

19th May 2024 – Morning Service

Pentecost

Megan Ashmore

Call to Worship

Alleluia. Christ is Risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia**

The fire of God is coming! Sing praises. **Sing praises to God**

The wind of God is blowing! Sing praises. **Sing praises to God**

The joy of the Spirit is here! Sing praises. **Sing Praises to God**

Sing praises to God all the earth! Sing praises. **Sing praises! Sing praises! Sing praises!**

StF 2 – Come, let us sing to the One

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| 1) Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Father of life,
Whose light fills the earth like the sun;
Come, tell of the wonders he's done.
Great is the world he has made,
Are the myst'ries untold,
Is his measureless power of old;
Come, come let us sing to our God. | 2) Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Saviour of life,
Find the fullness of God in the Son;
Come, tell of the wonders he's done.
Wild is the mercy of Christ,
Is the richness of grace,
Is the unending life we embrace;
Come, come let us sing to our God. |
| Ch) <i>To our God, who is able
To strengthen us in his grace
Beyond all we imagine,
Be all glory and praise,
Be all praise.</i> | 3) Come, let us sing to the One,
To the Spirit of life,
Leading us in the way of the Son;
Come, tell of the wonders he's done.
Strong is the Spirit within,
Is the boldness to speak,
Is the power to run when we're weak;
Come, come let us sing to our God. |

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Reading: Psalm 89:1-18¹

I will sing of the Lord's great love for ever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm for ever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, "I will establish your line for ever and make your throne firm through all generations."'

The heavens praise your wonders, Lord, your faithfulness too, in the assembly of the holy ones. For who in the skies above can compare with the Lord? Who is like the Lord among the heavenly beings? In the council of the holy ones God is greatly feared; he is more awesome than all who surround him. Who is like you, Lord God Almighty? You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

You rule over the surging sea; when its waves mount up, you still them. You crushed Rahab like one of the slain; with your strong arm you scattered your enemies. The heavens are yours, and yours also the earth; you founded the world and all that is in it. You created the north and the south; Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at your name. Your arm is endowed with power; your hand is strong, your right hand exalted.

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness. For you are their glory and strength, and by your favour you exalt our horn. Indeed, our shield belongs to the Lord, our king to the Holy One of Israel.

Prayer¹

Arriving early in anxiety, you call us. Arriving late in a panic, you call us.

Needing personal space, you call us. Needing contact and connection, you call us.

Seeking to talk at length of our loves and losses, you call us.

Craving predictability and routine, you call us. Craving difference and change, you call us.

With different minds and different hearts, different bodies and different lives, you call us in your love to be one. We come. **Amen**

All-age reflection

I wonder if you have ever played Twister. Twister is a fun family game which has been around for many years - in fact as long as I have!! A spinner indicates where each player is to place his/her feet or hands on a mat of coloured circles. For example – right foot on blue; left foot on yellow; right hand on red; left hand on green. So far, so good. But how quickly this seemingly simple game descends into a frenzied display of ungainly acrobatics as bodies have to stretch into awkward positions and negotiate other players vying for the same space, all the while ensuring that no other part of their own body touches the mat!! The game actually promotes itself as "the game that ties you up in knots."

Sometimes we might feel as though we're tied up in knots – things appear to be in a right muddle and we can see no way of straightening them out. God knows all about it and knows that we need help sometimes. And so He sent us the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us sort things out. But He also sent the Spirit to guide us in the way of truth and lead us in the ways of the kingdom; to empower us to speak the good news of the gospel and to enable us to walk in the light of God's love. That is what we are celebrating this morning, on this day of Pentecost.

StF 483 – We are marching in the light of God

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| 1) We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, Oh
We are marching in the Light of God
We are marching, Oh
We are marching in the Light of God | 3) We are moving in the power of God,
We are moving in the power of God,
We are moving in the power of God,
We are moving in the power of God.
We are moving, Oh
We are moving in the power of God.
We are moving, Oh
We are moving in the power of God. |
| 2) We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God.
We are living, Oh, we are living in the love of God.
We are living, Oh, we are living in the love of God. | |

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Reading: John 15: 26 – 27; 16: 4b - 15

'When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father – the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, "Where are you going?" Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.'

'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.'

Pause for thought

Following the death of Jesus, the disciples endured turbulent times - a roller coaster of emotions - disappointment; guilt; grief; despair; doubt; comfort; sadness; relief; hope. In the immediate aftermath of the crucifixion, they had locked themselves away. They had been scared and confused. Then came news that Jesus's body was not where it had been left; Mary and others talked of early sightings of the risen Lord; and indeed they had all then seen Christ appear in their midst. Jesus had returned to them. He comforted them as of old. He gave them orders to follow. Even Peter who had denied Jesus - he had been forgiven and charged with feeding God's flock. The disciples spent many times with the resurrected Lord and maybe were beginning to feel a bit more sure of themselves. But then Jesus left them again.

John in his gospel records how Jesus had informed them that his leaving them had to happen in order for them to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who would teach them and guide them in the way of truth. Jesus's ascension to heaven meant that the Spirit could be sent to complete the work of the kingdom. And in Acts chapter one we read that on one occasion when the resurrected Jesus was eating with the disciples he told them, *"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

I like to think that the disciples now understood a little better all that Jesus was doing in his last days on earth; that having seen the prophetic words about his death and resurrection come true they were more confident in letting Jesus go; that their experiences and the whole gamut of emotions served to strengthen them and deepen their relationship with God. Sometimes we find ourselves tied up in knots. Then, may we too, have the grace to seek the truth of God's Word that the Spirit might infill us with its guidance and comfort, support and strength.

Prayer of Confession²

Gracious and loving God, your grace is sufficient for every need, yet we often doubt your presence. We wonder where you are in all that happens in this world. We struggle with trusting wholeheartedly in your love, power, and goodness. We fail to keep our hearts centered and our minds focused on the good news of Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One. Forgive us. Rescue us. Empower us. As your redeemed children, may we seek to do your will to your name's great glory. Through Christ we pray. **Amen.**

Affirmation of Faith

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

StF 391 – O breath of life come sweeping through us

- 1) O breath of life, come sweeping through us,
Revive your church with life and power;
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit your church to meet this hour.
- 2) O Wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
Till humbly we confess our need;
Then in your tenderness remake us,
Revive, restore; for this we plead.
- 3) O Breath of love, come, breathe within us,
Renewing thought and will and heart;
Come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
Revive your church in every part.

Elizabeth Ann Head

Reading: Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: 'Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!' Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?' Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Monologue – “We shouldn't have been surprised” by Nick Fawcett

We shouldn't have been surprised, not if we had any sense; it was what we'd been told to expect, what he'd promised us. But we never imagined anything quite so extraordinary.

We were waiting, it's true, gathered together as so often before, but we'd been doing that for days and our confidence had taken a hammering. We were going through the motions, that's all, telling each other he hadn't forgotten us, talking of the future as though we still believed in it, yet wondering in our hearts if there was anything to look forward to.

I mean, what could we hope to achieve when all was said and done. What reason to think that we, a motley bunch if ever there was one, should fare better than our master?

We wanted to carry on his work, don't get me wrong: We wanted to tell people what had happened, help them find faith for themselves, but how could we even hope to begin?

So we kept the doors locked and sang our hymns and said our prayers and hid our doubts. Until suddenly it happened! I can't properly describe it even now, but it changed our lives.

It was as though a mighty wind blew away the cobwebs, a refreshing breeze revived our flagging faith, a breath of air stirred our spirits.

As though a tiny spark rekindled our confidence, a tongue of fire set our hearts aflame, a raging inferno swept our fears away.

As though life had begun again, the world become a different place, and each of us been born anew. I know that doesn't make sense, but it's the best I can do.

You'll have to experience it for yourself to understand. And you can, just as we did.

Believe me, we never would have thought it possible, despite all Jesus said to us.

We were lost, lonely, frightened, hopelessly aware of our weaknesses, searching for any strengths.

We never thought we'd change a soul, let alone the world, but that's because we had no idea how God could change us too!

Reflection

I remember a conversation I had over coffee with a member of the congregation at New Road. Somehow the conversation got onto housework, and she told me a lovely story from when her children were young. She recalls the midwife visiting and how, as a new mother, she apologised for the house being untidy. The midwife, replied, "Dear, it is not untidy. It is a homely muddle!" I often think about that when I look around my house - settees covered in knitting projects; piles of books and paperwork on the kitchen table; heaps of shoes by the front door etc., etc., etc. But all has a purpose and a reason for being there.

Holy Chaos is a term coined by Selina Stone in her book "Tarry Awhile." She uses it to refer to the work of the Holy Spirit. She writes, "*On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit arrives in a kind of holy chaos. It is holy because it is an act of God, but chaotic in relation to the order that as human beings we so often create.*"

A mighty wind, tongues of fire and the sound of multi-lingual voices proclaiming the good news of the gospel would appear to be chaotic to us but God does not work in our ways as Isaiah reminds us in his prophetic words: "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,*" declares the Lord. "*As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" (Isaiah 55:8)

Pentecost, translated from the Greek meaning "fiftieth" was a festival occurring fifty days after Passover. As a major feast day it attracted visitors from "every nation under heaven." In fact Jewish historians have suggested that there could have been as many as three million people in Jerusalem at the time of those two festivals. And there was a small band of trusting disciples who met together to worship; expectantly waiting for the Holy Spirit. And at the right time the Holy Spirit came.

It was all perfectly planned with each component having a purpose and a place:

The wind - a breath of fresh air, reviving tired bodies, stirring up new life in the disciples.

The fire – cleansing souls, illuminating minds, warming and comforting the hearts of the disciples.

The "other tongues" – coming at an optimum time when the words spoken by Jesus could start to be fulfilled: "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*" (Matthew 28: 19 – 20)

This half term, the focus of our music lessons at school has been composing. The littlies have been learning about rhythm and are beginning to make their own rhythm patterns now; key stage one have been creating sequences of sound and the older children have been composing accompaniments and creating their own pieces of music from scratch. Initially when I set them the task of creating, it has to be said there is such a racket. But once the children have got the "bashing and banging," as I call it, out of their system and begin to give some thought to structure and choice of appropriate sounds beautiful music is heard and shared. I'm not sure I could call this holy chaos but it's along similar lines. Out of chaos comes something wonderful.

In Genesis chapter one we read, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said...”*

Holy Chaos – a holy act of God from which came beauty and confidence and strength.
Hymn 387 from Singing the Faith sums it up like this:

*Into a world of dark, waste and disordered space,
He came, a wind that moved across the waters' face.
The Spirit in the wild breathed, and a world began;
From shapelessness came form, from nothingness, a plan.
Light in the darkness grew; land in the water stood;
And space and time became a beauty that was good.
Into a world of doubt, through doors we closed, he came,
The Breath of God in power like wind and roaring flame.
From empty wastes of death, on love's disordered grief
Light in the darkness blazed, and kindled new belief.
Still, with creative power, God's Spirit comes to give
A pattern of new life - our world begins to live.*

The Spirit that brought this wonderful world to birth and which later empowered the disciples to stand up, go out and share the good news of the gospel is the Spirit of our living God. The Spirit who will help us untie any knots in our lives. The Spirit who will encourage us on our journey of faith. The Spirit who empowers us to tell others about God's love for His world and how through Jesus all can be forgiven and saved.

Remember that phrase of Selina Stone: *“On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit arrives in a kind of holy chaos. It is holy because it is an act of God, but chaotic in relation to the order that as human beings we so often create.”* The Spirit is waiting and wanting to work within our lives. But perhaps that means letting go of the neat order of things that we have created for ourselves and letting the Holy Spirit have its way. Are we willing to allow ourselves to be twisted and turned, shaped and structured by the Holy Spirit for the purposes of the kingdom of God? Though it may be a challenge, we have Jesus, God's Word of truth to sustain us. On this day of Pentecost let's welcome the Spirit anew into our lives.

StF 385 – Holy Spirit we welcome you

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|---|---|
| <p>1) Holy Spirit, we welcome You.
Holy Spirit, we welcome You.
Move amongst 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.</p> <p>2) 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.</p> | <p>3) 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.</p> |
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Reflection

That day of Pentecost all those years ago was the day that the Church was born and today we celebrate the birthday of the Church. So we need a cake and a candle of course!

(Have (or imagine) a small cake with a relighting candle.)

Many have tried to stop the Church and snuff it out over the years.

(blow out trick candle-wait for it to relight)

But they can't stop the Church. Through the centuries there have been times of great persecution where people have been beaten or killed for being Christian, *(blow out candle and wait for it to relight)* but that didn't stop the Church.

There are places this very day where it is illegal to be a follower of Jesus *(blow out candle again and wait for it to relight)* but the Church still lives.

There have been times of apathy when people didn't believe or seem to care about Church any more.

Where people stopped reading their Bibles and praying and coming to church. *(blow out the candle and wait for it to relight)* But the Church still lives on.

Even a world-wide pandemic – Covid – where people couldn't attend church for months and months on end *(blow out candle and wait for it to relight)* didn't bring an end to the Church.

Why is this? How is this? What is this? The answer to all of those questions goes back to that day of Pentecost many, many years ago. The answer is, the Holy Spirit. And the answer to our questions today about life, and our troubles, and our world is in God's gift of the Holy Spirit. God is with us, through his Spirit.

Prayers of Intercession¹

Almighty God, Heavenly Father, as we ask you this day to send your Holy Spirit, so we pray that you might send it into all your church throughout the world. We pray for your church gathered here today, for all those seeking your Kingdom in every sphere of their lives.

We pray for our local community, for those with whom we come into contact day by day, in our streets, our shops, schools, places of work or places of leisure and recreation. May we reach out to all in need with love, hope and compassion.

We pray for those who shape the values of our community; those in education, politics, business and voluntary work. We ask that peace, truth and justice may be the guiding principle for us all.

For those who struggle to find adequate food and clean water, clothing and shelter and the other basic needs of life, we pray that governments and agencies, including the church, will reach out to change the course of their history for good, sharing from the abundance held by others. Grant us the courage and generosity to be part of the solution, working with local charities and organisations reaching out around the globe.

We pray for places torn apart by violence and for places which look to violence as a solution. Amplify the calm voices calling for peace and reconciliation that they may be heard, hardened hearts may be softened and that ancient divisions might be mended. We pray for those who sacrifice so much for the good of many, who risk even their lives for the cause of peace. Open our hearts to be active peacemakers too.

We pray for those known to us who are unwell at this time; for those who have known illness and pain, suffering and worry. Encircle them and their families with your comforting embrace. We pray too for all who mourn the loss of a loved one. Illuminate their darkness. Comfort and strengthen them.

God of love and hope, renew in us a deeper sense of who we are in you. Help us to be aware of your presence each and every day. Make us instruments of love and praise. May our words, actions and lives be living examples of your forgiving, healing and life-giving love. **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.**

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 the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 477 – Teach me to dance

Ch) Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart,
Teach me to move in the pow'r of Your Spirit.
Teach me to walk in the light of Your presence,
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.
Teach me to love with Your heart of compassion
Teach me to trust in the word of Your promise
Teach me to hope in the day of Your coming
Teach me to dance to the beat of Your heart.

2) Let all my movements express
A heart that loves to say 'Yes',
A will that leaps to obey You.
Let all my energy blaze
To see the joy in Your face
Let my whole being praise You, praise You.

1) You wrote the rhythm of life,
Created heaven and earth;
In You is joy without measure.
So like a child in Your sight,
I dance to see Your delight
For I was made for Your pleasure, pleasure.

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Blessing

Go from here dancing to the beat of God's heart, moving in the power of the Spirit, walking in the light of the presence of Jesus. And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. **Amen.**

¹ Contributions from Amanda Evans and Patricia Sanger – Worship Leaders at Overend

² Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church