

Welcome to  
**TRINITY METHODIST CHURCH**  
**CLIVE SQUARE, NAPIER**

**Sunday May 31st 2020.**  
**Pentecost**

**Worship Leader: Rev Lynne Frith**

**PREPARATION AND WELCOME**



*Welcome to Trinity Church at home.*

*This worship resource is for you to use at home. While we continue to be a dispersed congregation, we are united in spirit, one body in Christ.*

*As we accustom ourselves to this Level 2 phase of pandemic response, appreciative of a freedom we once took for granted, yet also cautious and mindful of the restrictions, there is nothing that separates us from the love of God made real to us in the person of Jesus.*

*It's a fitting coincidence that Samoan Language Week concludes today, the festival of Pentecost.*

Malo e lelei! Talofa lava! Ni sa bula Vinaka! Kia ora! Greetings!

All are welcome to join in this time of prayer.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

No great flowing fabrics of red  
Or crowds of candles in the sanctuary,  
yet this is still the day we celebrate  
Grace's breath shattering the shutters of our hearts.

**On this day, clad in our pyjamas, sitting at home  
may we continue to let the Spirit  
of new life breathe upon us!**

Scattered as we are,  
we gather in spirit with our sisters and brothers,  
proclaiming that we are God's Pentecost.

**On this day, we would touch all  
who remain in different kinds of isolation, 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 as restrictions continue to be reduced, as we hope they will,  
people will find a community awaiting them,  
doors open once more, and a joyful welcome.**

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**SING**      Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.      H&P 295

Spirit of the living god,  
Fall afresh on me.  
Break me, melt me, Mould me, fill me,  
Spirit of the living God,  
Fall afresh on me.

#### PENTECOSTAL PRAYER

*Wild spirit of wind and flame –  
You whip up our sometimes humdrum lives  
from out of their complacency!  
You fall upon us in unexpected moments:  
turning grief into laughter;  
confusion into motivation.  
You surround us in our rush of activities  
and settle upon us in our stillness.  
And, in all, you ever entwine  
Your holy breath with our breaths.*

*You surround us even now, O Spirit,  
offering us peace for our lives,  
pushing us out of our comforts,  
healing us with your hope,  
loving us -  
for you are the movement of our lives  
as we seek to embody your peace on earth,  
you are the power behind our every deed and word*

-Sharon Benton in 'From the Psalms to the Cloud'

READINGS	Acts 2:1-21 John 20:19-23	(page 149) (page 146)
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## CONTEMPORARY READING      'Song to the Holy Spirit'

*Lord, Holy Spirit,  
You blow like the wind in a thousand paddocks,  
Inside and outside the fences,  
You blow where you wish to blow.*

*Lord, Holy Spirit,  
You are the sun, who shines on the little plant,  
You warm him gently, you give him life,  
You raise him up to become a tree with many leaves.*

*Lord, Holy Spirit,  
You are as the mother eagle with her young,  
Holding them in peace under your feathers.  
On the highest mountain you have built your nest,  
Above the valley, above the storms of the world,  
Where no hunter ever comes.*

*Lord, Holy Spirit,  
You are the bright cloud in whom we hide,  
In whom we know already that the battle has been won.  
You bring us to our Brother Jesus  
To rest our heads upon his shoulder.*

*Lord, Holy Spirit,  
You are the kind fire who does not cease to burn,  
Consuming us with flames of love and peace,  
Driving us out like sparks to set the world on fire.*

*Lord, Holy Spirit,  
In the love of friends you are building a new house,  
Heaven is with us when you are with us.  
You are singing your song in the hearts of the poor.  
Guide us, wound us, heal us. Bring us to the Father.*

*James K. Baxter*

## REFLECTION

I was so moved by this essay from Debie Thomas on the Journey with Jesus website, that I want to share it with you in its entirety, rather than try to summarise it. Debie writes from the USA context where people are still in lockdown, whereas we are experiencing a degree of freedom and have moved out of complete isolation.

I Will Pour Out My Spirit By Debie Thomas.

*"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place."* This is the opening sentence of our reading from the book of Acts, and I have to confess, it makes me sad. In a literal sense, many of us can't relate to what the sentence describes. Because of Covid-19, it is not prudent for us to be "together in one place." We're confined to our homes, we can't gather for prayer and fellowship, and we don't know when we'll share bread and wine again around a common table. It feels difficult to contemplate togetherness — much less celebrate a great feast day like Pentecost — in this context.

But in another sense, we *are* in one place. We are in a hard place. A hollow place. A place of vulnerability and grief. We are together in our uncertainty. Together in our loss. Together in our hopes and fears. Across all sorts of distances — geographical, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic — we are bound together as one people, one humanity, one planet, facing a common threat that knows no borders. Like the disciples in our Gospel reading for this week, we are huddled together behind locked doors, waiting for Jesus to come among us and say, "Peace be with you." Waiting for him to breathe on us. Waiting for him to speak the words we need so desperately: "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*"

Pentecost — from the Greek pentekostos, meaning "fiftieth," was a Jewish festival celebrating the spring harvest, and the revelation of the law at Mount Sinai. In the New Testament Pentecost story Luke tells, the Holy Spirit descended on 120 believers in Jerusalem on the fiftieth day after Jesus's resurrection. The Spirit empowered them to testify to God's saving work, emboldened the apostle Peter to preach to a bewildered crowd of Jewish skeptics, and drew three thousand converts from around the known world in one day. For many Christians, Pentecost marks the birthday of the Church.

The story Luke describes is a fantastical one, full of details that challenge the imagination. Tongues of fire. Rushing wind. Bold preaching. Mass baptism. But at its heart, the Pentecost story is not about spectacle and drama. It's about the Holy Spirit showing up and transforming ordinary, imperfect, frightened people into the Body of Christ. It's about God disrupting and disorienting our humdrum ways of engaging the sacred, so that something new and holy can be born within and among us. It's about the Spirit carrying us out of suspicion, tribalism, and fear, into a radical new way of engaging God and our neighbor.

Luke tells us that the disciples were "filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability." "At this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each."

Those of us who speak more than one language might be the best equipped to grasp the import of this miraculous moment. Those of us who are bilingual (or better yet, well versed in many languages) understand implicitly that a language equals far more than the sum of its grammar, vocabulary, and syntax.

Languages carry the full weight of their respective cultures, histories, psychologies, and spiritualities. To speak one language as opposed to another is to orient oneself differently in the world — to see differently, hear differently, process and punctuate reality differently. To speak across barriers of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, culture, or politics is to challenge stereotype and risk ridicule. To attempt one language as opposed to another is to make oneself a learner, a servant, a supplicant. It is a brave and disorienting act.

Has there ever been a time when we've needed such brave, border-crossing acts more acutely than we do right now? As the world grows more and more tribal; as nations, cities, and even faith communities turn on each other out of suspicion and selfishness; as we're forced by the pandemic to physically separate from those around us, can it be that God desires to pour out the Holy Spirit on us, so that we might learn new and life-giving ways of being the Church, being the Body, being Love incarnate for a frightened and imperiled world? What languages do we need to speak right now that we've never spoken before? Where does the fire need to fall, to burn away all that hinders us from being bearers of Good News in this dark time?

When the disciples and their friends began to speak in foreign languages, the crowds gathered outside their meeting place understood them. And *this* — the *fact of their comprehension* — was what confused them. They were not confused by the message itself; the message came through with perfect clarity in their respective languages.

What the crowds found baffling was that God would condescend to speak to them in their own mother-tongues. That he would welcome them so intimately, with words and expressions hearkening back to their birthplaces, their childhoods, their beloved cities, countries, and cultures of origin. As if to say, "This Spirit-drenched place, this fledgling church, this new Body of Christ, is yours. You don't have to feel like outsiders here; we speak your language, too. Come in. Come in and feel at home."

As Christians, we place great stock in language. In words. Like our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, we are People of the Book. We love the creation stories of Genesis, in which God births the very cosmos into existence by speaking: "And God said." "In the beginning was the Word," we read in John's dazzling poem about the Incarnate Christ. On Sunday mornings, we profess our faith in the languages of liturgy, creed, prayer, and music. In short, we believe that language has power. Words make worlds. And unmake them, too.

What I love about the words and languages unleashed at Pentecost is that their articulation required surrender and humility on *both* sides. Those who spoke had to brave languages far beyond their comfort zones. They had to risk vulnerability in the face of difference, and do so with no guarantee of welcome. They had to trust that no matter how awkward, inadequate, or silly they felt, the words bubbling up inside of them — new words, strange words, scary words — were nevertheless *essential* words — words precisely ordained for the time and place they occupied.

Meanwhile, the crowds who listened had to take risks as well. They had to suspend disbelief, drop their cherished defenses, and opt for wonder instead of contempt. They had to widen their inner circles, and welcome strangers with accents into their midst.

Not all of them managed it — some sneered because they couldn't bear to be bewildered, to have their neat categories of belonging and exclusion explode in their faces. Instead, like their ancestors at Babel, who scattered at the first sign of difference, they retreated into the well-worn narrative of denial:

"Nothing new is happening here. This isn't God. These are blubbering idiots who've had too much to drink."

But even in that atmosphere of suspicion and cynicism, some people spoke, and some people listened, and into those astonishing exchanges, God breathed fresh life.

Something happens when we speak each other's languages. We experience the limits of our own words and perspectives. We learn curiosity. We discover that God's "great deeds" are far too nuanced for a single tongue, a single fluency.

I hope that the Pentecost story compels us, because it's a story for *this* time, *this* moment. As we continue to face the coronavirus pandemic as people of faith, we will be tempted to grow complacent, or to despair, or to turn in on ourselves and forget that we are part of a much larger whole. We live in a world where words have become toxic, where the languages of so many cherished "isms" threaten to divide and destroy us. The troubles of our day are global, civilizational, catastrophic. If we don't learn the art of speaking across the borders that currently separate us, we will burn ourselves down to ash.

It is no small thing that the Holy Spirit loosened tongues to break down barriers on the birthday of the Church. In the face of difference, God compelled his people to engage. In the face of fear, Jesus breathed forth peace. Out of the heart of deep difference, God birthed the Church. So happy birthday, sisters and brothers. Receive the Holy Spirit. Together, may we grow into all that Christ longs to pour into us, his Body.

## PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND FOR THE WORLD

*After the words "come, Holy Spirit", you are invited to say "renew the whole creation"*

On our world and its pain and uncertainty,

Come, Holy Spirit.

On our country, our government, and our civic leaders,

Come, Holy Spirit.

On this city in which we live,

On those who provide services that keep us safe and well,

Come Holy Spirit.

On those who are frightened, unwell, alone, nervous about going out,

Come, Holy Spirit.  
On those who are in quarantine, isolation, waiting to be reunited with loved ones,  
Come, Holy Spirit.  
On our church, the covenanting inner city churches, and the church throughout the world,  
Come, Holy Spirit.  
On each of us, wherever we are,  
Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.  
We gather together our spoken and unspoken prayers as we pray as Jesus taught us,  
**THE LORD'S PRAYER** spoken in the language of our choice

#### **Hymn** COME DOWN, O LOVE DIVINE. H&P 281

*This is one of my favourite Holy Spirit hymns. It was written by Bianco da Siena, an Italian poet and woolworker in the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Not much is known about him, other than that he joined a religious order of laymen. A collection of his writings was published in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ralph Vaughan Williams' beautiful tune Down Ampney adds richness to the poetry.*

The choir of King's College, Cambridge sings it on  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HPKL1wOVXk>

#### **SENDING**

The shutters of our hearts have been flung open  
by the fresh breath of God!  
**We will go to offer God's love to everyone around us  
even if only from our living room or porch.**  
Our souls have been set on fire  
by the justice of the Brother of the poor.  
**We will go to share visions of hope,  
to listen to the dreams of the oppressed,  
even if only through social media,  
a text, or a phone conversation.**  
Our loneliness and fears will be set aside  
by the Spirit of inclusion creating community.  
**We will speak words of peace to all we meet**

**even while maintaining a safe distance,  
we will open ourselves to the gifts of others  
even as we cocoon in place because we love them.**

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**BLESSING** *We offer each other a blessing as we say*

**Ia ia te I tatou uma lava le alofa tunua o lo tatou Alii o Iesu Keriso, ma le  
alofa o le Atua, atoa me le mafutaga ma le Agaga Paia. Amene**

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the community of  
the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.**



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**The Methodist Church of New Zealand  
Te Haahi Weteriana o Aotearoa**

**The Mission of Trinity Methodist Church, Napier  
is to demonstrate God's unconditional love through friendship, outreach  
and service in the community.**