

# ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



19 MAY 2024

PENTECOST



# WORSHIP AT HOME

*This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.*

*Set aside a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are. We join with them all.*

*Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.*

## **GREETING:**

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ  
And the love of God  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all  
**And also with you**

## **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:**

Today is a celebration of the Spirit and all are welcome to this celebration.

The rhythm of breath – drawing air in, and sighing it out –  
pulses in all of creation.

It is a simple sign of the resurrection;  
of the life that cannot be quenched,  
even by death itself.

We know what it is to breathe,  
our lives depend on it  
even as they depend on Christ,  
risen, alive and present.

## **CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people;  
And kindle in us the fire of your love.

Breathe the Spirit into us, Jesus, and teach us to sing,  
to worship, with every breath

And to live the inspiration that is your resurrection.

**Amen.**

## **HYMN 675 – ‘Lord the light of your love...’**

Lord, the light of Your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness, shining  
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth You now bring us

Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy

Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light

Lord, I come to Your awesome presence  
From the shadows into Your radiance  
By the blood, I may enter Your brightness  
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness

Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light

As we gaze on Your kingly brightness  
So our faces display Your likeness  
Ever-changing from glory to glory  
Mirrored here, may our lives tell Your story

Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light

## **PRAYER OF ADORATION:**

Loving and eternal God, we come to worship you in wonder and in gladness. You have blessed us and made yourself known to us in countless loving ways in your creation of a world that is full of your glory, in your coming to us in Jesus Christ to bring us back to yourself, and through your presence in the power of the Holy Spirit whose presence inspires our worship.

Today we recall with special thanksgiving and adoration your coming in the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Let us all be blessed now with that great gift that we may faithfully worship and serve you Lord God in the power of the Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

In penitence and faith, let us confess our sins to almighty God in a moment of silence.

...

Let us pray together:

**Merciful God,  
Our maker and our judge,  
We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed:  
We have not loved you with our whole heart,  
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;  
We repent, and our sorry for all our sins  
Father, forgive us.  
Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life;  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

Hear the assurance of the apostle Paul , "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.". Paul proclaims that in Christ, no matter what you have done you are not bound by the past. And so I declare to you Christ's word of forgiveness: Your sins are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **PASSING OF THE PEACE:**

Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body by dying on the cross and rising to new life.

We meet in his name and share his peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

## **THE SERVICE OF THE WORD:**

Your Word, Oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet;

### **A light to our path**

#### **John 15:26-27, 16:4a-15 (New Living Translation)**

26 "But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. 27 And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.

4 Yes, I'm telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning. I didn't tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer.

5 "But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. 6 Instead, you grieve because of what I've told you. 7 But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't, the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment. 9 The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in me. 10 Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. 11 Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.

12 "There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. 14 He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'

#### **Acts 2:1-21 (New Living Translation)**

2 On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. 2 Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. 3 Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. 4 And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

5 At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. 6 When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

7 They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, 8 and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! 9 Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, 10 Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” 12 They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.

13 But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

14 Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. 15 These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. 16 No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

17 ‘In the last days,’ God says,

‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions,

and your old men will dream dreams.

18 In those days I will pour out my Spirit

even on my servants—men and women alike—

and they will prophesy.

19 And I will cause wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below—

blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

20 The sun will become dark,

and the moon will turn blood red

before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives.

21 But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord

will be saved.’

This is the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

## **HYMN 404 – ‘Lord God, the Spirit Blest’**

Lord God, the Spirit blest,  
in this accepted hour,  
as on the day of Pentecost,  
descend with all your power;  
we meet with one accord  
in this your holy place,  
and wait the promise of our Lord,  
the Spirit of all grace.

Like mighty rushing wind  
upon the waves beneath,  
move with one impulse every mind,  
one soul, one feeling breathe:  
the young, the old inspire  
with wisdom from above;

and give us hearts and tongues of fire  
to pray, and praise, and love.

Spirit of light! explore,  
and chase our gloom away,  
with lustre shining more and more  
towards the perfect day:  
Spirit of truth! alone  
in life and death our guide;  
come, Spirit of adoption! now  
may we be sanctified.

## SERMON: ‘Celebration and Sadness’

May the meditations of our hearts and our minds be always acceptable in your sight, God our strength and our redeemer.

**Amen**

In our reading from John’s gospel today we are told the disciples are sad that Jesus speaks so openly and frequently of his return to the Father in heaven. Yet Jesus tells them that this is a good thing because when this does happen, he will send the Spirit in his wake. What I would like to show today is that the presence of the Spirit doesn’t necessarily make that sadness go away. But the Father and the Son, through the Spirit help us see hope and beauty in the world alongside our sadness. And that’s something worth celebrating.

In the verse from John 15 that I’m talking about, Jesus says

“But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you.” Another translation puts it even more poetically “Because I have spoken to you, grief has filled your heart”.

I think we can all relate to how sad it is to lose someone we feel has had a positive impact on our lives. You might have had a minister that you knew was leaving but you very much wished they could stay.

Think how intensely the disciples would have felt this. Jesus had taught them amazing things, built up a huge following, and shown incredible courage by challenging the authorities on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. They believed their movement would be doomed without his passion and power. Yet here he is telling his disciples he must leave them. They felt abandoned.

But Jesus has something life-giving in store. Jesus says “If I do go away, then I will send [The Spirit] to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.” We get a bit uncomfortable with talk of sin and judgement but what Jesus is talking about here is not punishment. It’s about making the world right by ridding it of evil, injustice and suffering. The Spirit will carry the message to the disciples and beyond that the world is transforming around them.

And this is where we come to the Pentecost story in Acts. Up to then, Jesus had only been able to speak to his own little world of 1st century Palestine. But the Spirit that Jesus sends will bring the good news to the four corners of the world. How so? Well in our Acts reading we hear that a sound like a mighty windstorm filled the house of believers and tongues of fire settled on each of them and all of a sudden they could speak in different languages. In the blink of an eye, the gospel message is understandable to so many more groups of people with their different languages. The Spirit is working in the world.

It all sounds very big and spectacular, doesn't it? And I suppose the story of Pentecost as told in Acts is spectacular. But the Spirit is not about spectacle. The Spirit is life. It infuses everything. And coming from Christ and the Father it gives us meaning and purpose. Often the problem is not that the Spirit is absent. It's that we take it for granted. We don't appreciate that it brings life to all the people and places and experiences we hold dear.

Understandably, we find it difficult to feel the presence of the Spirit in our sickness and sadness. I can't tell you why we live in a world with such pain and suffering. Sometimes, like the disciples, we feel like Jesus has abandoned us. But what I can tell you is that God longs for us to be God's children. We become God's children not simply by believing the right thing or saying the right prayers. Instead, it is through our faith in Christ who sends the Spirit in a way that can transform our hearts. It inspires and empowers us to love the creation given to us by God, even and especially when that creation is suffering.

This Pentecost I hope we can celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the many gifts that flow from it - like church, friends, family, kindness, lovers, beauty, wisdom - insert whatever you feel is life-giving. The sadness that we feel should not be denied but it need not lead to despair. This is because the Spirit is everywhere giving us life.

Perhaps a key out of the prison of our own despair is figuring out how to make the gifts of life available to those less fortunate than ourselves. Visit someone in a nursing home or hospital. Be a good listener to someone who is going through psychological struggles. Offer practical support to someone experiencing financial hardship. But don't just give them sympathy or charity. Show them the beauty of the Spirit by being curious, humorous, open and loving.

It should be liberating to know that sadness and celebration need not be strangers. There is no pressure to live up to a false ideal of never-ending happiness. In a hurting world Christ sends the Spirit of hope and joy. That is abundance and for that we give thanks to God.

Amen.

## **HYM 406 – 'Spirit Divine Attend our Prayers'**

1 Spirit divine, attend our prayers  
and make this house your home;  
descend with all your gracious powers:  
O come, great Spirit, come.

2 Come as the light: to us reveal  
our emptiness and woe,  
and lead us in those paths of life  
where all the righteous go.

3 Come as the fire: and purge our hearts  
like sacrificial flame;  
let our whole life an offering be  
to our Redeemer's name.

4 Come as the dove: and spread your wings,  
the wings of peaceful love,  
and let your Church on earth become  
blest as the Church above.

5 Come as the wind, with rushing sound  
and pentecostal grace,  
that all of woman born may see

the glory of your face.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:** Prepared by Warwick Barry

Spirit of the Living God, come: hear us and intercede for us.

We pray for your world:

for a responsible caring for your creation; for a just sharing of the world's resources; for a spirit of peace between nations.

Speak to us in the words of justice and pour out your spirit upon us, that we may be filled with a passion for justice and peace. Holy Spirit abide with joy in us.

We pray for your church:

for a renewal of faith and commitment; for power to proclaim your gospel; for unity between Christians.

Speak to us in the words of salvation and pour out your spirit upon us, that we may bear witness to your mighty deeds.

Holy Spirit abide with joy in us.

We pray for the communities in which we live: for families where love and forgiveness are found; for workplaces where the contribution of all is valued; for a society where the weak and the vulnerable are cared for and cherished.

Speak to us in the words of love, and pour out your spirit upon us, that our hearts may burn with love for you and for each other. Holy Spirit abide with joy in us.

We pray for all who suffer:

for comfort for all who are lonely and sad; for relief for all in pain or distress; for strength for all who care for the sick and the dying.

Speak to us in the words of hope, and pour out your spirit upon us, that we may know your comfort and bring your healing touch to all in need of consolation.

Holy Spirit abide with joy in us.

We remember the faithful departed: all who have known the power of your spirit; all from this parish who have gone before us to eternal life.

Spirit of the Living God, visit us again as at the day of Pentecost; speak to us each in our own language and pour out your spirit upon us, that we may understand your word, proclaim your works and live for ever in your presence.

Holy Spirit abide with joy in us, be our guide and grow your fruit and gifts in our lives like those who have gone before us.

We ask these prayers in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen**

(Janet Nelson – amended)

**The Lord's Prayer** – please pray this in whatever version you are most at home with.

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



## OFFERING:

We give in grateful thanksgiving for all that God has given us.  
In the upside down world of the gospel,  
we measure our wealth not by what we have,  
but what we can give away.  
Let us give away generously, in this offering,  
To bless your church, your people, your creation.

Quentin Chin, United Church of Christ [website](#)

## HYMN 421 – ‘Not by the world can our freedom be nourished’

*Refrain:*

Where the Spirit is there's freedom.  
Where the Spirit is, there is life!

1. Not by the world can our freedom be nourished,  
not by our things, only by Spirit.  
Practise, my children, to live by the Spirit,  
drop all your masks, take freedom's clothing! *Refrain*
2. Heaven on earth, here we live,  
free to love and to share, carried by joy,  
Practise, my children, to live by the Spirit,  
daring today to taste God's future. *Refrain*
3. Wounds will be healed, eyes will be opened,  
imaging God, reflecting Jesus.  
Practise, my children, to live by the Spirit,  
heaven is here, time made eternal. *Refrain*

## WORD OF MISSION:

Send forth your Spirit, O God, and renew the face of the earth. Dwell among us, even though your presence will startle and unsettle us. Grant us your peace, we pray, as justice and love pour down upon the yearning earth. Amen.

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## BLESSING:

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
**Amen.**

## DISMISSAL:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:  
In the name of Christ.  
**Amen.**

## POSTLUDE

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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Music: Karen Roberts

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## NEWS & NOTICES