

ZOOM Worship for May 23, 2021
Pentecost Sunday

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Announcements

Centering Music: "Lord Prepare Me" MV 18

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary,
pure and holy tried and true;
with thanksgiving, I'll be a living
sanctuary for you.

Call to Worship: (responsive)

One: Today we celebrate the birthday of the Church.

All: And we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit.

One: We refer to this special day as Pentecost. Like Jesus' first followers let us open ourselves to God's Spirit that it might fill us.

All: O God, help us to put our selfish desires aside and direct our thoughts to You, that Your power might fill this gathered community and our lives fully, just as it has filled churches and people throughout the last more than 2000 years. Teach us to be Your church and Your people.

Opening Prayer:

Most Holy God, we await the touch of Your Spirit with eagerness. We ask that You enter the lives of each one of us today, refreshing and renewing and healing us with the power of Your loving Spirit, that we might live with purpose, enthusiasm and courage. We ask it in Jesus' name.

The Lord's Prayer: (sung) VU 959

Our Father, in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours
now and forever.

Opening Hymn: "On Pentecost They Gathered" VU 195

On Pentecost they gathered
quite early in the day,
a band of Christ's disciples,
to worship, sing, and pray.
A mighty wind came blowing,
filled all the swirling air,
and tongues of fire aglowing
inspired each person there.

The people all around them
were startled and amazed
to understand their language,
as Jesus Christ they praised.
What universal message,
what great good news was here?
That Christ, once dead, is risen
to vanquish all our fear.

God pours the Holy Spirit
on all who would believe,
on women, men, and children
who would God's grace receive.
That Spirit knows no limit,
bestowing life and power.
The church, formed and reforming,
responds in every hour.

O Spirit, sent from heaven
on that day long ago,
rekindle faith among us
in all life's ebb and flow.
O give us ears to listen
and tongues aflame with praise,
so folk of every nation
glad songs of joy shall raise.

Prayers of the People: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KDY2t7slUc

Scripture reading: Acts 2: 1-21 (NRSV)

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

When the day of Pentecost had come, they 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.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

Peter Addresses the Crowd

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Reflection: "Holy Spirit, Wind and Flame, Move Within Our Mortal Frame"

Hymn: "Wind Who Makes All Winds That Blow" VU 196

Wind who makes all winds that blow,
gusts that bend the saplings low,
gales that heave the sea in waves,
stirrings in the mind's deep caves,
aim your breath with steady power
on your church this day, this hour.
Raise, renew the life we've lost,
Spirit God of Pentecost.

Fire who fuels all fires that burn,
suns around which planets turn,
beacons marking reefs and shoals,
shining truth to guide our souls,
come to us as once you came:
burst in tongues of sacred flame!

Light and Power, Might and Strength,
fill your church, its breadth and length.
Holy Spirit, Wind and Flame,
move within our mortal frame.
Make our hearts an altar pyre,
kindle them with your own fire.
Breathe and blow upon that blaze
till our lives, our deeds and ways,
speak that tongue which every land
by your grace shall understand.

Offering Invitation

Prayer of Dedication

Commissioning:

One: Let us open ourselves to God's Spirit and dare to believe and dream.

All: Come Holy Spirit fill us.

One: God's Spirit is calling out to us and desires to work through us for Godly purposes.

All: Come Holy Spirit fill us. Come and empower us today! Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Sent Out in Jesus Name" MV 212

Sent out in Jesus' name,
our hands are ready now
to make the earth the place
in which the kingdom comes.
The angels cannot change a world of hurt and pain
into a world of love, of justice and of peace.
The task is our to do, to set it really free.
O help us to obey, and carry out your will.

Choral Blessing: "Go Now in Love"

Reflection - Rev. Dale Burkart

"HOLY SPIRIT, WIND AND FLAME, MOVE WITHIN OUR MORTAL FRAME"

-line from verse 3 of Thomas Troeger's 1983 hymn found in V.U. #196

When have you felt the Spirit moving in your life? How did you recognize the Spirit? God's Spirit brings life and energy. It comes with peace, with warmth, with love, with joy and gentleness. It brings amazement and can leave the recipient to quote the famous hymn writer Charles Wesley, "lost in wonder, love and praise."

A significant piece of Jesus' final instructions to his disciples before he ascended to his Father was for them to remain in Jerusalem until they would be gifted with the Holy Spirit. As most of them were from

the far north, Galilee, their first and natural inclination would be to go home. But they were told to remain in Jerusalem.

And so this small group waited. Waited and wondered what they were waiting for. On the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Passover on the day the Jewish community celebrated Moses receiving the Law – 10 Commandments, something remarkable took place. Something that was a challenge to explain.

Witnesses described it as rushing wind and tongues of fire above those gathered in the room. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak other languages. A calm setting was suddenly transformed. The description found here takes me to Bruce Springsteen's song, Fire, which goes, "When we kissed, oo, oo, FIRE." We may have a sense of the kind of fire Springsteen is talking about.

Jesus' followers spilled out into the street and the commotion caused people out in the street to gather in bewilderment and they noted that those speaking were northerners from Galilee, a people held in low esteem by the cultured south.

Peter, impersonating Jesus, who at times had preached to thousands in open fields, started preaching and 3000 people, many from far off destinations visiting Jerusalem for the religious celebrations, joined the disciples in following Jesus. The Church and a movement were birthed.

From Jerusalem the church moved throughout the province of Judea, north to Samaria and Galilee and to the far reaches of the Roman Empire carried not only by Jesus' original followers but also the foreign visitors to Jerusalem that day. Eventually the Gospel reached to the ends of the earth. Jesus' disciple Thomas is credited with taking the Gospel to India.

Alpha, an introductory course to Christianity, is a modern example of how Christianity spreads. From 4 courses offered by Holy Trinity Brompton in London in 1991 it has spread to over 100 countries, taught in 112 languages, in all kinds of settings. It is used by Roman Catholics, the Orthodox Church and a wide assortment of Protestant denominations. Over 24 million people have taken it. Years ago I attended a day long Alpha training session attended by over a thousand people here in Mississauga. The gathering was opened by Mayor Hazel McCallion. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has a page on Alpha in his autobiography.

The church continues to grow and change. The most striking church change in our day is that 100 years ago, 80% of all followers of Jesus lived in Europe and North America. Today about 70% of all followers of Jesus live in the southern hemisphere, South America, Africa and Asia. Historian Philip Jenkins comments, "Christianity is flourishing among the poor and persecuted while it atrophies among the rich and secure."

While ministering at Westway I was part of a clergy prayer group in Rexdale. The minister sitting beside me had immigrated from Cambodia/Kampuchea 5 years earlier and shared that he was being asked to return as Christianity was exploding there and the emerging churches were lacking knowledgeable leadership. He spoke of his reluctance to go back as life here was good but he was feeling needed and that he should return. We prayed for God to lead him in his decision.

The Holy Spirit like wind is at work and the Church is forever changing.

Through the Holy Spirit Jesus' presence and teachings continue to be experienced. The Holy Spirit enables us to sense Jesus' love for us and to know and love Jesus in an intimate way. Golden State

Warrior basketball superstar, Steph Curry says, "Jesus means everything to me." The upper side of the tongues of the basketball shoes designed for Curry have Phil 4: 13 and the underside has these words "I can do all things" [in him (Jesus) who strengthens me].

People may deny or ignore the Holy Spirit but the Holy Spirit will be found at work in individuals and groups of people that are open and receptive to receiving God's love and direction.

The Rev. Canon Jennifer Reid, incumbent at St. Peter's Anglican Church, Erindale for the last 19 years, and I were teamed locally as part of a course we were taking at Queen's in Kingston. One day at our monthly meeting she said to me I have to tell you what just happened here. A woman flying from China was told on the flight about God. She had never heard about God before. After landing she went looking for a church and ended up at St. Peter's wanting to talk about God. Jennifer took her into her office and talked with her. Their session ended and they walked out into the hall.

A parishioner came along and Jennifer introduced the visitor to the parishioner. The parishioner's response was, "Oh Sweetie," and took the visitor by the hand and lead her away to another part of the church to share her experience with God. A voice had told that parishioner that morning "go to church." Sometimes we may think this stuff only happened in Bible times.

Our love for Jesus arises out of Jesus' love for us. The Holy Spirit lets us know we are indeed loved and accepted by Jesus our Savior.

Our love for Jesus in 2021 shows the work of the Holy Spirit that started the Church and a movement centuries ago is still at work in our world.

I invite you to regularly invite the Holy Spirit to come and touch your life.