

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Day of Pentecost - May 31, 2020

207 South Brodie St. Thunder Bay  
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

## Words of Welcome

Today is known as Pentecost Sunday. It celebrates the gifts of the Spirit poured out on the Church, its people, preparing Christ's followers to serve him in the world. So we worship God this day, with hope and trust that the Spirit is present in our lives and in the Church as we follow in ministry and mission wherever the Spirit leads. We begin with a call to worship.

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## Call to Worship

No great flowing fabrics of red  
hanging from sanctuary ceilings,  
yet this is still the day we celebrate  
Grace's breath shattering the shutters of our hearts.  
On this day, clad in our pajamas, sitting at home  
may we continue to let the Spirit  
of new life breathe upon us!

From empty sanctuaries, through video worship,  
we gather with our sisters and brothers,  
proclaiming that we are God's Pentecost.  
On this day, we would touch (virtually) all  
who remain sheltered in place, safe in God's grace.

There will be no birthday cakes, no balloons released,  
no butterflies emerging from cocoons,  
yet in the days to come, we will continue to speak  
of God's love and the Spirit's peace for all.

So that even apart, people know they are not alone,  
so that when that day comes, and we know it will,  
people will find a community awaiting them.

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I don't normally give background on the hymns we sing, but I thought it might be of some interest to know that *She Comes Sailing on the Wind* was written by a minister of the Anglican Church of Canada and now retired bishop Gordon Light. He is part of a quartet called the Common Cup and wrote this hymn in 1985. What is somewhat unique about this particular hymn is the female imagery used to describe and name the Holy Spirit which broadens our theology.

*Refrain*

*She comes sailing on the wind,  
her wings flashing in the sun;  
on a journey just begun,  
she flies on.  
And in the passage of her flight,  
her song rings out through the night,  
full of laughter, full of light,  
she flies on.*

1. Silent waters rocking on the morning of our birth,  
like an empty cradle waiting to be filled.  
And from the heart of God the Spirit moved  
upon the earth, like a mother breathing life into her child.
2. Many were the dreamers whose eyes were given sight  
when the Spirit filled their dreams with life and form.  
Deserts grew to gardens, broken hearts found new delights  
and then down the ages still she flew on.

*Refrain*

3. To a gentle girl in Galilee, a gentle breeze she came,  
a whisper softly calling in the dark,  
the promise of a child of peace whose reign would never end,  
Mary sang the Spirit song within her heart.
4. Flying to the river, she waited circling high  
above the child now grown so full of grace.  
As he rose up from the water, she swept down from the sky,  
and she carried him away in her embrace.

*Refrain*

5. Long after the deep darkness that fell upon the world,  
after dawn returned in flame of rising sun,  
the Spirit touched the earth again, again her wings unfurled,  
bringing life in wind and fire as she flew on.

*Refrain*

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**Opening Prayer**

A spark. That is all we need on this day, Imaginative God,  
to light our quarantined aloneness so that we can burst into bonfires  
which signal to all those around us you are bringing life and grace  
to us, and to the whole world.

A word. Just one, little word on this day, Poet of Pentecost,  
so that we can be the voice of all those forgotten by the world,  
so that we can be the warmth to melt all the hearts frozen by greed,  
so that we might speak in that still, small voice,  
and be the ones that live out, your good news to everyone we meet.

A breeze. A soft, gentle breeze that stirs the curtains on this day, Shattering Spirit.  
A breeze that will stay quiet, and peaceful, and still until the day comes (and it will)  
for us to become that storm of hopes to clear the despair  
from all our neighborhoods and lands.

Give us yourself this day, as we gather in praise and prayer, confession and pardon,  
Listening for a word of hope and encouragement from you  
God in Community, Holy in One, Amen.

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## **Assurance of Pardon**

Listen! It is not an old story, but ours.

It may not happen with a mighty wind, but with a soft whisper.

But this is our Pentecost.

This is our reminder that God forgives us and fills us with all things new.

Thanks be to God!

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## **Scripture Readings 1 Corinthians 12:1-13**

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. <sup>3</sup>Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; <sup>5</sup>and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; <sup>6</sup>and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. <sup>7</sup>To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup>To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

<sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were

all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

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The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

## **Message** Finding our voice

I have been wondering what to do. How to write. How to speak. How to respond. I have cried. I have prayed. I have found myself wanting to take a deep breath but not able to knowing that George Floyd was begging to breathe. I turn on the news, flip to a talk show, open the paper, scroll through Facebook and Instagram and I am confronted again and again with my own neglect, my own silence, my own fear, my own prejudice and privilege that is so deeply engrained that most of the time I don't recognize it. It takes effort to pay attention.

There is so much hate. So much violence. I get to turn away from most of it. Yet I open the paper and find a story about a documentary on the #MeToo movement and I remember my own moments when boys and men thought it was their right and privilege to put their hands into the most intimate spaces and places of my body and expect me to enjoy it. I did not. I have done much healing, but the memory of what has been done does not diminish. And yet, I can tell you stories of people who have experienced so much worse.

This week alone we have a Harvard graduate, a birder of all things, walking through a park and a white woman calls the police on him because he asked her to put her dog on a leash. Since moving to Thunder Bay I have met more birders than I ever knew in a lifetime. I would never have thought they were a threat. This man was black, that was his threat. The colour of his skin was what made her freak out. The woman, a Canadian.

An eighty-four Asian woman gets tripped as she pushes her walker on a Burnaby sidewalk. Police are still determining whether or not the incident was sparked by the woman's race, but they have noted that recently there have been more attacks on people of Asian descent than previously experienced. The perceived reason? That Asians are a threat, simply because they are Asian and the first Covid cases happened in China.

Here in Thunder Bay just a few short weeks ago, the paper ran a story of a doctor's family being harassed as they waited in a line up to enter a store. The perpetrators did not realize that the man and son were the family of a doctor in town, a woman, originally from Pakistan, but whose son was born and raised in Canada. She puts herself and her family in harms way to be sure that others were being cared for. All the family endured was because of the colour of their skin. They were not white.

The Globe and mail ran an article just over a year ago with the headline and byline that read, "Hate and hope in Thunder Bay: A city grapples with racism against Indigenous

people. In this Ontario city, racism against Indigenous people has taken a deadly toll. Police and political leaders are being asked to do better. How they respond could shape the future of reconciliation in Canada.”<sup>1</sup> I would add, how we all respond could shape the future of reconciliation in Canada.

Even where I minister, I hear and see the racism that infects our congregation. I am given a sum of money throughout the year to help those who come to our door for “bus fare”, which is code for I going to use it for something else. I have been told by a few that I shouldn’t be doing that. I shouldn’t let them in and talk to them. I shouldn’t give them anything. Thankfully the majority have some understanding that those coming to our doors have seen trauma that we cannot even imagine, and that moment of being able to connect over a couple of dollars for a bus fare or whatever, gives me the opportunity to ask their name, maybe have a conversation. Sometimes they ask me to pray with them. My hope is that they know they have been seen and heard. It is a pittance of an effort on my part and that of the church.

Still I wonder what else can be done. How do I stop the hate? How do I stop the racism, the abuse, the neglect, the homelessness, and brokenness? What is God asking me to do? What is God asking the church to do? It is no longer enough to share another Facebook post as I scroll through my feed. It never was enough and I don’t know how to stop the vitriol that is spewed from people who think that they have the right to say whatever they want with just a few strokes of the computer keyboard, or as they tap our messages on the screen of their phone or tablet. I have stopped following family members whom I love because I can no longer tolerate their judgements of others who they do not know. I am not eloquent in my speech. I stumble through trying to figure out what to say when there is so much to say, but I am not the one suffering the injustice. I do not bear the brunt of racism, poverty, or brutality.

The church as a whole has been complacent in not speaking out against all that is wrong in the world. I have been complacent in not speaking out. The reason – fear. We fear what we do not know or understand. But another reason is arrogance, the arrogance to think that we know better and do better. The people who speak or even rage about the Indians getting hand outs, immigrant workers taking our jobs, refugees crossing borders illegally, the people who feel so entitled to give their opinion on things they no little to nothing about, they need to sit down and have a conversation with the people they are judging. We all need to sit down and learn. And when I say conversation, I mean ask questions and listen for the answers. Make your whole purpose to learn about the other.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-hate-and-hope-in-thunder-bay-a-city-grapples-with-racism-against/> Accessed May 29, 2020.

Do not assume for a moment that you or I can grasp the depth of their pain, some of it generations in the making.

It is going to be through listening that we learn. When we stop judging people for race, religion, sexual orientation, political views, or country of origin. If you are white then assume that you don't understand and make it your aim to learn. Read a book that informs you, one that is written from the perspective of the oppressed, not one that fits neatly with your already established views.

When I started out preparing for the service this week, I was bemoaning the fact that this Pentecost Sunday, which also happens to be the 111<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church I serve, would be a quiet one. Normally Pentecost is a celebration of the birth of the Christian Church and landing as it did this year, we would have had cake and coffee hour to celebrate our own Christian witness in the City of Thunder Bay. But as the week went on and as I came to write this, I thought lament rather than celebration is the posture that we as the church and as Christians should be taking.

The reading from 1 Corinthians talks about the spiritual gifts that have been given to the church, not just the local church but the world wide church and the individuals within it. The church has been given a variety of gifts, varieties of services, and varieties of activities from the Holy Spirit for the *common good*. All these gifts are activated by the one and the same Spirit, it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone...For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Every person is created in the image of God. It does not matter how you look, if you have a Ph D or have cognitive challenges, whether you can run ten miles or you use a wheel chair. And though many of us think that God must have white skin and that Jesus most certainly did, because of the wonderful paintings of the Renaissance that have influenced our visual memory, then we need to reframe our understanding. If we are made in the image of God then colour, in its infinite shades of glory, from white to the darkest black, is certainly more reflective of God than our limited imaginations.

As a human race we are one body. What happens to one affects the whole. If people are being dehumanized, then we all are. When powerful men think they can take advantage of and demean a woman just because her body has a certain shape, we are all lesser for it. When children are torn from their parents at detention centers, we all lose. When people don't have a home or food, we all suffer. When seniors are neglected, and indigenous woman are murdered or missing, and we find our jails are disproportionately filled with indigenous men rather than giving them an opportunity for restorative justice, we have all failed and need to do better.

We can do better. We are one body in the Spirit. The body has many members. Christ who gave his life for all and particularly cared for the least in society, is our head. Today I implore you to find a way to start looking at your own prejudice and privilege. Find one thing you can do. For me, I will no longer stand quiet when I see or hear injustice in private conversations or out in public. I will face my fear. I am going to find a book to read and invite others to read with me and have conversation. I will look for the face of Christ in each person I encounter. I will find my voice.

I pray that the church, this church of St. Andrew's, and the church world wide will find its voice. I pray that you will find your voice and know that the gifts you bring to your work place, your home, your family, your friends, your gatherings, the church, whatever you do and wherever you are, these are needed. For to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. If you don't share what God has given you to do in the world for the good of all then we all suffer. We all miss out on being the people we are called to be in the world.

Today we lament yet we have hope, and maybe that is a good place to start again, and maybe in time we will come to see change that is a cause for celebration. Pentecost was the moment the Holy Spirit was breathed into people from diverse backgrounds and nations as they stood together. May we be made new today, and in the days to come, with the rush of the winds and breath of Pentecost that all creation and its people of the world may breathe.

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We respond to the words we have heard through, music, the scriptures, and the message, with prayer.

### **Closing Prayer**

Wind of the Spirit, blow through us on this day of Pentecost and renew our faith. Re-awaken our love for God, let your flames warm our hearts with trust in Jesus Christ and dare us to do great things in his name.

Wind of the Spirit, blow through us and give us energy to serve you in Christ's Church.

Open our eyes to recognize needs for ministry and mission.

Open our hearts to welcome newcomers and meet those we don't yet know.

Open our hands to share in the tasks that need doing, and open our lips in prayer and praise.

Wind of the Spirit, blow through us and give us understanding:

For those whose lives seem so different from ours

and those facing situations we've never encountered;

Understanding for those with whom we've disagreed;  
and for problems and challenges we face at home, at work, and in your world.  
We lift up to you the lives that are harmed and even taken by systemic racism.  
Help us to do better Lord, to be made aware of our own prejudices  
and to call, even demand just systems for everyone,  
all genders, all races, all people, all children of God.

Wind of the Spirit, blow through us and bring healing  
for all who face pain or illness, discouragement or disappointment.  
healing for all who know sorrow, sadness or grief,  
and for those who face stress and pressure.  
Bring healing to the earth, to places of upheaval and to ecosystems at risk.

Wind of the Spirit, blow through us and bring us  
the compassion we see in Christ Jesus.  
Blow through us and refresh us as your faithful followers,  
Spirit of Power and Promise,  
blow through us and renew our faith,  
as we are equipped to serve the world you love in his name,  
as together we say the words Jesus taught us.

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## **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 heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen

## **Invitation to make an offering**

Through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit we choose to share an offering of praise, trusting that in so doing our gifts may accomplish surprising things in Jesus' name. We offer ourselves, too, so that our lives may proclaim the Good News with grace and power.

If you desire to make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Thunder Bay please visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

We have been given a ministry, each of us called as individuals and together as the church. We have this ministry and we are not discouraged it is by God's own power that we may live and serve...



1. We have this ministry and we are not discouraged;  
it is by God's own power that we may live and serve.  
Openly we share God's word, speaking truth as we believe,  
praying that the shadowed world may healing light receive.  
We have this ministry; O God, receive our living.
2. O Christ, the tree of life, our end and our beginning,  
we grow to fullest flower when rooted in your love.  
Brothers, sisters, clergy, lay, called to service by your grace,  
different cultures, different gifts, the young and old a place.  
We have this ministry; O God, receive our giving.
3. The yoke of Christ is ours: the whole world is our parish;  
we daily take the cross, the burden and the joy.  
Bearing hurts of those we serve, wounded,  
bruised and bowed with pain,  
Holy Spirit, bread and wine, we die and rise again.  
We have this ministry; O God, receive our loving.

'We have this ministry,' Words by Jim Strathdee © 1979, Desert Flower Music.  
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## **Benediction**

Through all the turnings of time,  
let our actions revolve around the central presence of Christ,  
and let them convey and ongoing return of praise to God.  
May peace dwell in our midst  
and commitment to justice bond us together. Amen.

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