

Pentecost

Prayers of Power



Welcome to our third Prayer 2020 resource pack for this year of prayer. As we look to Pentecost and beyond, who could have imagined our chapels across Wales closed for Easter and the impact of the Corona virus on our daily life. However, in the midst of pandemic there is no restriction on prayer.

When Jesus told his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, the book of Acts tells us that they 'joined together constantly in prayer' (Acts 1:14). Those prayers in the 'Upper Room' led to the outpouring of the Spirit on the day Pentecost.

In this prayer pack you will find encouragement to pray in your own quiet place and God willing – the opportunity to meet once again together in prayer. Imagine, gathering again for the first time and sharing together in prayer.

As the Church is made of 'living stones' let's ask the Lord of the Church to send His Holy Spirit afresh to us; To renew us in Spirit, comfort those who mourn and breathe new life into His Church.

When God the Holy Spirit comes as promised.

Bible Reflection: **John 14: 15-31**

What do these words mean for you?

In John 14, Jesus speaks to a confused and frightened group of disciples as they contemplated his predictions concerning his betrayal and death. How could they imagine life without Jesus? How would they find him again?

In the midst of their uncertainty, He speaks of hope. He promises that He will not leave them as orphans but will send another comforter / advocate - the Holy Spirit.

As Christians, we believe that this promise was fulfilled at Pentecost and is still true for us today.

This Pentecost, we pray that we would know the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and lives.

*Come down, O Love divine!
seek out this soul of mine
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.*

Jubilate Hymns version of *Discendi, amor santo Bianco da Siena* (fl.1367 - 1434) adapted by Richard F Littledale (1833 - 1890) © Jubilate Hymns Ltd

Pentecost Prayer

Come Holy Spirit,
Lord, Giver of life.
To those who are fighting for their lives
breathe upon them the breath of life.

Guard with your renewing presence
the creation and all living things,
those who care for the sick and needy.
Shelter them in every act of kindness and compassion they
undertake
as they sacrifice their own safety for the benefit of others.

Teach us to remember those whom we have lost in this
pandemic.
We remember their names and celebrate their lives.
We remember all those who mourn the loss of a loved one.

In this interval of distancing from each other
may all kinds of living things fill the earth once more:
the animals, reptiles and insects
and all kinds of wild creatures.
May we discern that such diversity is good.

In every Babel of our making,
forgive us our yearning to be one and the same.
We have worshipped mankind's industry
which has been built on towers of arrogance before God.

Come to us O Lord.
Teach us not to do that which we wish:
Teach us to do that which is right.

As we meet behind closed doors,
pour out your Spirit upon us this Pentecost.
Come as the strong wind blowing through the rooms in which
we meet.
fall upon us afresh with tongues of fire.

Help us to speak with the language of the Gospel.
May all those who call on the name of the Lord
be saved

**Written by Reverend Aled Edwards
Chief Executive Cytûn (Churches Together in Wales)**

**'Not by might nor by power,
but by my Spirit,'
says the LORD Almighty.
Zechariah 4:6**

“Living Stones”

Recent events have reminded us that the church is not a building, but the people – the people of God. During the current restrictions, this truth has been enforced as many congregations have sought to find new ways of ‘being church’ whilst buildings remain closed.

In his first letter, Peter talks of ‘living stones’ being built into a ‘spiritual house’. Please find below a series of reflections based on 1 Peter 2:9. We hope that they will encourage you to consider and pray for the church of Jesus in Wales today. Why not use one of these reflections every week during the month of June?

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

A Chosen People

There’s a story in the Croesgoch area of how the Minister of Llangloffan Chapel was once asked to give advice to some church members who wished to attend the local Marthy Fair. His advice: ‘Go to the fair, but remember who you are!’ His intention was to remind his members that they represented the church everywhere they went and in everything they did. His wise advice to ‘remember who we are’ is good advice for us too.

“But you are a chosen people’ (1 Peter 2:9). Here Peter uses language based on the special relationship between God and the nation of Israel. Just as Israel was a chosen people, so we as Christians are also a special people, chosen by God. Being part of God’s special people does not depend on a person’s upbringing, language, or colour it depends only upon the love, mercy and grace of God.

In Christ, we are children of the same Father, with the same Spirit at work within us and the same aim set before us – to represent, serve and glorify our heavenly Father in any and every situation, on Saturday night as well as a Sunday Morning, in Chapel and at the fair, in crowds as well as in the secret places. It is a mystery when we realise that we are indeed a ‘special people’ chosen by God. However, with privilege comes responsibility. For us that responsibility is glorifying God, every way, everywhere and in everything we do.

Reverend Geraint Morse, Croesgoch & Pencaer

A Royal Priesthood

I remember a disastrous job interview. It went downhill after the interviewer looked at my academic qualifications and said “An Archaeology degree, eh? Not much call for Archaeologists, is there?” It wasn’t a question. It taught me to pay close attention to the job description. So why does Peter get these two job descriptions so mixed up, confusing royalty with the priesthood? In the Old Testament there was a family line of kings and a family line of priests. And, despite some attempts by royalty to take over, in the end priests were priests and kings were kings. Kings rule the people, priests mediate between God and the people (and sometimes the King...). I can think of one reason why Peter fused these two lineages. He is talking about a heavenly ideal, made real. We may not feel like it, but our family trees have been transformed and merged into both royalty and priesthood through Jesus, when we followed Christ. In the Church, there may not be much call for Archaeologists, but that’s okay. Check out the job description and you’ll find you have been called to much higher things.

Reverend Rob Saunders, Welshpool

A Holy Nation

What does it mean to be a holy nation?

Most people think holiness is just about moral purity – being ‘holier-than-thou’ – looking down from proud and lofty heights on a world that can never be as good as we are. Moral purity is, of course, a vital part of holiness. But the biblical idea of a ‘holy nation’ invokes so much more than this, and there is no place for pride within it. It is about being a people who are set apart, reflecting God’s uniqueness in radical goodness and power. There is a sense of danger about holiness, which is why it is so often represented by fire in the scriptures. It is attractive, compelling even, but also uncompromising, burning up what is evil and inconsequential until only the gold remains.

If we are to be holy in this way, people of integrity, truth, justice, Spirit-filled power and uncompromising love, we cannot expect to fit in with the world around us. As Good Friday demonstrated, the world can’t handle radical goodness. But this fire also draws people in, and those it touches will never be the same again.

Pray: *Ask the Holy Spirit to fill us as the people of God here in Wales and make us holy, burning up all that is unhelpful and leaving the gold behind. Then ask for courage to shine with radical goodness so that the world around us will be transformed.*

Reverend Deb Stammers, Anglesey

God’s Special Possession

Are we sometimes content in defining ourselves as ‘people who go to Chapel’? With our buildings closed, we have a new opportunity to seek a more appropriate definition. We are after all the people of God connected to Him in a special way. Jesus Christ died upon the Cross in order to bring us into this relationship. We have reason to take pride but not to boast – we are people who have received mercy. Being ‘people of God’ means not giving up, to be faithful in worship, listening to His word and following Christ whatever our circumstances may be.

We know that we are also connected to each other in a very special way as members of one family. In recent months we have been forced to find new ways of keeping in contact and caring for one another. Our relationship with God and with one another is our anchor in stormy times.

Pray: *Ask God to use this difficult period to deepen your relationship with him and strengthen the love and connection between the members of your church family that the love of God may overflow to the community around you.*

Reverend Casi Jones, Bangor

I will build my Church ... God at work in the Churches

God is at work in His Church across Wales today. Through His Spirit, He continues to inspire and equip congregations as they seek to 'be church' in a rapidly changing society. Please see below three stories of God at work in BUW churches. If you have a story of God at work in your fellowship, however small, please get in touch ... we'd love to hear from you.

Bethania, Leeswood

Here are a couple of recent stories from Bethania where we have experienced the presence of God the Holy Spirit:

During my induction service on 14 September last year, I was asked 'Will you care for the weak, bring Christ's healing to the broken-hearted, lift up the downcast, and pray regularly for those committed to your care?' My response was 'I will, God's Spirit empowering me'. While we were enjoying refreshments afterwards one of our leaders approached me and asked if he could share a prophetic word. He said 'expect a miracle'. My heart warmed to this as 1 Corinthians 14:12 'Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church' is a verse given to Jackie and me by God at our call into ministry.

We have been praying for miracles as a leadership team and have experienced the Holy Spirit at work in exciting ways. One Sunday morning following an invitation to come forward for prayer several people responded and asked for prayer for healing. Later, two reported that they had received healing.

In February during a baptismal service after the candidate had shared his story of becoming a follower of Jesus there was a powerful moment when the congregation erupted in praise to God. Over refreshments afterwards we discovered that a member of staff from a local school had attended to record the baptism as a resource for the pupils. Visually moved, her comment was 'I have never been to a service like this'.

Reverend Elfed Godding

Mount Pleasant, Pembroke

Out of disappointment and frustration, the Lord has taken us on a new spiritual journey that would challenge our faith and prove that obedience is greater than sacrifice.

The vision to build a new church was born out of prayer. Having limited resources our reliance on God's Grace and Provision was to prove the foundation for all that followed. There have been many challenging times, many lessons learnt, and disappointments faced as well as the thrill of discovering that God had gone before us! The acquisition the building plot was amazing as it was the only available land in the heart of Pembroke, but God had already chosen and moved the heart of the owner to favour selling to the church. The cost of the land was the exact price we received for selling the church manse! A Christian builder experienced in church builds arrived at Mount Pleasant who became the Project manager! You couldn't make it up!!

Almost all the money to date has been given by the fellowship, for those who know our circumstances this is remarkable. Gifts from other local churches and individuals have also greatly blessed us. There have been many great incidences of materials / equipment turning up at the site at just the right moment. There has been a dedication to pray on the site and some of the members of the church have prayed every week from the beginning. A portacabin was donated which slotted into a spot on the site with inches to spare - another example of God's goodness! The journey continues and we are now seeking to make the build weathertight. We trust that as God has led us thus far so we will in his grace and time finish the building.

Mr Peter Arnold

Missional House Project - Salem, Tonteg

When Jesus sat down with Nicodemus, one of the things he taught was about how the Spirit can lead us in unexpected directions, and this is something we can certainly identify with! From the decisions to leave our jobs and retrain, to the process of trying to work out how God wants us to serve in the church, we have been repeatedly surprised at how God has led us.

Long-term, this involves establishing a community house where 10-12 people (mostly Christian) will live together under one roof, sharing mealtimes, as well as regular times of prayer, worship and mentoring. In parallel, we will be working to establish social enterprises (charitable businesses) that will allow us to bring a Kingdom witness and presence in the community.

At the time of writing, much of this work is on hold due to the coronavirus lockdown, but this too has brought with it a surprising opportunity to see God's Kingdom come in the community. Beginning with an invitation to coordinate help on the local Facebook group, this ministry has multiplied through the local church (Salem Baptist, Tonteg) to the point where dozens of food bank parcels, prescriptions, and groceries are delivered to vulnerable and self-isolating local households. It has been amazing to see God provide for the needs of this work as it has grown, and we have every expectation that wherever the Spirit may blow in the weeks ahead that it will be exciting to see what happens next!

Reverend Jonathan Birch

The BUW recently launched a new Missional training programme "Forge Cymru" in partnership with Forge Canada and Cameron Roxburgh. Here are some 'missional' prayer points from Cam. (To find out more about 'Forge Cymru please visit the BUW website.)

One of the key passages for a deeper understanding of what it means to be 'missional' comes in 1 Peter 2:9. Here we find 3 key words that help us form a foundation for mission. These words are kenos, ethos, laos. They carry the meaning of our new identity (as children of a new Father/part of a new family), our character (becoming like Christ), and our new vocation (joining God on mission). In light of this, we invite you to pray around these themes....

- Pray that we will understand and live into our new identity in God the Father.
- Pray that we will be formed in the character of Christ, and learn to live life to the fullest.
- Pray that we will live in the power of the Spirit and understand our vocation to participate on mission with God.

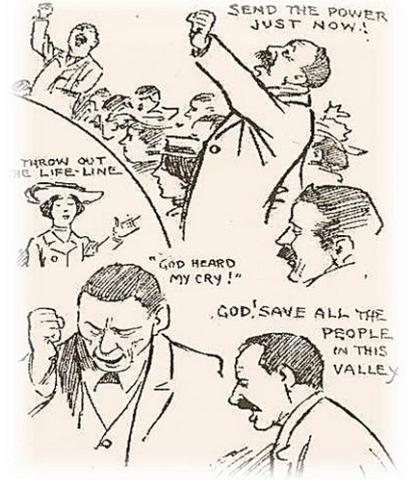
Cam's Prayer Points

Prayers for Revival

Wales is often referred to as the land of song and revival. For many, the word 'revival' immediately conjures up images of overflowing chapels filled with the sound of singing. However, revival is much more than this. It is the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit changing the hearts and minds of men and women as they come to a new or deepened relationship with Jesus. Such Revival changes the lives of individuals, families, communities and even nations. Nowhere can this be more clearly seen than here in Wales which, throughout the years, has been shaped, spiritually, culturally, socially and politically by numerous revivals.

As we remember Pentecost, we give thanks for the spiritual revivals that have helped shaped our country and pray for a fresh revival in our land. As we long to experience a fresh wave of revival in all its glory, we remember that every Revival starts with Prayer.

Please see below some stories of the power of prayer in from revivals past....



Shortly before his death in January 1903 David Howell, Dean of St David's, wrote the following words calling on his fellow Welshmen to pray for an answer to Wales' greatest need. Howell, who had himself experienced the great revival of 1859, called upon Christians to unite in earnest prayer for spiritual revival. Howell understood that revival begins with prayer. Within a few months, his prayer was answered in the form of the 1904/05 Revival.

What is Wales' greatest need? [...] SPIRITUAL REVIVAL!

If there were to be just two or three in an area to join together, to commit and apply themselves with all their heart to pray and plead for the fulfilment of his promises and to persevere to do this, tirelessly and confidently expecting, it is certain that god has spoken they will be fulfilled. Not formal, tepid and repetitive prayer but rather the insistent, unrelenting, grappling with God as Jacob did, filled with a confident, unflinching and undoubting certainty of his answer.

Reader! Will you do your part in this blessed work? Will you give yourself fully to this cause? Morning, midday, and night? Will you do your best jointly work with others so that you can create circles of intercession? Great is your privilege - great too is your responsibility. 'Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down ...'

... Take note, if this was to be my last message to my fellow countrymen throughout the length and breadth of Wales before I am taken to the judgement it would remain thus - the greatest need of my dear nation and country at this time is spiritual revival through a specific outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Taken from: Y Dysgedydd, January 1903, tt12-19.

As we celebrate Pentecost, consider the words above.

Will you join with Christians across Wales to pray for spiritual revival in Wales today?

A Call to Prayer 1903

The 1859 Revival was a revival rooted in prayer. In his account of revival, published in 1860, Reverend Thomas Phillips testified to the renewed spirit of prayer across the land:

The Lord has caused His people to feel more deeply than ever the need of a gracious Revival, not only in the world, but also in the Church; and this feeling has found expression in prayer, more generally and more intensely than at any former period within our memory. [...] Meetings for prayer have been held in all sorts of places, and attended by all sorts of people. [...] In all these places, from the lips and hearts of the thousands who attended them, One Prayer has ascended up before God's throne: "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years"

At Aberaeron ministers reported: *Language can hardly express the vast good God has graciously done among us! We are at a loss to find words to express our gratitude to Him for such a blessed visitation as we had in this outpouring of His Spirit! A happy change is everywhere observed - our prayer-meetings are become crowded, and a powerful spirit of prayer has laid hold of the Churches. The number of praying and prayerful people has marvellously increased.*

The Baptists at Presteigne and Knighton also testified to the same renewed spirit of prayer: *This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." To Him be all the praise! "The Lord has poured out His Spirit in this great revival, in answer to the fervent prayers of His people. It is a glorious truth - oh that the Church, the universal Church, - realised it - that the prayer of faith prevails with God!*

"This revival is altogether a revival of the spirit of prayer; it takes its embodied form in Christian unity."

Extract taken from:
Thomas Phillips, The Welsh Revival, 1860.

1859 A Revival of Prayer

A Prayer For The Church

Lord of the church, we pray for our renewing:
Christ over all, our undivided aim.
Fire of the Spirit, burn for our enduring,
wind of the Spirit, fan the living flame!
We turn to Christ amid our fear and failing,
the will that lacks the courage to be free,
the weary labours, all but unavailing,
to bring us nearer what a church should be.

Lord of the church, we seek a Father's blessing,
a true repentance and a faith restored,
a swift obedience and a new possessing,
filled with the Holy Spirit of the Lord!
We turn to Christ from all our restless striving,
unnumbered voices with a single prayer:
the living water for our souls' reviving,
in Christ to live, and love and serve and care.

Lord of the church, we long for our uniting,
true to one calling, by one vision stirred;
one cross proclaiming and one creed reciting,
one in the truth of Jesus and his word.
So lead us on; till toil and trouble ended,
one church triumphant one new song shall sing,
to praise his glory, risen and ascended,
Christ over all, the everlasting King!

Timothy Dudley-Smith

