

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
Pentecost Sunday – May 28, 2023

Call to Worship

Breathe upon us, Holy Spirit,
and inspire our thoughts and actions.

Stir in our hearts, Holy Spirit,
and fill us with energy to spread joy in the world.

Breathe upon us, Holy Spirit,
and refresh our commitment to serve.

Stir in our hearts, Holy Spirit,
as we worship and witness to God's coming reign.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. The Day of Pentecost. May 28, 2023. Year A.

***Hymn** I am the church! You are the church!

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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.

Refrain

"I am the church," words by Richard Avery & Donald Marsh © 1972 Hope Publishing
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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Spirit of God,
your energy moves in us and through us to face each new day.
You are as close to us as our breath, giving us life.
You refresh us like the breeze on a warm afternoon.
You challenge us like a strong wind, rousing our attention.
Holy Spirit, open our eyes to the wonder of God's mystery,
and open our hearts to the warmth of Christ's mercy.
To you, with God our Creator and Christ our Redeemer,
we offer our prayers and praise in love and loyalty.
Make us one in worship and witness by your grace and power.

**God of wind and flame,
at Pentecost your Spirit inspired Jesus' followers to dare great things in his name. But we confess that we lack daring and ignore the flame of your Spirit among us. Forgive us for the sins we have committed by our actions and the sins we have committed by failing to act. Send the Spirit to blow on the embers of our faith and reignite us for mission and ministry. Amen.**

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Assurance of Forgiveness

The mercy of our God is from everlasting to everlasting. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free to live in the renewing power of the Spirit. Thanks be to God for this most generous gift.

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Scripture Reading Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ “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.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

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Message Come, O Holy Spirit, come.

Fire has no shape or substance. You can't taste it or smell it or hear it. You can't touch it except at great risk. You can't weigh it or measure it or examine it with instruments. You can never grasp it in its fullness because it never stands still. Yet there is no mistaking its extraordinary power.

The fire that sweeps through miles of forest like a terrible wind and the flickering candle that lights the old woman's way to bed. The burning logs on the subzero night that save the pipes from freezing and give summer dreams to the tabby dozing on the hearth. Even from millions of miles away, the conflagration of the sun that can turn green earth into desert and strike blind any who fail to lower their gaze before it. The power of fire to devastate and consume utterly. The power of fire to purify by leaving nothing in its wake but a scattering of ash that the wind blows away like mist.

A pillar of fire was what led the children of Israel through the wilderness, and it was from a burning bush that God first spoke to Moses. There were tongues of fire leaping up from the disciples on the day of Pentecost. In John's apocalypse it is a lake of fire that the damned are cast into, and Faithful and True himself, he says, has eyes of fire as he sits astride his white horse.

In the pages of Scripture, fire is holiness, and perhaps never more hauntingly than in the little charcoal fire that Jesus of Nazareth, newly risen from the dead, kindles for cooking his friends' breakfast on the beach at daybreak.¹

These words were written by Frederick Buechner in his book called *Beyond Words*. At a time when Alberta has been and is still in places, under threat of fire, one can feel and see the power of fire. We have seen it previously in BC and in wildfires in the southern states.

In the scripture reading from Acts we hear that the Holy Spirit came from heaven “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.” (v2-4)

Today is Pentecost Sunday. We often forget, if we even knew it, that this holy day is ancient. Jeremy Williams writes on a website called Working Preacher that, “Pentecost is a harvest festival where families bring the first fruits of their harvest in anticipation of God blessing the remainder of the harvest (Exodus 23:16; Deuteronomy 26:5-11). This made Pentecost already symbolically rich for imagining the beginning of a bountiful ingathering, but in Acts’ case what was reaped was not produce, but people.”²

Some churches celebrate Pentecost as the birthday of the church. It is when the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Jesus, was given to the people...to the church, as a gift of Jesus. Yet to stop here takes away the continuing power of the Spirit to be active in a vibrant and energizing way in the world here and now. The Holy Spirit did not enter people on that day over two thousand years ago and then say, “Okay, ride that wave.” No. The Holy Spirit is as active as ever.

With the decline in worship attendance and the number of people who say they are of no faith community or done with the Christian faith, it would be easy to think that God’s Spirit is not as powerful as in the days of the early church. But that just is not the case. I do wonder if we have become desensitized to the work of the Spirit in the church, in us, and in the world. It is so easy to go along with the world’s evaluation of the church, but we are called to something more and different.

On the day of Pentecost God’s people were gathered as they had done for centuries and something incredible happened...God’s Spirit descended on the people. In that moment people from all different places who were there to celebrate the feast, many speaking languages other than Hebrew or Greek, heard people speaking about God’s deeds of power in their own language. (vs 10-11)

¹ Buechner, Frederick. *BEYOND WORDS* (2004) DAILY READING IN THE ABC'S OF FAITH.

[Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustration: Fire | Day 1](#). Accessed May 26, 2023.

²[Jeremy L. Williams](#)

[Commentary on Acts 2:1-21 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#) Accessed May 26, 2023.

It was so overwhelming, so confusing, and chaos causing, that those who could suddenly speak in other languages were accused of being drunk. Peter, standing with the eleven disciples, those who were left after Jesus' death and resurrection, brings things to order and quotes the prophet Joel of the Old Testament. Those words of the Old Testament were for them the only scriptures of the people of that time and Peter interprets through Joel what is happening.

What is also wonderfully mind boggling given the times, was that the Holy Spirit descended on everyone, was given to everyone regardless of gender or generation, social or economic standing. Men, women, children, elderly, slaves and free, it did not matter. The Spirit was given to all. It was amazing. Yet, even now we like to think that the Spirit is only for some.

We like to limit the Holy Spirit to moving and being in the world in ways that fit our mold. Still, imagine it. The Holy Spirit coming into our church, into churches, and blowing through us, inspiring us, but not only us. Suddenly those who sit on our steps have the gifts of the Spirit, those who are down trodden, homeless, drug addicted are given new life because of the Holy Spirit. Each of us given the opportunity interpret in ways that are meaning to others the gifts of God, the story of Jesus, the transforming experience of the Holy Spirit at work.

There is a hymn from Nigeria that we sing, the song, translated into English is...

Come, O Holy Spirit come.
Come, Almighty Spirit come.
Come, come, come.³

What would it create in us to sing those words in a meaningful way. To sing them remembering the power of the Holy Spirit to change everything. Expecting that something incredible is possible.

In a podcast I listened to, Professor Matt Skinner says, "Pentecost is a time where God breaks into the world through the Spirit and sets the church on a new course or new discovery of what God is making possible through Jesus."⁴

All of the churches I am working with currently and particularly this congregation of St. Andrew's Thunder Bay, all are working to interpret and experience how God is calling us to be in the world right now. Yet when we do this work, it is easy to forget that God is already doing God's thing through the Holy Spirit. We, as the church and individuals are invited into that work, but it will only happen when we pray, when we trust that God is still God, and that Jesus is still present through the power of the Holy Spirit.

³ Words: Church of Lord (Aladura), Nigeria; English, I-to Loh. Music: Church of the Lord (Aladura), Nigeria, I-to Loh, as taught by Samuel Solanke. Words and Music Copyright World Council of Churches and the Asian Institute for Liturgy and Music, 1986.

⁴ [Sermon Brainwave 905: Day of Pentecost - May 28, 2023 - YouTube](#)

If we try to do this work of being the people of God in the world today without looking to the Holy Spirit, praying for the Holy Spirit to enter into us and our churches, we will miss out on the very thing God knows we can do.

Peter talks about prophesying. To prophesy is not to be able to predict the future, rather it is about how we might glimpse how God is in the world today. It is to look at ourselves in our own time, to look at the world today and interpret together how God is in the world now and how God is showing up, at work, and still building community, healing, feeding, loving all people and then how we might and can be a part of that.

Rather than being afraid of our future as a church and as community, may we trust God to be faithful, present, and inviting us to make connections of love, hope, promise, forgiveness, while becoming communities of welcome and places where all can become whole and restored. Where the fire of holiness is burning.

Come, O Holy Spirit come.
Come, Almighty Spirit come.
Come, come, come.

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. Let your flames warm our hearts with trust in Jesus Christ and dare us to do great things in his name.

Spirit of Power and Promise,
Blow through us and renew our faith.

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, and to equip us to meet new challenges in ways we haven't dared before. Open our hearts to lives caught up in stressful situations. 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; for those with whom we've disagreed; and for the challenges facing our community and your creation in these complex times.

Wind of the Spirit, blow through us and bring healing for all who face pain or illness, discouragement or disappointment, for all who know sorrow, sadness or grief, and for those who face pressures coping with the cost of living. 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, equipped to serve the world you love in his name, as together we say the words he taught us:

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

At Pentecost, the gifts of the Spirit poured out on the Church, preparing Christ's followers to serve him in the world. We offer our gifts to God so the service of the Church will continue to flourish wherever the Spirit leads.

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If you consider St. Andrew's your church, regardless of where you live, would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Hymn

Joyful, joyful we adore you

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1. Joyful, joyful we adore you,
God of glory, Lord of love.
Hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
drive the dark of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.
2. All your works with joy surround you;
earth and heaven reflect your rays;
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
join to praise you joyfully.
3. You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blessed,
wellspring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest,
God Creator, Christ our Saviour,
all are yours who live in love.
Teach us how to love our neighbour;
lift us to your joy above.
4. Morning stars, awake the chorus;
mortals, join with every part,
for what joy is set before us
as Christ's love joins heart to heart!
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music leads us sunward,
in the triumph song of life.

Words and Music: public domain

Benediction

Go in the strength of the Spirit,
to greet those you meet with gifts of understanding and friendship.
And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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