

WESLEY UNITING CHURCH
PENTECOST
Sunday, May 19th, 2024
10:45AM



The three weeks of Ascension (last week), Pentecost and Trinity (next week), follow sequentially for good reason: they are connected. Ascension Sunday, when Jesus, leaves his followers with the Spirit, to have the freedom to get on with the job of renewal of the world, paints a picture of human beings as co-creators with God in shaping history:

Today, Pentecost Sunday, we continue this idea of human beings moving beyond themselves to “the more”, to become God’s creative partners in the world. In the ancient world characterized by tribalism, the vision of people hearing God speak across their tribal languages was unheard of. Language is one of the most concrete, tangible marks of difference between people, a mark that makes people unintelligible to each other. The experience of people hearing God in their own diverse languages, directly challenged the idea of a God who should reflect national or cultural, or group interest.

At Pentecost, the vision is romantic, broad and dramatic. To use the modern over-worked term, it is about inclusivity – but grounded in God, not in national, cultural or linguistic identity.

Today Bruce will reflect on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in particular the gift of gratitude.

GATHERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude: Sonata, Isabella Leonarda (1620-1704)

Introit: Fellowship in the Holy Spirit

'Chiswell' by Gustav Holst (1874-1934), words by J Peacey (1896-1971)

Filled with the Spirit's pow'r, with one accord
The infant Church confessed its risen Lord.
O Holy Spirit, in the Church today
No less your pow'r of fellowship display.

Now with the mind of Christ set us on fire,
That unity may be our great desire.
Give joy and peace; give faith to hear your call,
And readiness in each to work for all.

Widen our love, good Spirit, to embrace
In your strong care the folk of ev'ry race.
Like wind and fire with life among us move,
Till we are known as Christ's, and Christians prove.

Acknowledgment of Country and Safe Church Statement

Welcome and lighting the Community Candle from the Christ Candle

Call to Worship and Greeting

From the Hebrew reading of Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones.

Pay attention. Can you hear it?
So many of us carry dry bones that clank around in our hearts.
Dreams that are dying.
Gifts that are languishing.
Hopes left undernourished and neglected.
Loneliness that eats away
at our sense of connection with one another
until we wonder:
Can these bones live?

Pay attention. Can you sense it?
 God is always putting us back together.
 In dreams of abundance and visions of cooperation,
 in the cacophony of voices
 who share and receive the good news in their own languages,
 the Spirit revives us and restores us, reminding us:
**These bones live, because Love dwells among us,
 now and always.
 Thanks be to God!**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
 The Lord be with you;
And also with you.

Collect

Hymn 181, Come O God of all the earth...

Prayers of Confession

God stuck her tongue out at the church
 and we grabbed hold of it,
 as if it were a swimming-pool noodle
 and before we knew it
 we were hearing things, speaking things
 we had never dreamed of or wondered about.

Welcome stranger, alien, outsider;
now you are called sister, brother, friend.
 Gather around asylum seeker, refugee, immigrants;
we hear your language, no-one shuns you here.

Dance your way through the door lost ones;
 and teach us your wild moves;
and we will teach you ours.

Stroll in you wounded souls and skins;
and let us wrap and kiss your pain to healing.

Make room, settled ones
for the wave is surging;
and it will unsettle your closed-mouth silence.

Silence

Let us confess beginning the first paragraph with the choir side of the church and then the pulpit side of the church.

**We confess to you, Renewing Spirit,
that we confuse unity with uniformity,
and diversity with divisiveness**

**We speak and behave as if being a part of your family
means assimilating others to our way of living.**

**We deny and destroy the beauty you created in each person.
We long to change these patterns, O Creator,
but we do not know how.**

**Teach us to value challenge.
Help us to see strength in difference.
And empower us to build your kingdom in creativity and love.
Amen.**

Declaration of Forgiveness and Renewal

Hear the good news!

God's Spirit has been poured out upon all flesh,
and we have been made one.

We are no longer scattered or divided,
but gathered together to build the kingdom here and now.

Thanks be to God!

Gloria (TIS 771)

Now to him who loved us, gave us
 Every pledge that love could give,
 Freely shed his blood to save us,
 gave his life that we might live,
 Be the kingdom
 and dominion, 'and the glory evermore.

The Peace

We share the peace with each other with the words; "The peace of the Lord be with you. And also with you". We do this with either our hands clasped together or our right hand on our hearts.

SERVICE OF THE WORD**Prayer for Understanding****First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14****Second Reading: Acts 2:1-21**

We celebrate the Day of Pentecost as the day of the coming of the Spirit because of Luke's symbolic history. He is celebrating the presence of the Spirit in the early Christian movement. He does so with a slight sense of humour, alluding to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, which Paul also mentions, and gives it also a symbolic twist. It makes people sound like drunks to those who do not know what is going on. But to those who do know, here is a language miracle, which reverses the curse of the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis. The 20th century theologian, Karl Barth, emphasizes Pentecost as the reversal of the Tower of Babel with great enthusiasm.

Hymn 418, She sits like a bird...

Gospel: John 15:26 – 27, 16: 4-15

John speaks of the Spirit as the paraclete or advocate. The term has a legal feeling about it and probably reflects that situation where Christians were hauled before courts. The reasons for these problems had to do with the state but also the synagogue. In John's Gospel the conflict between church and synagogue exploded. By this later stage of John's Gospel, the "world" has taken on a new meaning. In the early

stages of John, the world was that neutral ground for mission, and was seen as promising. Later in John, we sense that the world is a hostile place marked by unbelief, lies and death. In this environment, the disciples need the Spirit more than ever.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Anthem: Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost

Grayston Ives, words by Christopher Wordsworth (1807-85) based on 1 Corinthians 13

Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost, taught by thee, we covet most,
of thy gifts at Pentecost, holy heavenly love.

Love is kind and suffers long, love is meek, and thinks no wrong,
love than death itself more strong; therefore give us love.

Prophecy will fade away, melting in the light of day;
love will ever with us stay; therefore give us love.

Faith will vanish into sight; hope be emptied in delight;
love in heaven will shine more bright, therefore give us love.

Faith and hope and love we see joining hand in hand agree;
but the greatest of the three, and the best, is love.

Homily

Hymn: 152, Joyful, joyful, we adore you...

Offering

Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People

Today we pray for the Indian Ocean islands: Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius and the Seychelles. We continue to pray for Gaza, Israel, Ukraine and Russia. At the end of each prayer/petition with the words, ***Lord Christ, hear our prayers.***

Lord's Prayer

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

*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 forever. Amen.*

Hymn 422, Come Holy Spirit come...vs 1,2,4,5,6.

Blessing and Sending Out

Go out into the world,
Dream dreams, pursue visions
and speak of God's goodness.
And may the God who breathed life into creation be your delight.
May Christ Jesus give hope to your dreaming,
and may the Holy Spirit, your advocate and supporter,
breathe life into your being.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ

Postlude: 'Marcia' from *Serenade*, Op. 8

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

