

## Words of Welcome

Today is Pentecost Sunday. A day to celebrate the church, its diversity and the challenges and hope that brings. Join as we look at God's vision for the church and the world. We begin with a call to worship.

## Call to Worship

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. (Acts 2:1-4a)

**Come Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of your faithful people;  
and kindle in us the fire of your love.**

—David Beswick, on [David Beswick's Home page](#).

## Hymn

*I am the church! you are the church!*

**475**

### *Refrain*

*I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together!  
All who follow Jesus, all around the world!  
Yes, we're the church together!*

1. The church is not a building; the church is not a steeple;  
The church is not a resting place; the church is a people.

### *Refrain*

2. We're many kinds of people, with many kinds of faces,  
all colours and all ages, too, from all times and places.

### *Refrain*

3. Sometimes the church is marching; sometimes it's bravely burning;  
sometimes it's riding, sometimes hiding; always it's learning.

### *Refrain*

4. And when the people gather, there's singing and there's praying;  
there's laughing and there's crying sometimes, all of it saying:

### *Refrain*

5. At Pentecost some people received the Holy Spirit  
and told the Good News through the world to all who would hear it.

## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Holy God,  
from our scattered lives we gather to praise you, for you are great and wonderful.  
With joyful hearts, we celebrate the work of your Spirit. At the dawn of creation, you sent your Spirit to bring life.

Over the centuries, your Spirit called your servants to proclaim your love and justice. Through the flames of Pentecost, your Spirit gave birth to the church with energy and wonder. Today, your Spirit is at work in the world, bringing renewal and hope here and everywhere.

**Almighty God,  
you poured out your Spirit to guide your disciples, and empower your church with gifts for ministry. We confess we often resist the Spirit's guidance. The challenge to change makes us uncomfortable. We overlook the gifts others can offer and fail to live out Christ's love for the world.**

**Forgive us, O God.**

Spirit of God,  
at Pentecost you created new understanding among the followers of Jesus.  
Move among us this day and fill us with new understanding of your living Word.  
Energize us bear witness to the world you love.

**Send your Holy Spirit to us again to open our minds and hearts to the challenges in ministry you set before us. Transform us by your Spirit to become more faithful followers of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

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## Assurance of Forgiveness

Hear and believe this promise of the good news:  
If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.  
The old life has passed away and new life has begun.  
Know that in Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!  
You are set free to live life anew in the power of the Spirit.

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## Scripture Reading Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear,

each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” <sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

<sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>‘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. <sup>18</sup>Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup>And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. <sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. <sup>21</sup>Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **Message** Amazed and Astonished

The month of June is upon us. For many, at least here in Northern Ontario, but most of Canada as well, June means planning for summer, whether it be holidays or just warm days on a bench or at a window. The colours of summer are to be enjoyed. It is a time for rest and renewal. If you watch the news, are aware or involved with different groups, you may also know that June in Canada is designated, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Pride Month as well as National Indigenous History Month. If you were living in the U.S., you might also celebrate Immigrant Heritage Month, National Caribbean American Heritage Month and Black Music Month.

Each of these designations celebrate the diversity of our humanity, from gender, to culture, to heritage. These celebrations help us to appreciate what diversity there is in people from their colour, to how they experience the world, their music, their food, and so much more. Diversity is a gift given to us. Sadly, we often see diversity as a threat, something to be feared. We see difference instead of diversity. Difference makes us adversaries. Diversity, when celebrated, brings unity.

Today is also a celebration of our creation through World Environment Day. The diversity of the environment from mountains to rain forest, desert to streams, oceans, plant, birds, and animals, all show the diversity of a creator who did not need everything to be the same in order for there to be meaning, purpose, beauty, even if it can also bring challenge and struggle.

Today also marks the third festival in the Feast of Weeks, the Jewish Festival of Shavuot. This Jewish holiday occurs on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan. In the Bible, Shavuot marked the wheat harvest in the land of Israel. A Jewish holiday that has double significance, it marks the wheat harvest and commemorates the anniversary of the day when the Jews received the Torah at Mount Sinai. The day is also called Pentecost by those who celebrate the Jewish Festival.

When we look at the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the people gathered in Jerusalem in the New Testament, we miss that this story is told on the day of Pentecost for the Jewish faith. The early Christians, used the name Pentecost to mark the birth of the Christian church. The Jewish faith commemorates the anniversary of the day when they received the Torah, and we celebrate when the church received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Torah is also important to us as to it belongs the first five books of the Old Testament, the law of God as revealed to Moses.

Another connection that you may not have caught between this very Christian experience and the Hebrew scriptures is that when Peter starts to preach, he is using words from the prophet Joel. He says so himself at verse 16 and then reciting Joel says, <sup>17</sup>'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. <sup>18</sup>Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy...<sup>21</sup>Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

What is striking about this text is that the prophecy from Joel was all about the diversity of people who will receive and call on God's name, and that in Acts the people gathered in Jerusalem were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. We heard the names of the many people and their backgrounds within the reading. And when the Holy Spirit came calling attention to its presence...to God's presence in that moment...with what sounded like the rush of a violent wind and then an unexplainable visual described as divided tongues, as of fire, appearing among them and a tongue resting on each of the Christians gather in a house, it caused all of them to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.

We are told that the languages they spoke allowed for the people gathered, who were originally from many different places, to hear about "God's deeds of power" each in their own language and it was amazing, but also astonishing and perplexing. So perplexing that the Christians were accused of being drunk at 9:00 in the morning. So unexpected and unexplainable was the experience that people were perplexed and astonished. Still, that did not stop those hearing their language being spoke from being amazed.

Here was diversity in all its glorious abundance. The diversity of people and language could have been a dividing and defining factor in how people lived together, experienced the world together, but in God's world this experience showed that God did not expect every one to be the same, in was a defining factor in a new way. God's word was brought

to people in their diversity of language and experience. Through the Holy Spirit, God brought unity as people heard about God's deeds of power in their own language.

Think about what it feels like to hear your own language if you are traveling. You don't have to go far. I remember Ken and I travelling from Toronto to Thunder Bay and stopping in communities in Northern Ontario where the language spoken is French. Neither of us speak French, so even ordering a hamburger was challenging in one fast food restaurant. On another trip, when visiting Quebec City, it was a relief when the waiter spoke to us in English. Not that we were not enjoying the diversity, but to understand in our own language was so meaningful. There is comfort and assurance in hearing our own language. I think it may have been that way for those who heard the message of God in their own language. It is why the work of translating the Bible is so important for people.

But the knowledge of God in our world, of God's deeds of power, allows us to learn about Jesus and his teaching, preaching, healing, death, resurrection, and ascension, that was all for us. It is here that we learn of how to love one another in our diversity, to celebrate it, and continue Christ's work in the world. As Christians we can celebrate Pride Month and Indigenous History month, looking first at how we have not shown God's love to both those groups of people, acknowledging that, and then doing all we can to show and be God's love in the world.

Pentecost is about diversity; it is about how the image of God is found in people and places very different from ourselves. As Michael Jinkins writes in a commentary, "the image of God is not something that adheres to the singular individual, as though God were a windowless monad, singular and distant, in whose image we were created in arrogant isolation. The image of God in which we were created is the image of the triune God of grace."<sup>1</sup>

Our God is one in which people of different backgrounds, whether it be heritage, gender, race, economic standing, or ability, are celebrated as made in the image of God. May we spend today and the days to come celebrating our diversity as made in the image of God. May we learn from and love one another as Christ loved us. All have value, all are made in the image of God. As the church on this Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the abundance of God in humanity and in creation and may our words and actions of love once again amaze and astonish the world.

## **Prayers of the People**

Wind of the Spirit,

blow through us on this day of Pentecost and renew our faith.

Re-awaken our love for God and strengthen our fellowship after the challenges of the pandemic. Let your flames warm our hearts with trust in Jesus Christ

and hope for the future he will create. Dare us to do great things in his name.

Wind of the Spirit, **Enliven us and renew our faith.**

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<sup>1</sup> Jinkins, Michael. *Feasting on the Word: Year C Volume 3 Pentecost and Season After Pentecost*. Editors David L. Bartlett, and Barbara Brown Taylor. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville. 2010. P.18.

Wind of the Spirit,  
blow through us and renew our energy to serve you in Christ's Church.  
Open our eyes to recognize needs for ministry and mission in changing times.  
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, **Enliven us and renew our energy.**

Wind of the Spirit,  
blow through us and give us new understanding for those whose lives seem so  
different from ours, and for those facing situations we've never encountered.

For those with whom we've disagreed  
and for those whose values challenge our expectations.

For problems and challenges we face at home or at work  
and for the complex issues we face in your world.

Wind of the Spirit, **Enliven us and give us new understanding.**

Wind of the Spirit,  
blow through us and bring us healing and peace  
For all who face pain or illness, discouragement or disappointment.

Bring healing for all who know sorrow, sadness or grief

Bring healing for those who face stress and pressure

Bring healing for places in the world facing conflict  
and for the creation struggling for life itself

Wind of the Spirit, **Enliven us and bring healing and peace.**

Wind of the Spirit,  
Blow through us and bring us the wisdom and compassion we see in Christ Jesus.  
Blow through us and equip us to serve the world you love in his name.  
Blow through the General Assembly meeting this week  
and inspire the debates and decisions of the commissioners.  
Blow through our whole church and refresh us as your faithful people  
as together we say the words Jesus taught us:

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## **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.**

## **Invitation to the offering**

Pentecost celebrates the gifts of the Spirit poured out on the Church, preparing Christ's followers to serve him. An offering today will build up the ministry and mission of Christ's Church here and everywhere in his name.

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## Hymn

*O Breath of life, come sweeping through us*

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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.
4. O Tongues of fire, come rest upon us,  
so we may speak your word aright;  
kindle the flame of love among us;  
equip your church to spread the light.

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## Benediction

As you enter a new week,  
may you experience God's presence.  
May you feel God pouring out the Holy Spirit  
over your heads and your thoughts and the words of your lips,  
over your hearts and your feelings and emotions  
and your compassion for all others,  
and over your hands and your feet  
as you put into action all that God commands you.

During this week,  
may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with each of you; Amen.

~ posted on the **Presbyterian Church of Canada** website. <http://presbyterian.ca/worship/>