The University Sermon

Pentecost

31 May 2020
Welcome to this week’s service which is the fruit of a collaboration between the Cathedral and the University Church.

The Feast of Pentecost is one of the great Feasts of the Christian Year, marking the fiftieth day of Eastertide. God sends his Holy Spirit to empower the Church to perform the mission which the risen Christ has entrusted to her. The breath of life moved among the first disciples as a rushing wind and tongues of flame, transforming a fragile and fearful community into a people of hope ready to be drawn into love and service, witnessing to the truth. And we pray that same Spirit will move among the Church today.

This is also a festival which is usually marked by a University Sermon at the Cathedral. The practice of delivering University Sermons dates back to the earliest days of the University of Oxford. Each year preachers from a variety of different traditions are invited by the Vice-Chancellor to deliver sermons before the University. The University’s motto from Psalm 27, *Domini

illuminatio mea*, ‘The Lord is my light’, captures something of its purpose: an occasion for the illumination of the mind in the context of prayer.

Today, these sermons occur at the University Church, the Cathedral and College Chapels across the University. They provide an opportunity to hear thinkers from a range of disciplines and perspectives, drawing together the life of learning, spiritual discovery and the quest for truth. This term, in response to the pandemic and with University students and staff dispersed across the country and undertaking their lessons and exams online, the University Council has given permission for the Sermons to be shared as podcasts online. So we join together as Cathedral and University Church with people from across the University to share in this special service.

The preacher is the Revd Canon Professor Simon Oliver, the Van Mildert Professor at the University of Durham. Music is drawn from the archive recordings of Christ Church Cathedral Choir, Magdalen College Choir and the Cathedral Singers. Readings and prayers are led by chaplains and students from Hertford, Oriel, St Peter’s, Trinity and Christ Church and by members of the University Church.

May God’s Spirit richly bless you with wisdom, peace and understanding this Pentecost.

Cathedral services are available online at www.chch.ox.ac.uk/onlineworship
The University Church weekly podcasts are available online at www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk/content/weekly-podcast
The Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy, Dean of Christ Church, the Revd Dr Will Lamb, Vicar of the University Church, and Canon Carol Harrison, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, welcome the Congregation.

Collect

Let us pray:

God, who as at this time
 taught the hearts of your faithful people
 by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit:
 grant us by the same Spirit
 to have a right judgement in all things
 and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;
 through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,
 who is alive and reigns with you,
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever.

Amen.
Hymn

sung by the Cathedral Singers of Christ Church

O thou who camest from above
the fire celestial to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart!

There let it for thy glory burn
with inextinguishable blaze,
and trembling to its source return
in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart’s desire
to work, and speak, and think for thee;
still let me guard the holy fire,
and still stir up the gift in me.

Still let me prove thy perfect will,
my acts of faith and love repeat;
till death thy endless mercies seal,
and make the sacrifice complete.

Words: Leviticus 6:13, Charles Wesley (1707–88)
Music: Hereford, S S Wesley (1810–76)
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Reading

Acts 2:1–4 (NRSV)

read by the Revd Mia Smith, Chaplain of Hertford College

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in
one place. 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. Divided
tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of
them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other
languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Thanks be to God.
Anthem
sung by the Choir of Magdalen College

Listen sweet dove unto my song
And spread thy golden wings in me;
Hatching my tender heart so long
Till it get wing and flie away with thee.

Such glorious gifts thou didst bestow
That the earth did like a heaven appear,
The starres were coming down to know
If they might mend their wages and serve here.

The sunne which once did shine alone,
Hung down his head and wisht for night
When he beheld twelve sunnes for one
Going about the world and giving light.

Lord though we change thou art the same,
The same sweet God of love and light;
Restore this day for thy great name,
Unto his ancient and miraculous right.

Words: The Temple, George Herbert (1593–1633)
Music: Grayston Ives (b.1948)
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A reading from the Gospel according to John.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

Thanks be to God.
Anthem

sung by the Choir of Christ Church

My breath lies quiet at the door of my mouth,
As I ponder the task that you set at my gate.
You guided me safe across the seas.
You led me from home to bring me home.

My feet stand ready to do your will.
My heart’s desire is to follow your voice.
Build with us the walls of a city,
May this house be your dwelling-place.

Your hand at my back to guide my way home,
Your hand on my brow to give peace to my thoughts,
Your hand on my heart to nourish my life,
Your hand in my hand to show me the path.

Words: Third Psalm, from Around the Curve of the Earth
Music: © 2000 Francis Grier (b.1955
Recording © 2011 Christ Church)

Prayers

The prayers are led by the Revd Clare Hayns, Chaplain of Christ Church,
Thiago Alves Pinto (St Peter’s College), Gianni Tam-McMillan (Christ Church),
Alannah Burdess (Trinity) & Tom Farlow (Oriel):

Minister: Let us pray through Christ to the Father,
for the gift of his Holy Spirit:

Student Lord, you are our light and our salvation,
we hold up to you our colleges and University
praying for students wherever we each are
and for all who support our common life,
as we study, research and connect online:
breathe upon us the gift of your Spirit
that we may discern truth, beauty and goodness,
even in the midst of challenge and change.

Student Lord, hear us:
All Lord, graciously hear us.
Student Lord, your Spirit groans with the world and all creation, labouring with the birth-pangs of all you will to be: heal the fractures of our fragile communities, take away all that prevents the sharing of life, the sins of violence and injustice, of greed, pride and envy, lead us in your ways of gentleness and peace:

Student Lord, hear us:

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Student Lord, your Spirit brings hope and the first-fruits of promise: we pray for all those from whom this illness has snatched the breath of life; for families and friends parted by sickness, suffering and death; for those who despair, the weary and tired, the anxious and afraid; may your Spirit rest on them this day with kindness, patience and healing in her wings.

Student Lord, hear us:

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Student Lord, your Spirit breathes at the heart of your Church, drawing us onwards and calling us forth, yearning for the Kingdom, with sighs too deep for words: make us thankful for our blessings, and equip us with your mercies, gifts of wisdom, faith, prophecy and healing, to build others up and share your love.

Student Lord, hear us:

All Lord, graciously hear us.
The Lord’s Prayer

Minister    Gathering our prayers and praises into one, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

All        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, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing
given by the Dean

Dean        May the Spirit, who hovered over the waters when the world was created and fell upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost as tongues of flame and a rushing wind, breathe into you the life he gives and inspire you with his love; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest upon you and remain with you always.

All         Amen.

Organ Voluntary
played by Steven Grahl, Organist of Christ Church

Choral varie sur le thème du Veni Creator               Maurice Duruflé (1902–86)
Regular worshippers may like to join us via Zoom at 11am BST for the weekly Cathedral coffee morning. Details of how to join may be found in the weekly e-news or by emailing philippa.white@chch.ox.ac.uk.

Prayer for the Week

O God the Holy Ghost
Who art light unto thine elect
Evermore enlighten us.
Thou who art fire of love
Evermore enkindle us.
Thou who art Lord and Giver of Life,
Evermore live in us.
Thou who bestowest sevenfold grace,
Evermore replenish us.
As the wind is thy symbol,
So forward our goings.
As the dove, so launch us heavenwards.
As water, so purify our spirits.
As a cloud, so abate our temptations.
As dew, so revive our languor.
As fire, so purge our dross
Christina Rossetti (1830–94)

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O Thou who Camest from Above from the album ‘How Shall I Sing That Majesty’, © 2013 Convivium, (P) Cathedral Singers of Christ Church under the direction of John Padley.
My Breath Lies Quiet © 2000 Francis Grier, recording from the album ‘Treasures of Christ Church’ © 2011 Christ Church and published by Avie Records, (P) Christ Church Cathedral Choir under the direction of Stephen Darlington.
Duruflé, Choral varie sur le thème du Veni Creator, recorded specially for this service © 2020 Steven Grahl.


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Stay Connected

During these difficult times, please be assured that the prayers of the clergy and people of Christ Church continue. Please let us know if we can pray for you, or if you need our support. You are warmly invited to continue to participate in our community worship, prayer and spiritual life, whether you are a longstanding member of our congregations or new to us.

You can find resources for prayer and contact details at:
www.chch.ox.ac.uk/onlineworship
www.chch.ox.ac.uk/cathedralblog
@ChChCathedralOx

A shortened version of this service is available by telephone: please call 01865 954 005 to listen (charged at a local rate). You will be able to access shortened versions of our Sunday services every week from now on by using this telephone number. Please do share the number with anyone you know who may be unable to access the website or the weekly e-news.

You can find all our archive of sermons and services on the Cathedral blog:
www.chch.ox.ac.uk/cathedralblog

On Sundays, there is a weekly recorded service available at 9am and an additional standalone sermon by one of the Cathedral clergy, on the readings of the day, available at www.chch.ox.ac.uk/onlineworship

There is also a booklet of prayers for use at home, a recording of the service of Compline, and other prayer resources on the Online Worship webpage.

Students and members of the University may join the College Chaplain, the Revd Clare Hayns, for a variety of services and online events throughout the term.

The Church of England has also set up a Daily Hope phone line service on 0800 804 8044. This offers hymns, prayers and readings through a menu system and is entirely free of charge.