

Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020

Hello Emmanuel. Happy Pentecost and Happy Birthday Church! We celebrate today the gift of the Spirit and the birth of the church on that day through the Spirit-empowered witness of the first followers of Jesus. The Spirit has come! He has come indeed!

Can we say that together? The Spirit has come! He has come indeed!

We gather each week to imagine what our lives can be like because Jesus is Lord, and we believe he is at work in our world, making all things new. So we gather to be reminded of who he is, King of Kings and Lord of Lords; we gather to be reminded of who we are as his beloved children, and who together we can be as a community seeking his kingdom and pursuing his righteousness and justice in the world.

And the role of the Spirit is to draw our attention to Jesus, to open our eyes to see Jesus, to enlighten our understanding, to inspire our imagination with visions of Jesus, so we can become the people of Jesus as his life is formed in us. Dale Bruner refers to the Spirit as “the shy member of the Trinity.” The Spirit does not call attention to himself; he calls attention to Jesus. J. I. Packer says that the Spirit is like a hidden spotlight that shines on Jesus. The Spirit never says, “Look at me, but look at him!” And as Jesus himself says in John 16:14, speaking of the Spirit whom he would send, “He will glorify me...”

As we give thanks today for the gift of the Spirit and the gift of the Church that he brought into existence, may we be strengthened and renewed by him to live in Jesus, to stay rooted in Jesus, so his life can be known more fully in us and among us. The Spirit has come. May we welcome his presence and receive his gifts.

We received word this past Friday from the government that churches can reopen on June 8 with gatherings of up to 30 persons. Over the next week or so, I will be discussing with the staff and elders what that means for us as a church family. We will likely wait until we can re-gather with a higher number of people and will keep you posted on that.

Next Sunday afternoon, June 7, I will be hosting a membership class on Zoom at 3:30pm. If you are interested in learning about membership at Emmanuel, and would like to join me for that class, please send me an email so I can send you the login information. My email is [bgibson@ebap.ca](mailto:bgibson@ebap.ca).

And finally, please remember to check our website, [www.ebap.ca](http://www.ebap.ca), as well as the weekly email Jan sends out on Monday, for ways to connect and keep up to date during this time of physical distancing. Let us keep connected to Jesus and to each other even as we continue to remain apart.

The Spirit has come! He has come indeed!

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Come, Holy Spirit:  
breathe into our prayers  
your breath of life.

Come, Holy Spirit:  
fan the flame of love within us,  
and draw us into the life of God:  
Father, Son, and Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit:  
renew us and revive us,  
that in our worship and in our living,  
we may live a life of love  
for the praise and glory of God.

Baptist Union of Great Britain

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## Everything We Need

In the morning Lord we do look to You  
for the strength we need just to make it through  
Have mercy

In the evening Lord we look back and say  
it was in Your strength that we made our way  
Have mercy

You are everything we need  
feed us Lord  
You are everything we need  
feed us Lord

Gord Johnson

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Let's spend a few moments in prayer. After each section there is space for silence, in which you can voice your own prayers.

Gracious God, rejoicing in your blessings,  
trusting in your loving care for all,  
we bring to you our prayers for the world.

We pray for the created world:  
for those who rebuild where things have been destroyed;  
for those who fight hunger, poverty, and disease;  
for those who have power to bring change for the better and to renew hope.  
Lord, hear our prayers...

Silence

We pray for our country:  
for those in leadership;  
who frame our laws and shape our common life;  
who keep the peace and administer justice;  
for those who teach and those who heal  
for all who serve the community  
Lord, hear our prayers...

Silence

We pray for people in need:  
those for whom life is a bitter struggle;  
those whose lives are clouded by death or loss,  
by pain or disability, by discouragement or fear,  
by shame or rejection.  
Lord, hear our prayers...

Silence

We pray for those in the circle of friendship and love around us:  
children and parents; sisters and brothers; friends and neighbours;  
and for those especially in our thoughts today...  
Lord, hear our prayers...

Silence

We pray for the church in its stand with the poor,  
in its love for the outcast and the ashamed,  
in its service to the sick and the neglected,  
in its proclamation of the Gospel,  
in this land and in this place.  
Lord, hear our prayers...

Silence

Eternal God:  
we entrust to you our prayers,  
the spoken and the silent,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be all praise and glory for ever.  
Amen

Baptist Union of Great Britain

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## Beautiful Things

All this pain  
I wonder if I'll ever find my way  
I wonder if my life could really change, at all  
All this earth  
could all that is lost ever be found  
could a garden come out from this ground, at all

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us

All around  
hope is springing up from this old ground  
out of chaos life is being found, in you

You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of the dust  
You make beautiful things  
You make beautiful things out of us

Lisa Gungor  
Michael Gungor

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On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

They were completely amazed.

“How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages!

We are from Parthia, Media, and Elam; from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia; from Pontus and Asia, from Phrygia and Pamphylia, from Egypt and the regions of Libya near Cyrene. Some of us are from Rome, both Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism, and some of us are from Crete and Arabia—yet all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!”

Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other, “What does this mean?” But others made fun of the believers, saying, “These people are drunk!”

Acts 2:1-13

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As Brendon mentioned at the beginning of the liturgy, today is Pentecost Sunday. It's a day to consider, with heightened intentionality, the coming of the Holy Spirit and to ask ourselves the same question those at the first Pentecost asked, 'What does this mean?' As with many of the post resurrection accounts, over time we have become familiar with these stories. In an information kind of way we know this stuff and so at times, at least for me, in this familiarity our minds have a tendency to skim through the accounts and simply arrive at the endings. Like today for instance, there is no secret, no cliff-hanger ending, no new information. Just as Jesus promised the Spirit came.

In an effort to keep myself from skimming through details, I have been working at is putting myself into the stories as if I were there. Trying to see and hear and feel and live into these accounts through the eyes and ears and hearts of those who experienced these unfolding events in real time. As we explore Pentecost today, maybe we can join together in trying to put ourselves into this story and see what we discover.

As we begin, let's back things up just a little bit so that we can get into the context of what has lead up to this day. We'll pick things up on the last occasion where Jesus met

up with his disciples. This occurred on a hill just outside of Jerusalem near the village of Bethany. There we'll join the disciples and Jesus. As with all of the post resurrection accounts we carry with us excitement, and fear, and doubts, and questions, and love. So here we are...

In this last moment together, Jesus is asking the disciples to keep telling his story all over the country and beyond. He also reminded them to wait for the gift of the Spirit. Of course the disciples were a little confused as to what the intent of the gift of the Spirit would be, and asked Jesus if that's when the Roman Empire would be overthrown and the kingdom of Israel be restored. Jesus didn't really answer their question with any clarity. He only said that they would receive power, and that things would work out according to a timeline set by his Father in heaven. Before the disciples were able to ask any more questions, Jesus began to ascend into the sky and was engulfed by a cloud. He was present, then he drifted upward, and then disappeared.

For sure this was a mind-bending experience for the disciples, (as it would be for us as well). After this happened, they stared intently into the sky trying to make sense of it all. Eventually, after a visit by a couple of angels, the disciples collect themselves and return to Jerusalem. Once back, they immediately gather some of the other followers of Jesus, including his mother and some of the other women, and meet in an upper room of house. Here they begin their waiting – praying, and trying to figure out what was next, visiting the temple, returning to the upper room of the house, and more waiting.

Now while this group is waiting in the upper room there are Jews were arriving in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost.

Just before we get more fully into the story, I just want to give a little background as to what Pentecost meant for the Jews. The word Pentecost comes from a Greek word meaning fifty. Greek-speaking Jews had begun using the phrase 'fiftieth day' to refer to Jewish holiday called the Festival of Weeks. Moses gave instructions to the people of Israel to count fifty days from the end of Passover and then present an offering of new grain to God. While the holiday was originally a harvest festival, there was always a subtext connected to gratitude and thanksgiving to God for delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Over time, the holiday grew to become a calling together of the Jewish people to remember the law being given at Mount Sinai. So Jerusalem was filled with Jews from many different regions and countries who had made their way to the city to take part in the festival of Pentecost.

That's the backdrop to this story. In one area Jews are getting ready for the festival of Pentecost and in the upper room the group with the disciples are praying.

So back to our story It's about nine o'clock on the morning of Pentecost. (In the story we are told it's the third hour – three hours after sunrise, which was traditionally thought of as six am.)

As the group in the upper room is praying there is suddenly a very loud sound of rushing wind – a violent wind. I grew up in an area where we frequently had tornadoes I kind of associate this description with that sound. Gusting wind and the low rumble that would shake our house. In any case, it's not a gentle breeze – it's a big noise and it fills the entire room. Then what appeared to be tongues of fire or flames of fire descend and rest on the heads of every person in the room.

Now remember that in the Old Testament wind and fire were both indicators of the Spirit of God. The Hebrew word for breath, spirit, and wind all come from the same word. So in this context the wind is an indicator of the breath of God – the Spirit of God. The association with flames of fire resting on their heads is a reminder of things like God speaking from a burning bush, or how God led the Israelites from Egypt in the form a pillar of fire at night.

Here, the Holy Spirit descends and rests on the people praying in the upper room. And not just rests on the people – the people are filled with the Spirit. The Spirit of God takes residence in humanity.

Traditionally, the Jews understood God's presence to reside in the physical Temple so this blows everything up. The residence of the Spirit is no longer a removed place that the people have to travel to. Instead the Spirit comes to the people and makes its dwelling place within humans. Humans become living temples for the Spirit. The separation is gone.

In the ascension we see Jesus taking humanity into the presence of God. But now at Pentecost, the Spirit brings the presence of God to humanity. There is a fusion of Human (us) with God the divine. Creator and Creation coming together. Here is another beginning in all things being made new. A movement towards how things were at the beginning. Creator and creation united in a tangible way.

This event causes a giant commotion. Which makes sense. Imagine yourself making your way to a city for a big event. Let's say you've gone to Mexico City for the Olympics. You're just drinking your morning coffee when you suddenly hear a loud noise that you can't really place. Then as you look out of your window, you see what seems like fire on top of a building just a few blocks away. Now you hear the sound of sirens speeding past your hotel. You make your way down to the street and become part of a crowd that has materialized trying to get a glimpse of what's going on.

This is kind of what is happening in our story. Except that as the crowd gathers around the house they begin to hear the sound of people speaking many different languages all at the same time. At first it just sounds like babbling – but then slowly different people begin understand what is being spoken – they are hearing about the goodness of God. Then at the same time, there is a realization that the people who are speaking the different languages are not from the countries of which the language is being spoken.

And it puzzles them – it bewilders them. How is it possible that these people are speaking languages from regions and countries that they are not from?

While they were amazed at what was happening, they also were perplexed and worried. They asking, ‘What does this mean?’ That though the people in the upper room were talking, there was a sense that they were not the ones speaking. In some fashion they had become a conduit for the divine.

The truth is that we don’t know what exactly they were saying, or if the ones who were talking even understood what they were saying. What is clear, is that the people who had come to investigate the commotion heard, in their own languages, the wonderful things that God had done for humanity.

It was astonishing but also a little unnerving. And nobody could seem answer the question of what it all meant.

Finally it seems to have gotten so crazy that the only reasonable explanation was that group was drunk. Maybe like how sometimes things get near the very end of a wedding reception. Are you familiar, you know where a group of people have liberally purchased drink tickets and also finished all the half empty bottles of wine left over from the supper meal. And now they’re just loud, and maybe a bit silly, but definitely unreserved in nature.

In any case, there seems to have been a growing consensus that group from the upper room had gotten into the wine and were now drunk. So the crowd began to make fun of them.

Here is where things take a bit of turn because suddenly Peter is trying to get the attention of the crowd. He asks the crowd to let him have a chance to explain – to answer their question as to what it all means. First he addresses the accusation that the people in the upper room are drunk. Peter is like, seriously, come on! There is no way that they are not drunk. Look at your watches, it’s only nine o’clock in the morning. This kind of makes me laugh – first off because of his logic – it’s too early in the morning for this kind of drinking nonsense to happen. And second because I think Peter may be recalling a time where he may have had a bit too much wine and so he’s arguing the point from personal experience. In any case – Peter tells them that though it may seem like spirits are the cause, it’s actually the work of THE Spirit that has caused this to happen. In other words, it’s like Peter is saying, ‘What you people are trying to write off as wine is actually the outpouring of the divine – you are witnessing the beginning of the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel. The Spirit will be poured out on all people and when this happens men and women will prophecy, young people will see visions, old people will have dreams. The Spirit will manifest itself in these ways – ways that may seem a little crazy, or wild, but divine none-the-less. This seems to quiet the crowd because they settle in to listen to what Peter has to say.

Peter goes on to preach the story of Jesus coming to earth. How Jesus came to help all of humanity to understand the love God. How Jesus made this love known through his teachings, and through his miracles, and through spending time sharing life with people. How Jesus was put to death, but he rose from the dead, and he ascended into heaven, and now from heaven he has sent his Spirit to reside within humans.

And then Peter says, 'So yeah, it's time for you to change your old way of thinking – turn from your sinful ways, accept and follow Jesus, be baptized, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

Peter wraps it all up by saying, 'The Holy Spirit is for you and your children and for all who are far away, all who God calls to Himself.' (Which by the way, is everyone)

In other words, what Peter is saying is that the Spirit is for all people. Those that were present on the first Pentecost and also those who will live in the future. For those who are Jews and also those who are not – for men and women, young and old, boys, girls – EVERYONE!

In this we see the Spirit coming as the active agent in Jesus's work of making all things new. The Spirit coming, crossing all borders of ethnicity, of gender, of age – not just crossing borders but erasing them. Working to unify and bring unity to all of humanity, while at the same time celebrating and embracing diversity.

The Spirit of God residing in humans, pulling them together in community – as a body with many different parts, unified in function to be the love Jesus to the world.

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Oh, the unity of diversity, the beauty of a garden of one vine but many flowers, the strength of one body but many members. The strangeness of a God who gives himself without limit. He gives his very essence away and is not diminished; he grants portions of his eternal power to creatures of blood and clay and is not weakened; he uses children, women, and men to be the pottery holding his infinite holy oil, and no matter how lavishly he pours himself into them, his vessel is always full. He speaks, and pure words only multiply from the echo.

Watching this mystery for eons, the six-winged seraphim cry to God over the altar, as they cover their feet and their faces:

Holy, holy, holy!

There is one fire. One Spirit. But hallelujah, there are many burnings among the human family, and each one is welcome on the joyous altar of God.

Paul J. Pastor

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All Who Are Thirsty

Come, Lord Jesus, come

Won't you come

won't you come

Nothing but Your will for me

I am only free when You come

Come, Lord Jesus, come

Benton Brown  
Glenn Robertson

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“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place...” Unfortunately, we are not able to be together in one place today. The ongoing concerns around COVID-19 continue to preclude that. But though we are physically apart, we can still speak of being together in one place because we are “in Christ.” Though scattered across our city and beyond, we are still bound together by the Spirit as a family of faith in Jesus. That is the gift of Pentecost, which we celebrate today - the gift of the Spirit who unites us.

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit enabled the uneducated, unsophisticated disciples of Jesus to communicate the good news about Jesus to those who were gathered in Jerusalem from the all over the Jewish Diaspora. When the wind and flame of the Spirit descended upon them, they were enabled to speak and be understood in the diversity of languages present that day. They were given the gift of speech to cross boundaries and build bridges so that the initial harvest of God’s new creation could be brought in to God’s kingdom.

Did the disciples understand the languages they were speaking? We can’t say for certain and I don’t think it mattered. What mattered was that those who were present heard the wonders of God spoken in their native languages, in their mother tongues. Barriers of language were broken down; boundaries of speech were crossed; bridges of understanding were built. As a result, God’s salvation, the salvation that is available in Jesus, came to many that day, and the church of Jesus Christ was established.

It is likely that all who were present that day would have understood the Greek language to some extent. It was the language of commerce and was widely spoken. But the Spirit did not help the disciples to speak Greek in a way that could be understood by all. The

Spirit honoured the diversity of those present and empowered the disciples to speak in their languages.

And the Spirit continues to honour the diversity of the peoples of the world as he draws us all into union with Jesus and with each other. The church is the place where all peoples of the world are drawn together in Jesus, into his kingdom and under his Lordship. The Spirit unites us to Jesus and to each other by honouring each of our particular and unique distinctness. And he calls us to welcome and accept one another in the rich diversity of cultures and ethnicities and skin tones and languages and accents.

Our experience of the Spirit and the life he gives to us is informed by our heritages, by where we have come from and by who we have become through our unique journeys of formation. Thomas Smail invites us to think of the Spirit “as an artist whose one subject is the Son [Jesus], and who is concerned to paint countless portraits of that subject on countless human canvasses using the paints and brushes provided by countless human cultures and historical situations” (*The Giving Gift*, 77). Each of our cultural heritages and historical situations helps to shape the image of Jesus that the Spirit forms in us; they influence how we worship and express our love for Jesus, how we participate in the life of our church family, how we love and serve others as we bear witness to Jesus in the wider community.

In his book, *The Face of the Deep*, Paul J. Pastor makes a similar point with a different metaphor. He repurposes from the day of Pentecost the image of fire and its impact on different types of wood to reimagine the Spirit’s creative interaction with each of us. He writes:

“But that good fire [the fire of the Spirit that set humanity ablaze at Pentecost - that good fire] did not crackle on each with the same sound. Just as there is one kind of burning for hickory, another for fir, another for apple, oak, rowan and vine maple, the flame of pure speech sets each nation, tribe, and tongue, and each one of our mouths alight in a different way.

To God there is a kind of burning of the spirit that happens when the heart of a Cherokee is set alight, another for the heart of a Magyar, another still for a New Zealander. Englishmen have a kind of burning, as do the Hmong and the Nez Perce. There is a burning for the Inuit and the Italians, the Argentines and Quechua, the Spanish and every tribe of the Amazon forest [as well as the Canadians, as well as the Saskatchewanians]. We could list the clans of the whole earth here, each with their way. . .”

He continues, “There is a kind of burning for you, for me, and for every individual human ever made. We each, because of our giftings, our personalities, our thousand unique kindnesses and potentials, have the capacity to show and carry the spirit of Jesus in a way recognizable with all the others but unique to ourselves. For that, he came.

There is one fire. One Spirit. But hallelujah, there are many burnings among the human family, and each one is welcome on the joyous altar of God” (The Face of the Deep, 216-217).

“One fire... One Spirit... but many burnings among the human family...” As you ponder that, please consider with me the following questions:

How do I experience the burning of the Spirit in my heart?

How is his fire expressed in my life personally and in how I participate in our church family?

Do I feel the freedom to offer the expression of his flame that burns within me in our life together as a family?

The flame of the Spirit burns uniquely in each of us. Some of us will worship exuberantly and some quietly, and everywhere in between. Do we feel free to worship as we are wired, and do we celebrate and extend grace to those who worship differently? Some of us engage in our formation through disciplined Bible Study and prayer, others prefer to contemplate God in creation, and still others approach formation through the lens of service or other practices. Do we feel the freedom to engage in our formation under the Lordship of Jesus and the direction of the Spirit, and do we celebrate and extend grace to those who approach formation differently? Some will express the life of the Spirit in serving the poor and confronting issues of injustice, while others will do so through evangelism and apologetics; some will create art and music, while others mentor business leaders. The life of the Spirit will be expressed in unique ways in each of us. Do we have the freedom to live as we feel called to by the Spirit, and do we celebrate and extend grace to those who feel called to live otherwise?

Now, the Spirit creates order, not anarchy; he promotes peace, not division; he calls us to pursue holiness, not selfish ambition. He binds us together under the Lordship of Jesus and he calls us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. He calls us to welcome one another and to accept one another and to be patient with each other as we live into and out of the life of Jesus. He calls us to love one another as Christ has loved us.

So, as we think about the unity of the Spirit in the diversity of his people, are we open to those whom the Spirit will bring among us?

Do we welcome the diversity of gifts that the Spirit brings to us in the faces and bodies and lives of others?

Can we celebrate the unique ways his flame burns within them - the ways his life is expressed in and through them?

Each community of faith, each body of believers, will look different and will express the life of Jesus in different ways, because of the diversity of the people that the Spirit has drawn to that place. “One fire... One Spirit... but many burnings...”

So today I give thanks for the church family called Emmanuel, for the two congregations that the Spirit has called us to be, and for each of us and the unique gifts we bring to the body in our beautiful diversity.

May the flame of the Spirit burn brightly within us and among us. May he cause us to crackle with speech and life that reflects his presence and work among us. May he continue to paint his unique portraits of the Son on each of our canvasses. And may he weave us together into a beautiful tapestry of unity with all the unique threads of our diversity. The Spirit has come! He has come indeed! May we welcome his flame and his creative artistry. Amen.

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Come, come like the rain  
a quiet stream, a holy downpour  
Come, come like the rain  
a truer fount than I could ask for

Reign over me, awaken my soul

Come, come like the wind  
a gentle breeze a Holy breath here  
Come, come like the wind  
Your perfect love removing all fear

Breathe into me, awaken my soul  
Breathe into us, awaken our souls

Joel Davis  
Brady Toops

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Holy Spirit, storm and breath of love;  
bridge-builder, eye-opener,  
unseen and unexpected,  
untameable energy of life –  
we praise and adore you.

You have called your Church to be a sign  
of hope in a world without hope,  
to be a healing community in a broken world,  
to be a people of peace in a world at war with itself.

Forgive our failures of the past  
and create in us a vision of unity and hope,  
of love and sharing,  
that we might be agents of your gospel for the whole world;  
through Jesus Christ Our Lord  
Amen.

Baptist Union of Great Britain

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The musicians for May 31 are:

Adam Bourassa, Amy Bourassa, Marc Bourassa, John Erik Gustafson, Scott Jeschke,  
Lauri Lee, Rob Lee, Scott Lepp, Chloe Meadows, Reisha Peters, Seth Peters, rob  
Priestley, Jordan Reimer, Joyce Reimer, Dale Wilson, Dave Young.