

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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◆ Sunday May 31, 2020 ◆

Pentecost

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

* indicates a time to stand, if you are able
congregational responses are in **boldface type**

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE – *Aria, The Goldberg Variations*

J.S. Bach

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

* OPENING HYMN – *As Comes the Breath of Spring*

VU 373

*1 As comes the breath of spring
with light and mirth and song,
so does your Spirit bring
new days brave, free, and strong.
You come with thrill of life
to chase hence winter's breath,
to hush to peace the strife
of sin that ends in death.*

*2 You come like dawning day
with flaming truth and love,
to chase all glooms away,
to brace our wills to prove
how wise, how good to choose
the truth and its brave fight,
to prize it, win or lose,
and live on your delight.*

*3 You come like songs at morn
that fill the earth with joy,
till we, in Christ, newborn,
new strength in praise employ.*

*You come to rouse the heart
from drifting to despair,
through high hopes to impart
life with an ampler air.*

*4 You breathe and there is health;
you move and there is power;
you whisper, there is wealth
of love, your richest dower.
Your presence is to us
like summer in the soul;
your joy shines forth and then
life blossoms to its goal.*

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: We know the tradition of candles on birthday cakes as a sign of light, life and celebration, used as a symbol of a significant marker in the passage of time.

All: May we understand these candles as markers of the birthday of the church, and may the light and warmth of these flames and the breath that it takes to blow them out be reminders of this birthday of the Christian Church called Pentecost.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Spirit wind comes by many aspects, and we perceive that wind in diverse ways:

A mighty wind that overwhelms or a calm breeze that comforts and caresses;

All: a zephyr of movement that refreshes or a tornado that destroys what we know;

One: a strong breeze into which we lean with relish or a moist draft hinting at changing weather.

All: We come on this Pentecost Sunday to be shaped by Spirit wind: a helper that guides or a challenging gale that pushes to new places.

One: Light us up, O God, that we may burn for the Way of Jesus. Blow on the embers of our faith that we may blaze light into the world.

All: Fuel the light we share by our words and actions of loving-kindness. Illuminate our lives with transformation and with opportunity. Amen.

A TIME WITH CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (said together)

**Great God of change and growth, we are wary of your Spirit's power. We want to be changed,
But changed only according to our terms.**

We don't really want to take your good news seriously enough to affect everything in our lives, just some aspects!

Help us to embrace your power so that any change is possible. Remake and refashion us as disciples and servants, ready to proclaim the good news. Amen.

◆ SERVICE OF THE WORD ◆

Reader: Ian Brisbin

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

One: Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

Teach me oh God, the way of your perfect commands. You are my God and I will extol your name. Let us hear and wrestle with the spoken word of God! Amen.

THE WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Numbers 11:24-30

So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again. Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!" And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

One: This is the word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 104: 24-36, 35b

O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great.

There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.

These all look to you to give them their food in due season;

when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works —

who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the LORD.

Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD!

Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD!

REFLECTION: Beauty of Creation! - Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b

In wisdom and divine intelligence, God created the universe and continues to create in majesty and splendor. In every facet of creation beauty exists, awe inspiring beauty that moves us beyond words. We see it in the powerful and uniqueness of nature as it touches our hearts and elevates our souls.

God has intricately designed our world not just for function, but also to care for and nourish us. Breath taking panoramas await our exploration teeming with diversity, colour and imagination. No matter where we travel around the globe there are wonders to behold.

God has gifted us with: flowers that are pleasing to the eye and give of delightful aromas; birds that chirp in chorus; animals that serve as pets and guides and ones that roam and hunt; rivers and waters that swirl and glisten in rhythmic flow; shade trees and flowering shrubs; carpeted hills and valleys; roaring spectacular falls. Everywhere we look, we see the imprint of the hand of God in our world.

The psalmist sees a sense of order in creation and behind this order, a purpose for life that is grounded in God. There is praise for both creation and its sustenance by a God who is not absent or apart from his work. Each new day begins with a light caused by the rotation of the earth in the precise formula needed to maintain its existence. The very ground of existence is a powerful and generous and gracious God whose Spirit flows through and in all in ways that we are not able to understand.

God's ordering contains potentially dangerous waters along with smooth flowing currents and sets night after day and a variety of seasons to allow harvest and rest and peaceful interaction between predators and people. It is a design that allows interaction and cross-pollination and a chain of supporting habitats that benefit the earth's species.

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all. Sheer wonder and awe. Breath and food – spiritual and physical co-exist in the totality of life.

Yet, the psalmist is all too aware that the unknown in the equation is that of humans who can selfishly shake the stability of the earth and plunge it into despair. The psalmist asks that God not let that happen. The beauty of God's world for the use of all must not be exploited and used for selfish ends.

The gifts of the spirit are renewing and life-giving and an invitation to see, hear, taste and touch all that God has given is good. As a people who have been endowed with this powerful spirit, we take in what is needed with grateful hearts and we share with all. Even when we, in our misguided moments misuse what has been given to us, God continues to send forth the Spirit to the earth and the universe is renewed.

We are reminded by the psalmist that we have been placed here as stewards of the earth, entrusted in caring for rather than consuming creation. This time in our history of pandemic may be an opportunity to transform our lifestyles from consumerism to a life in harmony with creation.

“I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.” This hymn of praise is on our lips as we ponder this amazing love that has created this playground in which we live, move, and have our being.

Our “down time” is an opportunity to rethink our place in this planet, and to remember whose we are.

Amen.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES: Acts 2:1-21

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 and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another,

“What does this mean?” But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

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

One: The gift of the Holy Spirit

All: Praise be to you, all three in one.

REFLECTION: Wind and Spirit! - Acts 2:1-21

In the late nineties, while I was at Fairfield-St. David’s our Picnic service fell on the day of Pentecost. We met at Dundurn Park in the pavilion where we set up our sound system and I began the service. It was a very windy day, and as I began to preach from the lectionary for that day about the coming of the Holy Spirit on the people gathered, the wind caught the speakers and was amplified with a roar. Everyone was electrified with the significance of the moment. It was as if we were transported in time, standing before Peter in awe.

.....
through the gift of sound effects used in film
we have a rushing wind....

The Holy Spirit is alive and well in our church. We have been baptized and empowered by the same Holy Spirit that came upon the disciples. It was a commission to spread the message of God's saving love to the ends of the earth.

The apostle, Paul, says that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness, sends spiritual gifts to enrich our worship, helps us determine who is to lead our community, how we relate to outsiders and the direction we are to take as a spiritual community.

It wasn't always clear how to interpret the outpouring of the Spirit as it did not appear in black and white so even in the early days there was dissension amongst the elders on many aspects of religious life. As the Christian community grew, the Holy Spirit was stifled in favour of structure dictating teaching, worship, leadership, and decision-making. Mention of the Holy Spirit fell out of favour.

Charismatic and Pentecostal voices called out for recovery of the Holy Spirit in the role of worship and the experience of "signs and wonders."

God's Spirit at work in the world was not new to the Day of Pentecost, it had been at work since the beginning of time. Recorded in Genesis as the life-giving breath of God. Again, we hear of its presence in Isaiah who promises the Spirit will rest

with wisdom and understanding on the people during the time of exile in Babylon.

Each age traverses through a wilderness of change that brings fear of transition. Many of you who grace our pews know this fear. While nothing changes inside, the world outside is in a constant state of flux. Unpredictable economies, life transitions, church closures, health challenges, and out of the ordinary world events, bring fear and mourning, but they also bring hope and promise and new possibilities.

Today, we celebrate the birthday of the church year. In a sense, it is a graduation party for the disciples who have spent their three years in internship preparing for striking out on their own. They have been fully prepared and authenticated by the One in whose name they and, we, go forth.

The responsibility shifts to us to continue this challenge to call upon this Spirit to locate, claim and utilize our unique voices, gifts and skills with which we set out to love and serve. This all-powerful Spirit is loose upon the world, never intended to be harnessed for our individual use. Its life-giving power is creative and sustaining in all the communities of the world.

These were not early morning intoxicated revelers; they were filled with the Spirit that had been foretold in the book of Joel and promised by the Lord, Jesus. It comes in not as a meek, quiet entity but rather as a force of power. It is a reminder that the Spirit does not always arrive as a still, small voice or a faint stirring in the heart. The Holy Spirit's power is not always fragile, subtle or polite. Even today it can be electric, atomic, and volcanic.

Within our worldwide worship there are examples of thundering choirs, over the top praise bands, hand clapping and rock star preaching. (I missed that class)

The beauty of Holy Spirit infused worship is that it may take the form of ecstatic, dramatic, or profound spiritual experience, or it may gently and subtly roll in washing over the congregant with a sublime sense of building ripple by ripple towards our identification as sons and daughters of God, as part of the divine family. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

When we think of your church, O God, we might think of the formidable stone structure, or the beautiful stained glass windows that are admired but then forgotten when the church gets locked up. We might think of the grass that needs cutting and the custodian mopping the floors. What we hear today is that your church is not the physical building, O God, but rather it is a sacred story of a life laid down in the outstretched arms of love, in a circle of friendship and a one-minute speech, heard in many languages, about what the Spirit is doing and how important this is to the betterment of people's lives, as kindness and goodness are nurtured in this world. It's amazing that you can take what is offered and make it your church as you did on the day of Pentecost and now with us.

In this trying time when we cannot worship in our beloved sanctuary, we come together in hearts and minds from our homes and we thank you for our people who carry on the tradition of keeping your church of Melrose alive so that we may represent

you in our corner of the world. Thank you for the gifts of our dedicated people who continue to make this work possible.

OFFERTORY –Fantasia
Chris Palmer, guitar

Anon

★ OFFERING HYMN – *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*

VU 541

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures high and low;
give thanks to God in love made known:
Creator, Word and Spirit, One.*

A NEW CREED

Written in 1968, added to in 1980 and 1995

To make it gender neutral and reflect our enhanced concern for
the created order
(said together)

**We are not alone, we live in God's world.
We believe in God: who has created and is creating,
Who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,
To reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the
Spirit.**

We trust in God.

**We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence,
To live with respect in Creation,
To love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil,
To proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
Our judge and our hope.**

**In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.
We are not alone.
Thanks be to God.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Come to our world, mind and heart changing Holy Spirit!
Transform the violence that exists world wide through communication and understanding and the will for peace.
Transform the racial labeling and prejudice we experience in all nations through talking, working and playing together.
Transform the gross indifference to the fate of our planet – air and water polluted, forest clear-cut, fossil fuels exhausted – through the will to conserve and live more simply.

All: With your unseen but effective influence, Holy Spirit, we can do it!

One: Come to the places of the suffering, healing Holy Spirit!
Bring peace where there is strife, resentment and inconvenience.
Bring reconciliation where conflict exists in family and friends.
Bring patient endurance where sickness and fear of spread of the Covid-19 virus restrict normal activity or ends our accustomed patterns of living.
Bring hope where the ache of bereavement is felt or the loss of control is a reality.

All: With your unseen but effective influence, Holy Spirit, we can do it!

One: Search out and meet the obvious and hidden needs within our church.

Encourage each member to give of their time, talent and money for this common good.

Lift the eyes of your people to perceive the crying needs that lie beyond this church and this nation.

Clarify the pattern of service and the quality of commitment we show as those who are called Christians.

All: With your unseen but effective influence, Holy Spirit, we can do it!

One: Come and restore each one of us, life-giving Spirit!

When we are reluctant to make the first move towards friendship;

when we feel overshadowed and cry out in despair;

when hurt goes on and on, and rejection is experienced;

when depression sets in and bitterness is keen;

All: when it seems there is no one to share our dismay or our joy: with you as our companion, Holy Spirit we can be restored!

One: We pray for our community of Melrose - we pray for, Richard and Cynthia in the passing of Flo Longworth. for Loretta and her family, for Jeff and his family, for Flo and her family, for Fred and Linda and Shari, for Vic and his family, for Cheryl's mother and her family. We pray for those outside our church community who are impacted in many ways for our current situation. Lord, we ask that you be with them in the ways that each one needs.

For all those that we hold in our hearts we raise up to you for their safekeeping.

(Quiet reflection)

Our Lord's Prayer (said together)
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.

* CLOSING HYMN - *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise* VU 264

*1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.*

*2 Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and love.*

*3 To all, life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life, thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish, like leaves on the tree,
then wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.*

*4 Thou reignest in glory, thou rulest in light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;*

*all laud we would render, O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.*

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

One: The power of the creating and energizing Spirit moved
through us today in our homes.

The warmth of the Spirit has entered our hearts, courage
has been offered, and loving mercy granted.

The Spirit has hovered around us, dwelt within us,
And moved beside us in this time of worship, in scripture
in music, and in prayer.

Now as we move back into our daily lives, we know the
Spirit's nearness always, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

May God keep us
In our going out and our coming in
In our lying down and our rising up,
In our work and in our leisure,
In our laughter and in our tears,
Until we meet again. Amen.

POSTLUDE – Sonata #12, KV 332

W.A. Mozart