

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

*We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation. We also acknowledge that the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – have lived on this land since before settlers of European descent claimed ownership and displaced those for whom it was home. As we pursue our goals to dismantle racism and attend to growing diversity, we lament this injustice in our history and commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.*

***May we live with respect on this land and live in peace and friendship with its people.***

➤ ***Dance with the Spirit***

***MV 156 (repeat)***

Call to Worship

Breathe upon us, Holy Spirit,  
**and inspire our worship with your truth.**

Stir in our hearts, Holy Spirit,  
**and fill us with your love.**

Strengthen us, Holy Spirit,  
**and move us to act with your power.**

Breathe in us, Holy Spirit,  
**and receive our prayers and praise.**

Let us come together in prayer...

† Prayer

As our worship begins, O God, we pause. We breathe deeply and try to be still within – hoping to know you – trusting that in the stillness there is dancing – trusting that as we open our hearts to you, your Holy Spirit enters.

We confess that pausing and stillness can be difficult for us. We confess that we resist the life you offer – we are scared to move forward – unsure of your direction – denying your lead.

Forgive us, O God. Breathe your spirit within us again and make us new. We pray together in Christ's name ***...Our Father, who art in heaven – hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come – thy will be done – on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***

Words of Hope

In Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven. Be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another. Thanks be to God for God's steadfast love and mercy!

† Prayer for Understanding

**Holy God of hope, breathe into us that we may live. Fill us with your sacred Word as we open ourselves to the scriptures today. May your Holy Spirit be our guide, our comfort, and our truth. Amen**

Scripture    **Ezekiel 37: 1-14**

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "*Mortal, can these bones live?*"

I answered, "*O Lord GOD, you know.*"

Then he said to me, "*Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.*"

So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, "*Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.*"

I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, "*Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely. Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.*"

**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.*"

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### Message – *The Day of Pentecost*

The formation of the church in Acts happens with all the drama that accompanies any birth. It is miraculous and inscrutable – there is a strangeness about how the church comes into being and how these once timid disciples find their tongues to speak up – to proclaim the truth of Christ. They are waiting and praying when all heaven breaks loose – cracks open – erupts sound and emotion like the very currents of air that swept across the waters at creation and made something out of nothing – the breath of God once again bringing something to life.

The same Spirit that moved over the face of the deep to bring order out of chaos in creation brings resurrection and gives birth – life – to the church. There are no barriers limiting the activity or effectiveness of this Spirit – it transcends boundaries of religion and race; language and learning; rank and status; gender and age. At Pentecost we are invited to share a vision of scandalous inclusion – the idea that everyone we meet bears something of the goodness of God. In the church, the Spirit gathers us in all our rich diversity for the common work and witness we share — the *missio dei* – God's sending into the world.

First the disciples heard it, then they saw it – fiery tongues of flame – representing the Holy Spirit – becoming the gift of other tongues – speech. The gift of proclamation has finally come to the tongue-tied followers of Jesus. Exciting! The moment of truth – Jesus is dead, risen, and ascended – at the right hand of God. The disciples have been taught, prodded, encouraged, entrusted with the good news. They have experienced the roaring entry of the Holy Spirit – driving wind and scorching flame – will they carry it on? Will they be filled with new wisdom and prompted to express themselves? Can they stand up in the face of opposition and accusations? Will they allow their timidity to be transformed by an infusion of divine enthusiasm? Can they become people who live by the Spirit? Will they speak?

And if they speak, who will listen? We are told that there are people from every nation under heaven present – involved in this cataclysmic event. A crowd has gathered. They are bewildered because each person hears the disciples speaking in their own language. The Holy Spirit has connected the people linguistically so that they can be joined in faith – joined in the salvation of Jesus Christ. The listeners are amazed and astonished – confused and suspicious. The in-breaking of the Spirit is profoundly unsettling and deeply threatening to those gathered.

As they devise an explanation – some rationalization for such irrationality – we are reminded of a similar experience near the beginning of Luke’s Gospel when Jesus visits his hometown synagogue. The community’s admiration turns to wrath when they are reminded of how the powerful love of God has erupted into the lives of foreigners – available to everyone. Once again, the power of God comes suddenly into an ordinary assembly of the faithful in a most extraordinary way – convention is disrupted by the divine. Once again everything hinges on the Spirit’s ability to set proclamation in motion – evoking bewilderment, scorn and questions.

In response to their questions Peter stands to speak – Peter who followed at a distance – who said, “I do not know him” – who wept in the courtyard in despair at his own betrayal. Peter – a disciple tested and found wanting – a disciple we can relate to, perhaps the disciple we are – Peter stands to speak.

In Genesis the Spirit of God breathed life into dust and created a human creature. In our scripture today from The Book of Acts the Spirit has breathed life into a once cowardly disciple and created a new person who has the gift of bold speech. Here in Jerusalem – fifty days after the Passover – Peter proclaims, echoing the prophet Joel, that God’s Spirit will be poured out on all people – sons, daughters, young, old, slave and free – that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Where do we get the idea that God only speaks to and through some people, whom we deem acceptable? This is a miracle of proclamation – those who had no tongue – no voice to speak the mighty works of God, now preach – share what they know to be true – openly and with confidence. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved – everyone. Luke’s vision of the restoration of Israel is scandalously inclusive.

*Spiritus – ruach – pneuma* – they all mean breath or wind. Spirit is an invisible phenomenon – no one can see the wind, only its effects. Spirit may at times be a rather fleeting thing. After all,

the refrain of the book of Ecclesiastes is that much of life seems like no more than a breath – a transient, vapory blip that disappears in an instant. However, we know that both wind and breath are not only invisible and sometimes fleeting but also awesome realities. The breath of life provided by someone offering CPR can be the difference between survival and death. And certainly we are aware of the fact that wind can be hugely destructive – consider the powerful windstorms that have thrashed our island and the devastation they have wrought. You don't need to be able to see the wind, or know where it comes from, to respect its reality – its power.

Today is the Day of Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit of God comes upon the church in power. Celtic Christians chose the wild goose as a symbol representing the Holy Spirit rather than the prettier, quieter white dove that is the more familiar icon. A wild goose is one noisy, bothersome bird as you may know. It is an image of the Holy Spirit that jars us out of our complacency – moves us beyond predictable patterns of comfortable behaviour. The Holy Spirit is the creative breath of God that fills our hearts like each intake of breath fills our lungs. You know that if we take the oxygen out of a room anyone in that room will soon die. Take the Holy Spirit out of the church, and the church will die. Without the Holy Spirit, the church is dead – we are dead.

The coming of the Spirit didn't just happen to Peter. It didn't just happen to the disciples. The coming of the Spirit is not some exotic phenomenon that is hidden and of purely personal significance. This outpouring of the Spirit is wild – sometimes noisy and bothersome – there is wind and fire – loud talk – buzzing confusion – public debate. The Spirit is all about God's sending – about the church going public with good news – attracting a crowd – encouraging people to stare and wonder. This new breath of air is set loose on the earth – provoking a storm of wrath and confusion for some – clearing a way of hope and empowerment for others.

Despite what some may suggest, Pentecost is not the complete reversal of Babel. We still can't understand each other – we routinely miscommunicate – we gather, and we gripe, betraying the unity Christ has called us to as his body. But the good news of today's Acts story – the good news of all our gathering – is not that the church has a mission – but that God's mission has a church.

We are part of communities of faith that participate in the ongoing experience of the Holy Spirit – driving wind and scorching flame – will we carry it on? Will we be filled with new wisdom and prompted to express ourselves? We assemble to be dispersed – to be mistaken for the drunken fools for Christ that we are – to speak and to act not by our own wits but through the Spirit's life-giving power. Will we allow our timidity to be transformed by an infusion of divine enthusiasm? Can we become people who live by the Spirit – speaking up so that everyone – everyone – will be saved?

God is continually at work within us – the Spirit accompanies us on our journey of faith, enabling us to face whatever challenges we encounter. We continue seeking the winds of God – tongues of fire and the outpouring of the Spirit – to elevate our gifts, loosen our tongues, inspire our actions and open our hearts yet again. May the in-rushing breath of the Holy Spirit invigorate and encourage us all. ***Come, Holy Spirit!*** Amen

† Prayer

We have heard your word, O God, and we have felt the entry of your breath in us. We have felt the wonder of your life come to fullness within us – and we celebrate it today. What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears, what our hands have touched – this we proclaim: that you are the most High God – the Maker of all things – the one who is able to bring all things out of nothing – to bring life out of death.

Visit this awakening in our minds and upon our hearts, we pray. Enable us to grasp its truth, to take ownership of this reality – for the sake of our life as a community of faith. Help us address the decay and death that is within and around us with a faithful heart. Make rivers of living water well up within and pour forth from us that bone many come unto bone, – sinew and flesh may cover that which is naked – and that the breath of life may be in all.

O God – we pray for the blowing of your Holy Spirit upon each one of us. For the rescue of those who are dead in hope and in heart – for those who deny the power of your hand and the goodness of your will – and for the enlightenment of those who fail to understand.

Hear these prayers for ourselves and for others – and hear too all that we ask now for our world, for our nation, for our community, for our church, and for our neighbours...

O Lord, hear our prayer and in your loving mercy, reassure us of your answer as we pray in the name of Jesus. the Christ. Amen

† Offering and Prayer

At Pentecost, God poured out gifts of the Spirit upon the church, to equip Christ's followers to bear witness to him throughout the world. We offer our gifts and our lives to God, so that the witness of the Church will continue with the blessing of the Holy Spirit in this generation and beyond.

**Spirit of grace and power, bless the gifts we offer so that they accomplish surprising things in Jesus' name. Bless our lives, too, so that our words and actions may bear witness to Jesus' love and mercy every day. Amen**

Blessing

May our lives be transformed by God's forgiveness and grace – may our actions be informed by the wisdom of Word and Spirit – may the love of Jesus be at the heart of all we do. And may the grace of the Risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit go with us all.