



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Day of Pentecost

May 23, 2021

Now the Feast and Celebration

Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Crossing all boundaries that would separate us, the Spirit brings the wideness of God's mercy to places we least expect it—to a crowd of strangers of different lands and tongues, to dry bones, to our weak hearts. Jesus promises his disciples that they will be accompanied by the Holy Spirit, and that this Spirit reveals the truth. We celebrate that we too have been visited with this same Spirit. Guided by the truth, we join together in worship, and then disperse to share the fullness of Christ's love with the world.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping on-line with us today! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God's calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God's mission in the world.

GATHERING

GATHERING / LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Rev. Kathy Martin, Assistant to the Bishop, BC Synod

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Rev. Dorothy Chu, King of Life, Coquitlam

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ,
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ,
for these waters where you make us new,
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.

We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us
in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,
like rains to our thirsting earth,
like streams that revive our souls,
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.

Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear.
Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.
Send us companions on our journey as we share your life.

Make us one, risen Christ.
Cleanse our hearts.
Shower us with life.

To you be given all praise,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God,
now and forever. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG: Soli Deo Gloria (#878)

The Danish Lutheran Church of Vancouver

O God of blessings, all praise to you!
Your love surrounds us our whole life
through.
You are the freedom of those oppressed;
You are the comfort of all distressed.
Come now, O holy and welcome guest:
Soli Deo gloria! Soli Deo gloria!

All praise for Jesus, best gift divine
Through word and witness, in bread and
wine;
Incarnate love song of boundless grace,
Priest, teacher, prophet in time and space,
Your steadfast kindness with human face;
Soli Deo gloria! Soli Deo gloria!

All praise for prophets, through grace
inspired
To preach and witness with hearts on fire.
Your Spirit chooses the weak and small
To sing the new reign where mighty fall;
With them may we live your gospel call:
Soli Deo gloria! Soli Deo gloria!

A billion voices in one great song,
Now soft and gentle, now deep and strong,
In ev'ry culture and style and key,
From hill and valley, with sky and sea,
With Christ we praise you eternally:
Soli Deo gloria! Soli Deo gloria!

All praise for music, deep gift profound,
Through hands and voices in holy sound;
The psalms of David, and Mary's praise,
In wordless splendor and lyric phrase,
With all creation one song we raise;
Soli Deo gloria! Soli Deo gloria!

GREETING

Rev. Kathy Martin, Assistant to the Bishop, BC Synod

The love of God poured into our hearts, the saving grace of Jesus Christ, and the abundant life of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 2:1-21

Clair & Ruth Meger, Our Saviour's Lutheran, Prince George

A reading from Acts.

1When 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 Jewish-born

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.”

14But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “You Judeans 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 youth shall see visions,
and your elders shall dream dreams.

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

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

20The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

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

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Romans 8:22-27

Carmen Little, Chetwynd Shared Ministry

A reading from Romans.

22We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

26Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. 27And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15 (Inclusive Language version)

When the paraclete comes, the spirit of truth who comes from Abba God, whom I myself will send from my Abba, she will bear witness on my behalf. You too must bear

witness, for you have been with me from the beginning. I didn't tell you this at first, because I was with you. Now I am going to the one who sent me. Yet not one of you asked, "where are you going?" You are sad of heart because I tell you this, still I must tell you the truth. It is much better for you that I go. If I fail to go, the paraclete will never come to you. Whereas if I go, I will send her to you. When she comes, she will prove the world wrong about sin, about justice, and about judgement. About sin, in that they refuse to believe in me. About justice, because I go to Abba God and you will see me no more. About judgement, for the ruler of this world has been condemned. I have much more to tell you, but you can't bear to hear it now. When the spirit of truth comes, she will guide you into all truth. She won't speak on her own initiative, rather she will speak only what she hears and she'll announce to you things that are yet to come. In doing this, the spirit will give glory to me, for she will take what is mine and reveal it to you. Everything that Abba God has belongs to me. This is why I said that the spirit will take what is mine and reveal it to you.

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Bishop Greg Mohr, BC Synod

The Acts of the Apostles...no...of the Spirit!

Today is a major celebration in the church year. It is Pentecost Sunday – that day when we celebrate how God lives and moves and has being among us.

Now, first of all, I must say this: whoever put this Bible together and named each of the books has it wrong! The title of this book of Acts is very misleading. The book we call "The Acts of the Apostles" has the wrong title. It should be called "The Acts of the Holy Spirit!"

That's what this book is about. That is who this book is about.

Oh, sure, the apostles do plenty of action in this book, but most of their action is reaction. The real action in the story, the real direction in the story, is from the Holy Spirit.

Open up "the Acts of the Apostles" and check it out. All throughout the seven weeks of the Easter season, whether in years A, B or C, we read from the book of Acts. What we see when we read these texts is that every major move that the church or the leaders of the church make in the book of Acts is initiated and prodded by the Holy Spirit.

Here in today's reading, we find the disciples gathered in an upper room, waiting, waiting . . . for what, they do not know, but they are practically as good as dead.

The great, glorious, heady days following Jesus' resurrection now seem so distant. Jesus had left them once again and they are all alone.

Oh, sure, Jesus promised that he would send them something; something the Scriptures call the Counsellor or the Advocate, but really, what did that mean?

And so they stayed there in Jerusalem, all huddled up together.

How could that small group of lifeless and dispirited disciples do anything? How could they achieve anything? Their motley crew had little hope – and even less confidence.

But like that Valley of the Dry bones that we read about in the book of Ezekiel, we witness how the wind/breath/spirit of God began to blow. In and through them, God's spirit moved.

They say it looked like flames, and that image evokes all the other Biblical images of how the presence of God is described in the language of flame and fire.

We think of the time Moses encountered God in the burning bush.

We're reminded of the story of the Exodus, where God led the people in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Perhaps we recall the story of the Transfiguration, where Jesus' appearance is changed and his face shone.

The image of flames is NOT the most important thing here, however. It might be cool from a cinematic point of view, but what makes this account even more dramatic, even more unbelievable, is that here the Holy Spirit is given to them all.

Previously, the Spirit was a special possession for a special purpose. We think of the Judges or the prophets throughout Scripture: God calls, the spirit is given, an individual accomplishes the task.

But here at Pentecost, God changes the way God operates. A new thing is being done among us. God's spirit shall be with and abide with us all the time.

My goodness – do you understand what is being said and done? God's spirit resting on each of us, to bear God's creative and redeeming word to all the world;

God's spirit resting on each of us, to be God's agents in this world, to be a vehicle of love and compassion, to be a prophetic voice in the midst of our communities; no longer the purview of one person here and there; no longer the task given simply to one here and one there – but to us all.

My goodness – what is this Spirit up to? Is there no end to the breadth and depth of the spirit's workings?

It starts here in this story in the book of Acts and continues on.

Time and time again, we read of how the spirit propels the church onward into new ventures, into new ways of experiencing the love of Christ, into new and sometimes difficult understandings of what it means to be the people of God.

All throughout this book of Acts, we see the spirit at work.

Gathered in Jerusalem that day were Jewish people from “every nation on earth” for a big celebration. That long listing of the nations in our reading from Acts is meant to convey that every nation on earth had somebody there at Pentecost.

There were strange nations with strange-sounding, difficult to pronounce names like Cappadocians, Medes, Elamites and Mesopotamians.

But as one scholar has pointed out, this Pentecost gathering is not only a diverse ethnic gathering, it is also a historically impossible one as well.

Those Medes who were there that Pentecost would have had a tough time getting to Jerusalem from Mesopotamia, not only because they had to travel a few hundred kilometers but because they had to travel a couple of hundred years as well. The Medes had been long gone from the face of the earth for at least two centuries.

And those Elamites? They were mentioned back in the book of Ezra but not again. Those Elamites were also lost in the past.

We have here not only a gathering of people from the north and south, east and west, but also from the living and the dead. Fascinating!

As I travel throughout the churches of our ELCIC and of other denominations, I notice a particular architectural feature in some of our very oldest congregations.

Perhaps you also are familiar with this: The front of the church is very typical of a lot of older churches, where there is a communion rail in the shape of a half-circle that wraps around the altar.

An architect friend once told me that the shape and design was very intentional theologically and symbolically. The design arose from the time when most churches had a cemetery as part of the church property.

As you gathered for communion you came and knelt around the altar, in this half-circle arrangement. The symbolism was that the rest of the circle extended out into the rest of the church property, where the church cemetery was.

In other words, when you came to the altar for Holy Communion, you were being reminded that you gathered not just with the people who were sitting in the pew next to you, but you also gathered with all the saints, with the communion of saints, of every time and every place.

You gathered not only with Grandma and Grandpa and Great Uncle Frederick and Aunt Martha, but you also gathered with those mentioned here in Acts, chapter 2: Elamites, Cappadocians and Mesopotamians.

This strange, playful story is Acts way of saying that when God’s spirit was poured out at Pentecost it was poured out not just for a few, but for all. The Holy Spirit is God’s way of being portable; of not being restricted to time and place.

It is often said that the word “God” is not a noun but a verb. It is a word of action. The same is true of that aspect of God — the Holy Spirit — it is a verb, an action, alive, engaged.

This is an active God: seeking, searching, leading, guiding, comforting, renewing, saving, loving, calling.

The Spirit is given to call us forward, to call us into action, to be agents of change and seekers of justice, engaged in neighbour-love, grounded in service.

One of the terms used in Scripture for the Holy Spirit is that of Counsellor. This name of Counsellor isn't so much about making us feel better, as it is a Counsellor who helps you work through things, and make changes in your life, your attitudes and your actions.

Another translation of the biblical term for Holy Spirit is that of Advocate. We think of someone who walks beside us and advocates on our behalf. But this is done not so you can be a passive participant. Rather — an advocate helps you to achieve change, transformation and justice.

Come, Holy Spirit, come. Abide in us. Restore us. Transform us. Re-orient us. Propel us forward into love, service, justice-seeking and justice-making, love for the world of God's holy creation, love for each other, love for the neighbour.

Maybe that half-circle of a communion railing isn't just about being reminded of the saints who have gone before us. Maybe that half-circle extends out beyond the cemetery, into the world beyond, into God's beloved creation, among all people, neighbours and strangers, beloved.

Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Let Streams of Living Justice (#710)

Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, Langley

Let streams of living justice flow down upon the earth;
Give freedom's light to captives, let all the poor have worth.
The hungry's hands are pleading, the workers claim their rights,
The mourners long for laughter, the blinded seek for sight.
Make liberty a beacon, strike down the iron pow'r;
Abolish ancient vengeance; proclaim your people's hour.

For healing of the nations, for peace that will not end,
For love that makes us lovers, God grant us grace to mend.
Weave our varied gifts together; knit our lives as they are spun;
On your loom of time enroll us till our thread of life is run.
O great weaver of our fabric, bind church and world in one;
Dye our texture with your radiance, light our colors with your sun.

Your city's built to music; we are the stones you seek;
Your harmony is language; we are the words you speak.
Our faith we find in service, our hope in others' dreams,
Our love in hand of neighbour; our homeland brightly gleams.
Inscribe our hearts with justice; your way – the path untrod;
Your truth – the heart of stranger; your life – the Crucified.

CREED

Rev. Curtis Aguire, Our Redeemer Lutheran, Penticton

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,*
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Elina Singh, Intern Pastor at Trinity Lutheran, Delta & Good Shepherd Lutheran, Coquitlam

Refrain: Rev. David Hunter, Margaret Hundebly Hunter & Janice Mezynski, Peace, Vernon

We have a sung refrain for our prayers today using words from Hymn #407 "Come now and fill our spirits; pour out your gifts abundant. O Living breath of God, Holy Spirit, breathe in us as we pray." Let these words join our prayer as we sing....

"Come now and fill our spirits; pour out your gifts abundant. O Living breath of God, Holy Spirit, breathe in us as we pray."

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Gracious God, you give the Holy Spirit to your church, filling it with many and varied gifts. In the church throughout the world, strengthen us in our visioning and dreaming, that it may discover anew the Spirit's creative work. Fill our synod and our congregations with gratitude for the gifts we have received from you. Renew our ministries, heal our divisions, and open us to the needs of our neighbours. God hear our prayers as we sing.

"Come now and fill our spirits; pour out your gifts abundant. O Living breath of God, Holy Spirit, breathe in us as we pray."

God of life, your mighty works are too numerous to count. The earth is full of your creatures, living things both great and small. Open your hand and give them the necessities of this life. Send your fresh Spirit over the face of the earth. God, at the sound of the rushing wind, people speaking different languages proclaimed and heard together your deeds of power. Fill the leaders of nations with your Holy Spirit, so that they exercise your gracious will in the lives of people. God hear our prayers as we sing.

"Come now and fill our spirits; pour out your gifts abundant. O Living breath of God, Holy Spirit, breathe in us as we pray."

God of faithfulness, you tend to the needs of your people, even the sighs of our hearts. Hear those who cry out to you in distress. Restore to wholeness all who are in any need this day especially those whose names we offer now (*pause*) God of hope, those who have died in you raise their eternal song of praise. We give you thanks for the many gifts of your people and rejoice in the witness of your saints. God hear our prayers as we sing.

"Come now and fill our spirits; pour out your gifts abundant. O Living breath of God, Holy Spirit, breathe in us as we pray."

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING HYMN: As the Grains of Wheat

OFFERATORY PRAYER

Su Wieczorek, Mount Olive Lutheran, Surrey

Let us pray,

Blessed are you, O God, ruler of heaven and earth. Day by day you shower us with blessings. As you have raised us to new life in Christ, give us glad and generous hearts, ready to praise you and to respond to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Amen.

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy, to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, Holy God, through our brother Jesus Christ, who fills us with the Spirit of love and grants us life, empowering us to join in with all the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, the whole church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

GREAT THANKSGIVING

O Lord your works are manifold and wise and you create great things by your might and authority. All of creation looks to you as you provide nourishment and sustenance for our souls, upon which we lean on, rely, and gather strength. You send forth your Spirit and you renew us with your love shown to us through your Son Jesus, whom you sent to us to reveal your enduring glory and forgiving grace.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal and took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it and said, "take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And after they ate, he took the cup that they all would share, gave thanks, and gave it to them to drink from saying, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this food we have and share that we see the Spirit working in and through us, even as we proclaim this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O Lord, we shall sing to you for as long as we live, for all blessing, honour, and praise are yours, through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Hannah Hoenisch, Grace Lutheran, Victoria

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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 COMMUNION

Taste and see God's love given to us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: Lamb of God (p. 14)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks for giving us your Word of life, joining us by your Spirit, and empowering us to be your people in the world. May we continually rely on your promises of grace and steadfast love, that we not be hindered by our distance or this pandemic, but we continually praise you through our lives through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

As we go forth from our worship,
may the wind of the Spirit enliven our senses and flow through our lives;
may the fire of the Spirit burn away our complacency and light our way.
And may the blessing of the Holy One....Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer...
rest with you now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: The Lord Now Sends Us Forth (#538)

Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, Langley

The Lord now sends us forth
with hands to serve and give,
to make of all the earth
a better place to live.

The angels are not sent
into our world of pain
to do what we were meant
to do in Jesus' name;

That falls to you and me
and all who are made free.
Help us, O Lord, we pray,
to do your will today.

DISMISSAL

Glen Harvey, Hope Lutheran, Nanaimo

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God.

From sundaysandseasons.com.
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