

**Earlsdon Methodist Church**  
**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

**Opening Affirmation**

Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to his  
name;  
worship the LORD in the splendour of  
his holiness.  
The voice of the LORD is over the waters;  
The glory of the Lord is revealed to us.

*Psalm 29:1-3*

**Hymn: StF 20 Be still**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or  
listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOCfPjLOvC4>

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the  
Holy One is here;  
Come bow before Him now with reverence  
and fear.  
In Him no sin is found, we stand on holy  
ground;  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the  
Holy One is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all  
around;  
He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is  
crowned.  
How awesome is the sight, our radiant King  
of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all  
around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving  
in this place;  
He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister  
His grace.  
No work too hard for Him, in faith receive  
from Him;  
Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving  
in this place.

*David J Evans (b1957)*

**Let us pray together**

Eternal God  
Your spirit moved over the waters and you  
breathed creation into birth.  
We praise you for the wonders which you  
have made. The beauty that surrounds us.  
The chill of a winter morning. The glistening  
of frost and snow. The early signs of new life  
appearing in gardens and hedgerows. All  
that speaks of your ongoing act of creation.  
We praise you for the gift of life and the  
ability to experience your creation all  
around us.

Your spirit moved over Jesus at his baptism.  
We praise you that, in Jesus, you came to  
live among us. To experience all that it  
means to be truly human. To be tempted, to  
experience joy and sadness. To die on a  
cross so that we could know the full extent  
of your love for us. To rise again so that we  
can know the gift of eternal life through  
him.

Your spirit came upon the believers in the  
early church.  
We praise you that your spirit is still active  
in your church and in the world today. That  
we can know the presence of that spirit in  
our lives. Filling us, empowering us, bringing  
us into a deeper relationship with you.

We praise you God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**Amen**

### **Today's Bible Readings**

#### **Mark 1:4-11**

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

#### **Acts 19:1-7**

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues

and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

### **Hymn: StF 233 When Jesus came to Jordan**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJEMg\\_fpB6U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJEMg_fpB6U)

When Jesus came to Jordan  
To be baptized by John,  
He did not come for pardon,  
But as his Father's Son.  
He came to share repentance  
With all who mourn their sins,  
To speak the vital sentence  
With which good news begins.

He came to share temptation,  
Our utmost woe and loss,  
For us and our salvation  
To die upon the cross.  
So when the Dove descended  
On him, the Son of Man,  
The hidden years had ended,  
The age of grace began.

Come, Holy Spirit, aid us  
To keep the vows we make,  
This very day invade us,  
And every bondage break.  
Come, give our lives direction,  
The gift we covet most:  
To share the resurrection  
That leads to Pentecost.

*Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)*

### **Time to Reflect**

With Christmas over and yet another lockdown beginning this may be the time to find a good book to read. Maybe we can catch up with the books which we've always wanted to read but never got round to.

Some books are particularly gripping, it's hard to put them down and we find ourselves moving from chapter to chapter very quickly. I remember when the last "Harry Potter" book came out, like many other people I was eager to see how the story ended. I have to admit that I cheated and read the last chapter first (just to find out if Harry survived), but then I 'binge read' the book, reading the whole 607 pages in just a few days. It was gripping and each chapter seemed more exciting than the last.

At this time of year the story of Jesus moves from chapter to chapter very quickly. Having just celebrated the nativity and then welcomed the Magi at Epiphany last Wednesday we already find Jesus as a fully grown man about to enter into his ministry. John has been preaching in the desert and is baptising in the Jordan, calling people to turn back to God (to "repent"), to confess their sins and to be cleansed and healed in the water of baptism. John's preaching appears in all four Gospels, although the baptism of Jesus only appears in the first three and, as is often the case, Mark's Gospel gives little detail about the encounter between John and Jesus. But what we do know is that Jesus, despite being without sin, received the same baptism offered to all. Right at the beginning of his ministry Jesus identified as one with the ordinary people. Holy God but wholly human. If we are to be like God we need to turn to him, confess our sins, receive a baptism of cleansing and healing. "Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place. He comes to cleanse and heal and minister his grace." That cleansing and healing is offered to all who believe in him and is constantly being renewed. Will you commit yourself again to owning that baptism for yourself?

But the story doesn't end there. There is an even more exciting "next chapter" to come. When Jesus comes out of the water there is a voice from heaven and the Holy Spirit rests on him like a dove, gentle but powerful. There is another baptism to come. As John prophesied "I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." The believers at Ephesus had received John's baptism of repentance, but God had much more planned. When Paul baptised them in the name of Jesus they received a new baptism – the baptism of the Holy Spirit and were filled with a new power.

Too many Christians today put down the book before getting to that exciting next chapter. Content with where they are, knowing God's love and forgiveness but failing to know the true power that comes through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

But we don't have to stop there. Maybe today is the day for you to turn the page and to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit for yourself. To say "loving God I know that I'm a forgiven sinner, cleansed and healed by you. But I know that you have more to offer me. Baptise me now with your Holy Spirit." It may be time for you to begin to experience an exciting new chapter in your journey with God. God's spirit is "unseen as the wind and gentle as a dove". Will you open yourself up to being baptised by that spirit?

#### **A time of prayer**

Cleansing and healing God

We pray for our world today.

For those in need of forgiveness and for those who need to find the courage to forgive others.

For those who are victims of injustice, intolerance and oppression.

For Christians who struggle to remain faithful in countries where it is not safe to proclaim the gospel.  
For refugees and asylum seekers, the homeless and those who have lost their jobs in recent days and weeks.  
For all those who are sick and suffering in any way, particularly those who are known personally to us.  
For all in positions of authority as they seek to keep their communities safe during the pandemic.  
For scientists and health workers around the world who are working to alleviate coronavirus daily.  
For parents and children  
And all who have lost loved ones  
That they may they feel your love this week and always.  
We offer all these prayers In Jesus' name  
**Amen**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

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,  
the power and the glory  
For ever and ever  
**Amen**

### **Hymn: StF 394 Spirit of God, unseen as the wind**

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GkOKqI5ogw>

*Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,  
gentle as is the dove:  
teach us the truth and help us believe,  
show us the Saviour's love!*

You spoke to us – long, long ago –  
gave us the written word;  
we read it still, needing its truth,  
through it God's voice is heard.

*Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,  
gentle as is the dove:  
teach us the truth and help us believe,  
show us the Saviour's love!*

Without your help we fail our Lord,  
we cannot live his way;  
we need your power, we need your strength,  
following Christ each day.

*Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,  
gentle as is the dove:  
teach us the truth and help us believe,  
show us the Saviour's love!*

*Margaret Old (1932-2001)*

### **A prayer of blessing**

Father God, you blessed Jesus in the water of baptism.  
May we too receive your blessing.  
Wash us with the water of your spirit  
So that refreshed, reinvigorated and cleansed  
we may become agents of your transforming love for the whole world.  
**Amen**

*Michael Jagessar*