this is going to be the "Acts of God" (not the 'acts of people) It's HIS mission, his power, - we just get to join in!

And yet how easy it is to confuse what God says HE will do, with what he asks US to do! At the end of ch.2 (v.47) it says "the Lord added to their number, daily, those who were being saved" They couldn't save anybody. That's what God does! What did THEY have to do? (the verse before says) "The disciples devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, to fellowship, to breaking of bread and to prayer... and the Lord added to their number daily!"

Can you manage that? To devote yourself to God's word, meet with other Christians, break bread both in communion but also in sharing meals together and to prayer? Then let God do the rest – saving souls / building the church / worrying about tomorrow.

The problem is that so often WE try to do the things that God says HE will do. And at the same time we DON'T do the things he has asked US to do. We take on our shoulders the burden for the salvation of our friends and family, when Jesus said, "**I have come to seek and save the lost**" As church leaders, we take on our shoulders the burden for growing the church, when Jesus said "**I will build my church**"

We get so busy trying to do the things God says HE will do – that we MISS the things he HAS asked us to do. We see this time and time again in Scripture.

Luke 9:13 – we meet 5000 hungry men – and Jesus says to his disciples "YOU feed them!" (he does the bit only HE can – divides the loaves and fish – the disciples do the rest)

Exodus 4 – God says to Moses "I'm going to rescue my people from Egypt"

And Moses says "fantastic – Go God!" And God says "you don't understand – I'm sending you!" (oh!)

God says “I’m going to bring love and hope to this community” (and we say “fantastic God – I’ll pray it goes well”) (God says – No you don’t understand – I’m sending you!”)

God says “I’m going to bring peace in your family” And we say “fantastic God – it’s gone on long enough”
And God says “no you don’t understand – I’m sending you to make the first move”

He does what only HE can – in partnership with our obedience. So just think for a moment about your life Is there anything God said HE will do – that we are trying to make happen in our own strength? And is there anything God HAS asked YOU to do that you’re not doing?

What would it mean for you to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It won’t look like the disciples / or your parents / or your church leaders. **But a spirit-filled YOU!**

What would it mean for you to “be my witnesses” – as it says in v.8 To Jerusalem (at home – your friends & family) To Judea (the community around you) To Samaria (your enemies – those you’ve fallen out with). To the end of the earth (those who don’t yet know Jesus)



Your CALLING is the place where your GIFT, your PASSION and an OPPORTUNITY meet.

So a good test of where God is calling you to serve, is to ask those 3 questions:

1. **What is my gift?** What has God put within me that I can do for him? Do you have skills? Are you a caring person? Can you play music? Do you have money? Do you have time? if you’re not sure what it is – ask a friend

2. **What is my passion?** What could you stay up all night talking about? What gets your excited? What gives you joy? What gives you a godly anger?

3. **What opportunities are there to serve?** (in front of me at the moment)

And try to find something to do – where you gift / passion / opportunity meet.

And if you’re thinking “this is not for me – I’m way past doing new things for God” Take a look at Peter’s speech in ch.2:17- 18 – quoting the prophet Joel “your sons and daughters will prophesy” (male and female included) “your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams” (no age limit -upper or lower) “Even on my servants I will pour out my spirit” (it doesn’t matter our status]

Do you believe that means you? I’m here to tell you – that means you!

Are you willing? Are you ready?

And if you’re thinking “God couldn’t possibly use me” I’m too sinful. I’m too old. My faith is too weak. I don’t belong. Let me remind you of the sort of people God can use...

ADAM - No self-control NOAH - got drunk ABRAHAM – old man ISAAC - day dreamer JACOB - liar
LEAH - unattractive to her husband JOSEPH - abused by family members MOSES – couldn’t speak properly GIDEON – problem with fear SAMSON - Weakness for women NAOMI – widow JEREMIAH - too young DAVID – murderer ELIJAH – suicidal JOHN Baptist - ate bugs! SAMARITAN Woman - divorced PETER - denied Christ DISCIPLES - fell asleep (while praying!) MARTHA - worried too much ZACCHEUS - too short- AND LAZARUS (was dead!) - but all still used by God! - What’s your excuse?!!

1 Corinthians 1:27 says “**But God chose the foolish things of this world to shame the proud. God chose the weak things of this world to shame the strong**” – is that good news for anyone here today?

Have you noticed that all the parables Jesus tells about the kingdom of God are about small things? (a grain of wheat; a mustard seed; a sparrow). We can all do small things to bring about God's kingdom. How about speaking to a homeless person in the high street? Asking his name, his story! How about offering to pray for someone? How about helping a neighbour in need? We can all do small things

Final verse – 1 Peter 3:15 “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do it with gentleness and respect”. Who believes we still have a God who is in the business of transforming lives (in the power of the Holy Spirit?) It was true of the disciples and it's true of us – if we'll let him.

So we come back to where we started “**wait and you will receive**” It's a test of faith to wait for God's timing (for a job; family situation; opportunities to serve; answers to prayer.)

But as it says in Isaiah 40 – it's they who WAIT upon the Lord who will renew their strength. Those who rise on wings as eagles; who run and don't grow weary; who walk and don't grow faint

Song Spirit of the Living God Fall fresh on me
Spirit of the Living God Fall fresh on me
Melt me, mould me, Fill me, use me
Spirit of the Living God Fall fresh on me
1963 Birdwing Music

1 Go forth and tell! O church of God, awake!
God's saving news to all the nations take;
proclaim Christ Jesus, saviour, Lord, and king,
that all the world his worthy praise may sing.

2 Go forth and tell! God's love embraces all;
he will in grace respond to all who call:
how shall they call if they have never heard
the gracious invitation of his word?

3 Go forth and tell where still the darkness lies;
in wealth or want, the sinner surely dies:
give us, O Lord, concern of heart and mind,
a love like yours which cares for all mankind.

4 Go forth and tell! The doors are open wide:
share God's good gifts let no one be denied;
live out your life as Christ your Lord shall choose,
your ransomed powers for his sole glory use.

5 Go forth and tell! O church of God, arise!
go in the strength which Christ your Lord supplies;
go till all nations his great name adore
and serve him, Lord and king for evermore
James Seddon (1915 - 1983) CCL# 2627256

Intercession Prayer MARIA Our Heavenly Father,
Thank you for your Holy Spirit providing everything we need, thank you for your great love and blessing over our lives, You are our miracle worker and the light in the darkness.
Our Father, we pray for the two families we support overseas
The Bowers family with YWAM in Thailand discipling young Thai people
The Vokhel family in Nepal helping with a hospital building project
We also remember our local charities that we support

REInspired taking Christianity into schools, **CIRDIC** a safe space for a hot meal and a shower, **FAITH** distributing food to the needy and running Bed for the night **Mustard Tree**, reaching out to young people and street workers, **CCA** helping rehouse needy folk. As well as providing practical help may these families and charities help all their contacts to receive the love of God and seek and experience you personally.

Father, so many people in Reading are still living in the darkness, they can't see the light of Jesus. Our Great Father, please let them see your way, touch and heal their hearts, let your love overflow, bringing peace and joy to them. And please Jesus, use us. Jesus said whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. Father, please help us to love others as you love us, and let our lives be a reflection of your goodness.

Please help us to let your kingdom come and to be salt and light in all we do here week by week at Abbey, through our Renew Cafe, English classes and toddlers and other activities. Our Good Father, you are worthy of all praise. In the name of Jesus, **Amen.**

Song: Lord, the light of Your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth You now bring us Shine on me, shine on me

Chorus Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light

Lord, I come to Your awesome presence
From the shadows into Your radiance
By the blood, I may enter Your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness Shine on me, shine on me

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness
So our faces display Your likeness
Ever-changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here, may our lives tell Your story Shine on me, shine on me
Graham Kendrick. 1987@Make Way Music

The Blessing:

May you go out empowered, knowing that the Holy Spirit dwells within you.
May God strengthen you to serve him and do all he wants you to do this week.
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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.

This weeks' notices

Tuesday 10 th	8.00 pm church prayer meeting on Zoom
Wednesday 11 th	10.30am Renew Wellbeing 2.0 pm Who is Jesus 2
Thursday 12 th	10.30am Toddlers
Friday 13 th	5.00pm Table Tennis Club 6.30pm Iranian Bible Study