



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

Pentecost

10am – Sunday 31 May 2020

This service can be accessed from the Knox Church YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYksSjG0If00NeogNIGs7A>

or, after the live service concludes, from the Knox Church website <https://knoxchurch.net/>

Pre service music from around 9.45 am

Welcome and call to worship

Hymn

(tune Down Ampney) from Church Hymnary - Bianco da Siena, trans. Richard Littledale

1 Come down, O Love Divine,
seek out this soul of mine,
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

2 O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let your glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path
illuming.

3 Let holy charity
my outward vesture be,
and lowliness becomes my inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with
loathing.

4 And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human
telling;
we cannot guess its grace,
till we become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

Opening prayer, assurance of forgiveness and the announcement of peace

Children – Rachel Tombs

Readings – read by Benjamin Thew

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 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.'

John 20:19-23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Anthem

Reflection "Power for witness"

Prayer - God who speaks every language of every people, crossing every barrier of ability and disability, we ask you, step into our lives as we seek your Spirit to empower and send us. In Christ. Amen.

A question – knowing what you now know about what happened at Pentecost, when the invitation came, would you have accepted that invitation? I have to confess that I might hover between yes and no. The possibility of being in a confined space with people thought to be drunk doesn't appeal to me. I've been with drunk people and they're unpredictable and at times scary. They're not inhibited by social expectations so you're not sure what they will say or do. And I wouldn't like to be thought of as drunk. And we know about the disorder, violent wind and tongues as of fire and the speaking in different languages. Whereas I like order. The two words used of Presbyterian process are "decency and order". We like an agenda and guidelines, one person speaking at a time, people addressing the issue. but Pentecost was messy. And then the possibility that I might not understand what was happening to me because I had not experienced this before, speaking in languages that others understand. I like to be in control of my own behaviour and make thoughtful contributions. So if the invitation came, yes or no? When we wonder about turning up at an event, much depends on who does the inviting. The disciples knew enough of Jesus to trust his invitation - "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ... "The invitation is to receive power, but do we want power? I know people who don't like the word because they have experienced power as power to direct or power over or the power that made them do what they don't want to do. And we may know the people who seem to like power, people whose egos need bolstering with something other than their natural gifts, people who like to control what happens, gatekeepers. They put us off power. And don't we already have enough power? Our congregation has a building to gather in, a history and a heritage and knowledge and a way of doing things that has worked for many generations. We have good music and a mix of gifts and more. Maybe we can get by without the power of the Holy Spirit.

But the challenge is this – that we are called to more than what we ourselves can generate. To witness. And nothing I listed about the church will take us on to the street with Jesus for Jesus. Maybe we can talk about the church, but that's marketing. It's not witnessing. Those early disciples weren't exactly marketable. Judas had been one of the inner circle – how would they explain what he did? And Peter denied Jesus three times at the crucial moment. How would they explain that? And then when Jesus was

crucified, they all ran away. There wasn't a lot here to market. As is so for us, their lives did not speak for themselves.

Witnessing is what comes from within, through the Spirit. Witnessing is pointing beyond ourselves to Jesus and what Jesus does in our world. For that, we need power, because none of this comes naturally. Power to overcome our hesitation to speak, because we don't want to be glib or simplistic or judgmental. Power to overcome barriers of culture and language and distrust. Power to receive the gospel from people we didn't expect to receive it from – religious Jews received from ignorant Galileans. The power of the Spirit created relationships beyond their natural circle.

At Pentecost a lot happened in the room – the wind, the tongues as of fire, the speaking in the languages of people. But much more happened on the street, where people were amazed by hearing their own language. I want to draw on thoughts from John Flett a New Zealander who teaches theology in Melbourne. He says that the Holy Spirit is not for our sake, but for the sake of the world, that the blessing we receive from Jesus is not for us for our sakes, but so that we can witness in our community. If we stay in the room, soaking in the spirit, inwardly focused, that is not Christian faith nor is it church. John ritualises that understanding. When he leads worship, near the end of the service for the pronouncement of the benediction, he asks people to face the door of the church, because the blessing is for people to be a blessing to their community.

Power for witnessing. The power of God's Spirit, the Spirit who renews creation, the Spirit who points to the wondrous work of Jesus in our world, the Spirit who makes us part of what God is doing. That is why we exist. That is what we are for. So the invitation – yes or no?

Prayer for others and the Lord's Prayer – led by John Elder

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.

Hymn

1 Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,
you have chosen me to be –
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

2 Like a mother you enfold me,
hold my life within your own,
feed me with your very body,
form me of your flesh and bone.

3 Like a father you protect me,
teach me the discerning eye,
hoist me up upon your shoulder,
let me see the world from high.

(tune Ellen) from Church Hymnary - Shirley Murray

4 Friend and lover, in your closeness
I am known and held and blessed:
in your promise is my comfort,
in your presence I may rest.

5 Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,
you have chosen me to be –
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

Blessing

We continue to appreciate all tithes, gifts and offerings. Our bank account number is 03 0903 0016425 00 and our charity number for tax rebate purposes is #CC52318.

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