

Welcome/Announcements/Land Acknowledgement Lilian Sutherland

As followers of Jesus, we are compelled to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. It is our love of God and neighbour that leads us to acknowledge that we gather with gratitude on traditional and unceded Coast Salish Territory of Lkwungen people. We pray that past and present injustices can be reconciled as we commit ourselves again to just and respectful relationships.

➤ *Come, Holy Spirit (Gaither)*

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.

➤ *Come, O Holy Spirit*

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✠ Gathering Prayer / the Lord's Prayer / Words of Hope

Come, Holy Spirit, breath of God – come and inspire your church, inspire us. Come, Holy Spirit, wind of God - come and take your church by storm, blowing away from us all lethargy, pride, and despair. Come, Holy Spirit, fire of God – come and burn in us and for us, set your church on fire for the gospel.

We confess you to be the one who breaths life into us, O God, yet we resist filling our lungs and our being with you. We confess you to be the one who can take us by storm, O God, yet we fight to hold onto things of this world that you would blow away. We confess you to be the one who sets us on fire, O God, yet we dampen your flame with pettiness and empty routine.

Holy One, forgive us. Come, Holy Spirit – breath and wind and fire – may we be filled and sustained by you as we boldly pray... ***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***

Believe the good news... In Christ Jesus, you are forgiven. The Holy Spirit is with you always. Thanks be to God!

✠ Prayer for Understanding **Kathy Bracken**

Living God, you have created all that is. Send forth your Spirit to renew and restore us, that we may proclaim your good news in ways and words that everyone will understand and believe. Amen

Scripture **Acts 2:1-21** [NT 119]

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."*

Romans 8:14-17 [NT 158]

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God; for you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption.

When we cry, *"Abba! Father!"* it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

John 14:8-17 [NT 108]

Philip said to him, *"Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."*

Jesus said to him, *"Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you."*

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Message

Gloves are that item of clothing that often gets forgotten – at school – at church – at a concert. We wear them somewhere and then set them down when we arrive. Gloves are a common find in lost-and-found boxes everywhere. Once Steve lost a glove only to find it some days later on a regular dog walking route – probably just where he had dropped it! Some are small – some are large – made out of leather – knit from cozy yarn – fancy velour like this pair from a second-hand store find...

What do they look like? They are all hand shaped, but they are floppy – they just stay where you put them. They look like hands – but can they do what hands do?

No, they cannot. They are lifeless.

What is the purpose of gloves? They are to protect our hands from harm or injury – cold or dirt – they are to keep us warm and help us look stylish or give us a better grip.

There are many kinds of gloves: sporting gloves – working gloves – driving gloves – boxing gloves – golf gloves – rubber gloves – gardening gloves... They can all be useful but are ineffective until they are worn – filled with a hand. They are of the right material – the right shape, but when empty they are limp and lifeless.

The church can fall into the trap of being like that. It has the right shape – looks great – attractive, even stylish – it protects, but it can be floppy, fatigued, drained, and dull. The church is the body of Christ – in the image of God – but can be lifeless if the Holy Spirit is not working in its members.

Each finger of a glove needs to be filled for there to be life in it. Each person in a community of faith needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit for there to be life in the church.

The disciples were like that on the first Pentecost. They were all together, but they were afraid to do anything, they were listless, unmoving and without hope. However, when the Holy Spirit came and filled them – as the hand fills the glove – they came alive. They could engage in their calling and proclaim the good news.

It is not enough for us to look like the church – we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and live like the church – like the body of Christ, passionate and spirited in the world.

And so we come to Pentecost...

This is one of those outstanding transformative moments in the scriptures! Yet I sometimes feel discomforted by it – this is not a story for those of us who like to remain in control!

In Acts, Chapter 2, we encounter a story that is both captivating and mysterious. It is spontaneous, powerful, loud, surprising and chaotic – almost like some kind of mass hysteria as people are swept up into group euphoria where control is lost and anything could happen! Even things I have not planned!

The Holy Spirit is not something that comes from us or is under our power. There is such a thing as the human spirit, of course – the source of our imagination and creativity. It enables poets, painters, artists of all kinds to express their gifts and it inspires magnificent works in music, literature and art. But when we speak of the “Holy Spirit” we move beyond the human realm to speak of the divine – a force beyond human manipulation. Similar to the wind, the Holy Spirit is not something we can manage or direct.

On this day – this moment of Pentecost – what actually happens is the transformation of a community from holy huddle to powerful witnesses and a kind of big-bang that would

scatter the good news of Jesus all over the world. It is called the birth of the church – our birth as a community of faith.

It is a story of the breath of God alive in the world. How will this change things – change me? What vision of the body of Christ will God's gift of the Holy Spirit enable?

It is a story of hope – about how an encounter with the life-giving Spirit of God can set us free from the constraints that bind us, breaking down barriers and opening new horizons.

Luke wants us to know that this experience was unexpected, unrehearsed, unbidden – that in this moment new gifts are released – gifts which transform the world. We often try to explain away the mystery and power of such events described in scripture – to limit and control the big-ness and boldness of God's action.

We can do the same thing in our own lives – limiting our exposure to risk – to challenge – to conviction. We take great pains to hedge our bets – not stick our necks out – to avoid embarrassment. I love to watch young children at the market when Steve plays. They often skip and dance – they twirl or sway to the music with a sense of abandon – without a care in the world. Wee ones can respond to life with a certain freedom. No rhyme or reason – no bother – no purpose but fun – not a care in the world or a fear of looking silly. What is it I've seen on fridge magnets: *Dance like no one is watching?* Unlimited – unconstrained – filled with life.

How do we lose that? Where does it go? I want it back – want to do something just a bit spontaneous and surprising and bold – something that might make people wonder if I was filled with new wine – drunk on the Holy Spirit!

There is a wonderful quote, often attributed to Nelson Mandela, but actually from Marianne Williamson's book, "A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles". She says:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to

shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Part of the miracle of Pentecost is the gift of saying a resounding "yes!" to the Holy Spirit that encourages us to allow our light to shine without apology – to be people filled with the Spirit and therefore willing to take the risk of being open to God's work of transformation in and through us.

At Pentecost a new community is formed that sweeps past traditional walls of language and race. It is as if God is saying that the safe and familiar barriers behind which we like to establish and control community are not the plan of God. God's plan is to liberate us by the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can participate without reservation in relationship with Christ. We are children of God – adopted by God's grace – not because we earned our place but because God chooses us.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are no longer slaves – without status and insecure – but we are the privileged sons and daughters of God. And this radical new community with the very life of God is now extended to all humanity regardless of background, culture, race and language – a totally new community is born.

This new community – what we call "the church" – the body of Christ – is meant to be alive – animated and useful like gloves are once we put them on. We are meant to be transformed by it in ways that we cannot control or predict. This Holy-Spirit-filled community of faith is meant to be fiery and breathtaking and risky. The Holy Spirit is more than a little dangerous.

I know that might strike you as a bit odd. After all, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the helper – the advocate – the one who is on our side. We are also told that the fruits of the Spirit are things like peace and joy. And it is true that to be in a relationship with Jesus Christ does bring a peace that passes all understanding but remember what I have told you before – the peace of Christ is not the same as security.

The first thing the Spirit does after descending upon Jesus at his baptism is to drive him out into the desert for an intense encounter with the devil. Imagine it... the desert – a place traditionally identified with temptation and trial. Be advised – there is nothing cautious about associating with the Holy Spirit. You will be challenged – transformed.

The invitation of Pentecost is to say “yes” to the Holy Spirit – both as individuals and as a church – to be open to seeing ourselves beyond the narrow and ashamed constraints and limitations we have allowed others to place on us and to be open to forming new community with God and with God’s world. With the Holy Spirit – if you are open to it – you become the child of God you are intended to be – together we become the church God calls us to be – manifesting the glory of God that is within us. Unlimited – unconstrained – filled with life. **Amen**

➤ *Spirit of God, descend upon my heart*

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✠ Offering and Prayer

Pentecost celebrates the gifts of the Spirit poured out on the Church, preparing Christ’s followers to serve him. Our offering today builds up the ministry and mission of Christ’s church here and elsewhere, in his name.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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Life-giving Holy Spirit, bring to the bones of these gifts the flesh of our actions and the breath of our caring so that our church and our service to others may come to life in your name. Amen

✠ Pastoral Prayers

Empowering God, you gave us the abiding presence of your Holy Spirit. Look upon your church today and hear our prayers.

Through our study of your Word – our relationships – our songs and prayers – our joy in creation – through all these things we have come to know something of you. In a broken world, we have felt your nudging in our hearts.

Help us create a community of faith where it is safe to ask the bigger questions of life. In our sharing, questioning, and searching may we find all we need in you, O God.

In the space between the shared stories of our lives, O God, we have found you – whispering, encouraging, healing. Blow through our lives again. Help us to tell the stories of your wonderful works in and among us.

We pray for all that seems important to us – for things we notice – for those concerns that touch our lives...

Guide leaders of all nations, O Lord. May all in positions of authority and power seek to be just, wise and compassionate.

Comfort all who suffer this day, O Lord, especially those who have no voice to speak for their needs. May all those in circumstances of war, poverty, and oppression be held in your close embrace and feel the joy of your presence.

Heal all who are broken this day, O Lord. May those who are ill receive the treatment and care they need. May those who are weighed down by loss or grief or failure find release in the gift of your Spirit. May all of us see and acknowledge the frailty of our own lives, knowing that by your grace we are made whole. Hear the concerns of our hearts...

Grant that gathered and directed by your Spirit, we may confess Christ as Lord and combine our diverse gifts with the passion to continue Jesus' mission in this world. **Amen**

➤ *She comes sailing on the wind*

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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.

➤ *Go now in peace*

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