



St Stephens Williamstown Uniting Church in Australia
Service of the Word at Home - during Coronavirus Lockdown
Pentecost Sunday Year A 31st May 2020 & National Reconciliation Week (27 May-3 June)
 Prepared by Rev S. Juliette Maua^î



*Place a cross and Bible on a table (if possible) with a **Red** cloth - today's Liturgical Colour.*
Prepare reflective music, hymns as you feel prompted. Open YouTube to copy then paste link OR click on link. Use a bell, wind chimes, red flag, red material to wave where indicated... or close your eyes and use your imagination!

Readings: Acts 2:1-21 Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 20:19-23

(Choose your hymn/ song to play and sing along... you might have a hymn/ song ready to play on YouTube)

Song: Welcome Holy Spirit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8M1SvGuSjo>

Call to Worship *adapted from Acts 2:1-6 The Message*

“When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
 Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, - no one could tell where it came from.
 It filled the whole building.”

(Bell, wind chimes, red flag, red material / close your eyes and use your imagination!)

“Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread; they started speaking in different languages as the Spirit prompted them.”

(Bell, wind chimes, red flag, red material / close your eyes and use your imagination / maybe with “tongues on fire” and say):

“This is the day our God has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!” or <https://youtu.be/ANWtBeVkyxs> *(our Children might appreciate this as they shake a tambourine, blow a harmonica, or express in dance the moving of the Holy Spirit)*

(Choose your hymn/ song to play and sing along... you might have a hymn/ song ready to play on YouTube)

Song suggestion: TIS 405 O Spirit of the living God <https://youtu.be/8RvfYXWgeSk> or
 (contemporary song) Spirit of the living God <https://youtu.be/Y2t3TfhoNE8>



Opening Prayer

Welcome Holy Spirit! We are in your presence.
 Be with us as we praise our God in our home worship,
 worshipping in Spirit; joining our Uniting Church families and families of other Faiths,
 and for families who are of No Faith.
 Be with us in our spiritual gathering in these changing times we adapt to and must come to accept.

We ask for your Holy Spirit to descend on us as Jesus asked on our behalf,
 and just as your Holy Spirit did in that upper room of our ancestors many years ago.

Holy Spirit sustain each of us; Holy Spirit live inside of us every day,
 In the Name of Jesus, we come to worship this Pentecost Sunday! **Amen!**

Song suggestion: TIS 408 O Breath of God breathe on us now... <https://youtu.be/rTi5D-Ef3Bk>

Prayer of Confession

Holy Spirit - wind, fire like tongues of flame, and as *ruach* - breath of life:
 at times we forget that you know us deeply.

But here we are to confess that our sins have separated us from you, and from each other.

We acknowledge we often ask for forgiveness, yet we struggle to forgive.
 Where we fall short, grant us your peace; grant us your healing forgiveness.
 Breathe upon us the grace of your Holy Spirit to aid us to forgive others and ourselves.

Silence...

Words of Assurance

Friends in Christ,
 Hear the words of Jesus: “Peace be with you”, “Receive the Holy Spirit”, “Your sins are forgiven”!

Thanks be to God!



Time with our Yong Ones – Watch with your children suggested “Song” & “Story” refer Acts 2:1-21

Song: Psalm 104:35b Bless the Lord, O my soul <https://youtu.be/iC8RXIO-ujg>

Children’s Story - God Sends the Holy Spirit <https://youtu.be/OMQKy1Mx49M>

Reflections: *Holy Spirit promises in the birthing of the early church at Pentecost – what does Pentecost mean for you to live by the Spirit as charged by Jesus, as “sent” people of God?*

A few weeks ago, I invited Janet and Iris to contribute to our Pentecost Sunday service at home, and they did. God’s people never cease to amaze me when they are invited to share. Moreover, their sharing raises more theological questions and prayerful discernment in our ministry and as believers of Jesus sent out into the world to live-out Jesus’ mission as sent from our God.

Let me introduce Janet’s Pentecost contributions that include the discipline of *Haiku* – an unrhymed verse form of Japanese origin having three lines containing usually five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. A haiku expresses much and suggests more in the fewest possible words. The form gained distinction in the 17th century, when Basho, a Japanese poet considered the greatest practitioner of the form, elevated it to a highly refined art. It remains Japan’s most popular poetic form. The Imagist poets (1912-30) and others have imitated the form in English and other languages.

We can therefore appreciate Janet’s gift of Haiku and the detailed definition given above that speaks into today’s Reflections of Pentecost and living by the Spirit as sent people of God.

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/haiku#note-1>

As you refer to Janet’s attachment (**Meaning of Pentecost2**), note any words that might help you to discern how the Disciples may have felt in that upper room, listening to Jesus’ final discourse to them, in preparation for their ministry without Jesus but with the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wind, fire, and breath of the in-dwelling Advocate upon them as ‘sent people’ of God, they were going to be amazed, perplexed, and utterly diverse and ready to be unlocked into their ministry and mission!



In the same token, treasure the relationships made, past, present, and still to emerge, and allow yourself to be “drunk” in the Spirit, as Iris so aptly shares in her reflections. For it is in Iris’ sharing with peoples of all walks of life, mothers, clergy, children whom, I am in no doubt, were led by the Spirit of Pentecost. **Open Iris’s attachment (Pentecost Sunday – “On Fire!”)**, and read her experiences and witness of Pentecost in days gone that are still relevant today, depending on your views and in particular contexts. The COVID-19 pandemic has no doubt been a curse and a blessing, as Disciples sent amidst our current life of lockdown, restrictions, of acceptance to our reality, and navigating relationships, our economy, death, and how the easing of restrictions should tell us, if we wish to take the learnings from #Stay Home, Stay Safe – in this together – and allow the Spirit of God to transform us for a changed way of future discipleship and ministry.

It is the relationships Iris talks about amidst Pentecost revival and Janet’s profound words in Haiku poetry we can reflect on today, that I pause on John 20:19-23.

That is, in light of Pentecost Sunday and the unfinished business of Australia’s past history and reluctance to fully address the true history of missionary and explorers’ implicit and explicit colonisations of our First Peoples. Moreover, the injustices that still exist towards our First Peoples and which is resonated globally for example, in this week’s death in the USA of Mr George Floyd, draws me to ponder on being “sent peoples of God” (John 20:21), commissioned in the Spirit as Jesus “breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (20:22).



Then, as I ponder on where do we allow the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost and, as the apostle John in 20:19-23 has packed a lot in these five verses this Pentecost Sunday in v.23 that says, “if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”; if we are open to the wind, fire, and breath of the Advocate in the Church in the world, then we cannot by-pass or remain unspoken to forgiveness, the forgive-er and the forgive-en, in the light of First Peoples and marginalised minorities and people of colour.

How do you forgive – on any level? What is your response to – forgive and forget? Is it easy to be the “forgiver” or does the balance of power become detrimental to the process of forgiveness?



If turning the other cheek is part of your process of forgiveness “because I’m a Christian and I have to forgive”, does this then render you a passive battered victim whom you do not see yourself as ‘victim’?

And what do you say to others who have not walked in your shoes, but are impatient with you because it sounds like you are whining or they say that you have a chip on your shoulder? Yet, they were not ‘colonised’ and told your pagan culture or cultural beliefs are ungodly and not Christian!

In dedication to National Reconciliation Week, let us remember our Australian sisters and brothers who “20 years ago, hundreds of thousands of First and Second Peoples walked together for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and later in cities and towns across Australia, coming together in a way that was never seen before.” – *Stuart McMillan* 29/05/20 Facebook Page (past President UCA).

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/>

Let us pray for the Holy Spirit fire to unearth ‘Truth and Reconciliation’ (*see note below***) in light of this week’s USA Minnesota death of the late Mr George Floyd, and where Justine Ruszczuk Damond’s Australian family hoped Minneapolis police would have learned from the incident at the hands of a former Minneapolis police officer but to no avail, which this week Mr Floyd’s death at the hands of the Minnesota police office, has now ignited fury and a community in riot, which is not right either. (Minneapolis is in the state of Minnesota).

Perhaps, we need to acknowledge and accept that we cannot truly believe, nor can we know ‘peace’, nor is it possible for us to be ‘sent’ to be Christ in the world, nor are we able to truly forgive others and ourselves, unless we receive Jesus into our lives and receive fully to be Spirit-led, in the name of God who sent the Son, Jesus Christ risen and whom the Holy Spirit now walks and empowers you and I.

If we are burdened by the things we have done or not done; if we seek forgiveness but are not forgiven; if have the power to forgive but do not grant forgiveness, then may I remind you although we may be overwhelmed by loss, longing, loneliness, and/or lacking justice, God is still working and walking with us; renewing and re-creating the cosmos and humanity, sending forth his Spirit in our lives to renew what is ruined and recreate that which we need to sustain and edify our broken relationships with one another and restore the earth.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said this about reconciliation and forgiveness:

“True reconciliation is based on forgiveness, and forgiveness is based on true confession, and confession is based on penitence, on contrition, on sorrow for what you have done. We know that when a husband and wife have quarreled, one of them must be ready to say the most difficult words in any language, “I’m sorry,” and the other must be ready to forgive for there to be a future for their relationship. This is true between parents and children, between siblings, between neighbors, and between friends. Equally, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the lives of nations are not just airy-fairy religious and spiritual things, nebulous and unrealistic. They are the stuff of practical politics.”

(*see note above***) - ‘Truth and Reconciliation’ (refer to Nobel Peace Prize 1984, retired Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, 1996 who served as Chairman of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and His book “God Has a Dream” (Doubleday, 2004),

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/truth_and_reconciliation

Let us be diligent, on fire and alive, praying for the Holy Spirit to lead us into all things. Let us begin by speaking truth into our broken relationships and our relationship with Mother Earth. Might we pray in the Spirit to give us courage of truth to right the wrongs we have imposed on others and the earth, and to be open to the sustaining gift of the Holy Spirit awakening us to persevere towards truth and reconciliation. Then perhaps Friends, our understanding of forgiveness is made possible in the Holy Spirit where the victim and perpetrator will be restored by grace, healed and made whole in God who raised us up in Jesus, the risen Christ, in whom we have life! Amen!



The Lord’s Prayer... *pray in Silence, pray aloud, or sing the Lord’s Prayer in your cultural language.*

Call for Offering

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Cor 12:7)
Your offering will be gratefully received for Christ's ministry and mission in the world.

Offertory Prayer

Blessed Holy Spirit,
grant your blessing upon our stewardship of giving.
Manifest our offerings of food, time and energy, prayer and money,
for the work you call us to fulfil
in the name of the Triune God. **Amen.**

Song: TIS 411 Filled with the Spirit's power... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK_erOT_1IQ



Closing Prayer

Spirit God,
Thank you for the renewing strength of your Holy Spirit.
Guide us into the week for preparations and conversations
towards a gradual opening of our place of worship in safe discernment.
Fire our spirit towards your spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation for injustices
and towards walking closely alongside our First Peoples in Australia, as Second
Peoples in this together.
Fuel us with courage and truth led by your Holy Spirit,
in Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

Go in Peace in the Name of God:
Who created us; breathing Spirit upon us.
Who redeemed us; in the risen Son Jesus.
and always sustains us; in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. **Amen!**

May the Peace of the Lord be with you always! May you know the Spirit of the Paraclete walks alongside you with joy!

Adapted Worship resources from the Service of Prayers by Roberto Ochoa, UCC Associate.. Permission granted to adapt or reproduce worship resources for worship.

Acknowledgements – thank you Iris and Janet for your thoughtful and provoking Pentecost contributions that I hope will stir the Spirit within us to be inspired and on fire for the ministry of God in a changed world.

African Proverb, Ghana – “If you want to speak to God, tell it to the wind.”