

**ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH**  
**May 31, 2020 – Pentecost Sunday**

Welcome to Worship, Easter Sunday  
Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, May 31  
Email [absolute\\_solutions@live.com](mailto:absolute_solutions@live.com) to get the Zoom link.

**Prelude**

**Welcome – Alison Warner-Smith**

Welcome to the worship service of St. Andrew's United Church, in Sudbury Ontario. In this challenging time of social distancing, we can stay connected; God's Spirit touching us, each of us, and joining us together, the Body of Christ.

Also, please join us for Virtual Fellowship Time at 11:30 this Sunday morning. To get your Zoom link to that event, please contact Leslie Cassidy. Her contact information is published in our weekly NEWS emailed on Thursdays, and on our Facebook page.

Now let us prepare for worship together.

**Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

We take a moment to give thanks for the privilege of living on this land, land where you are and here where I am, where First Peoples have been stewards for thousands of years. The land where St. Andrew's worships is on the traditional territories of the Atikemekshing Anishnawbek and the Wahnapiatae First Nation. We all worship, you and I, on a traditional territory of a First Nation. We give thanks to the Creator for this wonderful land, and pray one day for just sharing and true reconciliation.

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

Happy Birthday to Christ's Church – the universal church! As we light this Candle today, we imagine God, Jesus, Holy Spirit as the special ones today. Don't we all need a reason to celebrate, after one day moves into another, often feeling the same. Take a few seconds then in quiet to celebrate what church community, what God's blessings, what the precious stories of Jesus, his life, death, resurrection mean. At the heart of Pentecost is God's unpredictable grace that caught the followers of Jesus and witnesses nearby off guard. Are you, am I, prepared to be surprised? Are we open? May this dancing flame inspire us to fill our lives with the ideals of love, justice and truth. (J L Quarles)!

**Call to Worship**

Today, may the breath of the Holy Spirit open our hearts and minds.

**Today, may we walk away from our fears  
and welcome the New Life given to us.**

Here, now, connected as Church by Spirit and technology,  
may we be ignited by the Spirit of justice.

**Show all people that there is a place in God's community for them,  
especially for those who feel alone, lost, and rejected.**

Spirit give us even a glimpse of the dreams of all among us,  
especially the voices of the oppressed in all languages.

**In the coming days and weeks,  
help us to spread the news of God's Love for all. Amen.**

**Opening Prayer**

Creator God, gather us in worship and praise for you, and to see the wonders you have made. Spirit of Truth, blow through us so we can spread your good news to all we meet. Ignite in us a passion to serve you, using the gifts you have given us. Spirit of Love, may we listen and act with

compassion, and may we be bold guardians of your Creation. We honour you as we pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us...

### **The Prayer Jesus Taught**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kin-dom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Hymn: VU 373 - As Comes the Breath of Spring, vs. 1,2,4**

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.

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.

You breathe and there is health: you move and there is power;  
you whisper, there is a 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.

### **Bible Readings**

#### **Psalm 104, Part Two (24-35), VU pages 826-827**

O God, how manifold are your works!

**With wisdom at your side you made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.**

There lies the great and mighty Sea,  
teeming with living things both great and small.

**Upon it sail the ships,  
and there is Leviathan, the monster you made to play in it.**

All these look to you,  
to give them their food in due season.

**What you give them they gather up.  
When you open your hand, you fill them with good things.**

But when you hide your face they despair.

When you take away their breath, they die, and return to dust.

**But when you send out your spirit, they live again,  
and you renew the face of the earth.**

May your glory, O God, endure forever.

**May you rejoice, O God, in your works.**

When you look at the earth it trembles,

**when you touch the mountains they smoke.**

I will sing to God as long as I live.

**I will praise my God while I have being.**

## **Acts 2: 1-14** *The Message* translation

When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

There were many staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, "Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?"

Parthians, Medes, and Elamites ... even Cretans and Arabs!

"They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!"

Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: "What's going on here?"

### **Response to the Bible Readings**

Come, Holy Spirit, come, breathe into our hearts this day.

Bless our celebration and inspire us, that we may live Spirit-filled lives of love and compassion for all. May it be so. Amen.

### **Message – *Where the Spirit Goes, Look Out!***

Nikos Kazantzakis, an author you may know from his critically acclaimed novel "The Last Temptation of Christ", writes poetically about a great, mysterious, *Cry*:

Blowing through heaven and earth,  
and in the heart of every living thing,  
is a gigantic breath - a great Cry - which we call God.  
Plant life wished to continue its motionless sleep  
next to stagnant waters,  
but the Cry leaped up within it and violently shook its roots:  
"Away, let go of earth, walk!"

Had the tree been able to think and judge, it would have cried:  
"I don't want to. What are you urging me to do?  
You are demanding the impossible!"

But the Cry, without pity, kept shaking its roots and shouting,  
"Away, let go of the earth, walk!"

It shouted in this way for thousands of eons;  
and lo! as a result of desire and struggle,  
life escaped the motionless tree and was liberated.

Animals appear - worms - making themselves  
at home in water and mud.

"We're just fine here," they said.  
"We have peace and security; we're not budging!"

But the terrible Cry hammered itself pitilessly into their loins.  
"Leave the mud, stand up, give birth to your betters!"

"We don't want to! We can't!"  
"You can't, but I can. Stand up!"

And lo! After thousands of eons, humans emerged,  
trembling on their still unsolid legs...

... Humanity calls in despair,  
"Where can I go?  
I have reached the pinnacle, beyond is the abyss."  
And the Cry answers,  
"I am beyond. Stand up!"

Gale force winds... Fire. The mystery at the heart of the Pentecost story was anticipated by the followers of Jesus; he told his friends before he left them, and I paraphrase, "Wait for something to come." I'm certain that his faithful circle could not have anticipated this Pentecost moment. How could they, or anyone, imagine the unharnessed Spirit symbolized by wind and fire.

We enjoyed a fire last night right here – here, flames danced and popped high into the air as tall tales were told. Children and adults marvelled at the stars in a clear night while firelight cast shadows around us. I watched the fire and the wonderful mysterious events around me through the lens of this Bible Pentecost story. I connected with those moments in my life when I, like those stunned onlookers in the Bible stories, wondered, "What on earth is going on here?"

Can you think of moments in your life where the Spirit took hold? Can you remember moments where things shifted suddenly, mysteriously? The mood at a gathering is profoundly impacted by the sharing of a poignant story. Or maybe things at one point in your life seemed hopeless, but, something happened or a person strangely had an revelation that helped resolve the situation.

Spirit can be unnervingly spontaneous. In this Bible story, Spirit triggered a sense of connection among the masses of people there. Imagine: Strangers sharing for a moment a radical sense of unity as they collectively behold the mystery. These were witnesses who would have otherwise walked by, but the Spirit's movement, some from foreign lands are hearing their language spoken.

"How it is that this fisherperson, or that farmer, speaks my language?!"

As the Spirit danced like fire, the air stirred up like wind, something changed there – changed Jesus' followers.

The friends of Jesus were left waiting in Jerusalem, grieving their friend's death but asked to wait expectantly. We can relate, can't we? We, too, have spent the last couple of months waiting at home,<sup>1</sup> in uncertainty, but holding onto a distant hope that some day we will physically connect again.

At Pentecost, Holy Mystery hovers in the air, breathes peace and unity onto onlookers. But there were cynics. There always are cynics and skeptics in the face of mystery. Some of us are skeptics – that is ok, to ask questions.

But... here I am, the morning after a fire. Seeing the ash, I remember Fire and Mystery. Encountering God's wild Spirit, though, invites us to go deeper into the question of what we believe about our Creator and about ourselves. We might ask ourselves: What difference do Spirit-filled moments in my life make in how I live and what difference I am capable of making in my world? The fire has died down, but you and I are invited to connect with that Spirit's power, symbolized by wind and fire, in our everyday lives.

Telling the Story of Pentecost, the birthday of Christ's Church, each year reminds us that it wasn't an *institution* that was born that day. It wasn't at all a call to organize ourselves, to craft a mission statement or to develop effective academic programs to train Christian leaders. For all intents and purposes, at Pentecost the Spirit sparked an uprising of love, a holy revolution that created a unique community grounded in the stories and teachings of Jesus.

Forgive me for borrowing language from our present experience, but I suggest that, at Pentecost, Spirit triggered a holy outbreak of viral proportions. People's lives were changed, they were born

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<sup>1</sup> "A Pentecost to Wait and Hope, Pray and Trust", workingpreacher.com. Sunday, May 24, 2020. Kathryn M. Schifferdecker

anew in their attitudes and actions. We are invited to decide today, and then again tomorrow, and in subsequent days to open our attitudes and actions, our whole lives to be transformed. I think some of us really crave an infusion of something radical, confined to our homes. What attitudes or lifestyle choices in your life need to be opened up to wind and fire, a spiritual spring cleaning?

When our opinions, behaviours, become entrenched because they are embedded in our routines – change is not easy. Especially in our world where sounding like a know-it-all tends to be rewarded more among public figures, more at times than leaders who dare to ask questions, to wonder. I think I see Spirit moving right now around me, as I see dedicated people near and far powerfully moved by suffering so much that they organize projects to care for people who carry more heavily the burden of pandemic living. When the Spirit moves among us, we cannot fetter or manage it – it moves where it will, who it will.

Are you open to being moved when the Spirit's wind and fire falls upon your life? I hear that it will change your life. Amen.

### **Hymn: MV 79 - Spirit, Open My Heart**

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.  
Spirit, open my heart.

God, replace my stony heart with a heart that's kind and tender.  
All my coldness and fear to your grace I now surrender.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.  
Spirit, open my heart.

Write your love upon my heart as my law, my goal, my story.  
In each thought, word, and deed, may my living bring you glory.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.  
Spirit, open my heart.

May I weep with those who weep, share the joy of sister, brother.  
In the welcome of Christ, may we welcome one another.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving.  
Spirit, open my heart.

### **Minute for Mission – “Protecting Palestine’s Children”**

*“Ramallah, April 21, 2020—The number of Palestinian child detainees in Israeli prisons and detention centers increased since January despite the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and widespread calls to decrease the number of people in custodial detention globally.”* This is not happening.

Imagine growing up in a place of conflict where you live in constant fear of violence. This is what it is like to grow up in Gaza. As a church family our hearts cry out for those who live in fear every day. Mission & Service supports *Defense for Children International–Palestine*, which offers programs for children in that region.



Israeli and Palestinian forces have been in conflict for decades, and children are often the victims. So, we give thanks for the work of global partners like **Defense for Children International–Palestine**, which offers programs for children to express in art what they are experiencing, and activities that help them just be children.

Please join us in making Mission & Service giving a regular part of your life of faith. If you already contribute towards the United Church of Canada Mission and Service, thank you! Loving our neighbour is at the heart of giving locally and globally.

### **Offering Moment**

Baffled followers of Jesus, ignited by the Holy Spirit. Stunned witnesses watching the Jesus movement burst forth, a movement, I suggest that is still unfolding in you and me today. The Spirit inspires, it encourages, it coaxes, it even ruffles our feathers. When you hear this ancient story of this birth of sorts, with all its chaos, its confusion, its excitement, what does it say to you?

Do you have a role in God's vision today? How are your talents, your personality, your abilities geared towards healing a hurting world? Caring for lonely people? Supporting the work of a church that is active locally and globally? Share with God...now... your offer of yourself. You with your gifts, your passions, your joys and even responding to injustices in the world that make you angry. Let us offer ourselves, our gifts to God. Now. If you already support St. Andrew's, thank you so much. If you haven't, yet, prayerfully consider. We love having partners, and would be happy to answer questions you might have if you send us an email ([church@st-andrews.ca](mailto:church@st-andrews.ca)), or go to our Facebook page, or subscribe to our weekly email Newsletter to find out what we are up to. Thank you for all that you do out of love, my friends.

### **Offering Hymn: VU 540 - Grant Us, God, the Grace**

Grant us, God, the grace of giving, with a spirit large and free,  
that ourselves and all our living we may offer faithfully.

### **Prayers of the Community**

Living and loving God, we thank you for your presence with us today. We pray for our families and friends who are close to us in heart and mind, but physically distant. We pray for all who are ill, who are oppressed, and who have lost their faith in you. We pray for those who have not yet let you into their lives.

Holy Spirit, set our hearts alight so our worship will be ever more pleasing to you, so our prayers will change our minds instead of trying to get you to change yours, and so we may live our lives always trying to make a real difference to real people in this real world.

Transform our societies so broken people find healing, lonely people find companionship, bitter people find peace, and fearful and downtrodden people find hope. Help our world leaders and governments communicate openly and honestly to allow justice and peace to prevail. Heal the earth so its wondrous bounties will be safe and available to all.

Fill our lives with your presence so that all that we hope and say and do will be an expression of love to others, in praise of your glorious name.

Triune God, we thank you for your wondrous gifts in our church and in the world around us. We thank you for breathing the breath of the Holy Spirit into our lives and for setting our hearts on fire that we might use the gifts you have given each of us to help others in your name. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

### **Closing Hymn: VU 375 - Spirit of Gentleness, vs. 1,2,4**

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free,  
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness,  
Wind, Wind on the sea.

You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,  
then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;  
and over the eons you called to each thing:  
wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free,  
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness,  
Wind, Wind on the sea.

You moved through the desert, you stung with the sand,  
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;  
and when they were blinded with their idols and lies,  
then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free,  
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness,  
Wind, Wind on the sea.

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,  
from the bondage of sorrow the captives dreams dreams,  
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes,  
with bold new decisions your people arise.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free,  
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness,  
Wind, Wind on the sea.

## **Blessing**

Our hearts have been opened wide by the holy breath of God.  
We are eager to share your message of love, justice, and peace.

**Send us your Loving Spirit so we may  
share your love with all Creation, and all who inhabit it.**

Our souls have been set on fire by the holy fire of God.  
Holy Song, craft us to be your instruments  
attuned to lives of service and compassion.

**Send us your Guiding Spirit so we may  
offer hope to the earth and all who are in it.**

Loneliness and fear have been cast aside by the Spirit.  
May we use our spiritual gifts to heal a broken world.

**Strengthening Spirit, send us out so that we may  
bring holy peace to our homes and to our global community.**

Please help me to pray our regular blessing prayer given to us  
by our United Church Moderator, Rev. Dr. Richard Bott:

**Creator God: help us to reach out with our hearts  
when we can't touch with our hands;  
help us to be socially connected,  
when we have to be socially distant;  
help us to love as perfectly as we can,  
knowing that "perfect love casts out all fear." Alleluia! Amen.**

## **Postlude**

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**Call to Worship** and **Opening Prayer:** Adapted from and thanks to Alison Warner-Smith.

**Response to the Bible Readings:** Written by Rev. Rex A.E. Hunt.  
<https://www.rexaehuntprogressive.com/>

**Message:** Written by Nikos Kazantzakis, *Report to Greco*, "The Cry." © 1975, Simon & Schuster.

**Minute for Mission:** Sources: 1. United Church of Canada website with link to <https://www.dci-palestine.org/news> 2. *Minutes for Mission 2020*, July 19, 2020, "Protecting the Children." © 2019 The United Church of Canada. Arranged by Diane Trollope.

**Prayers of the Community** and **Blessing:** Written by Alison Warner-Smith.

**Closing Words:** Written by our Moderator, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Richard Bott.

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