

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY, MAY 23, 2021
DAY OF PENTECOST / ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH 4

Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the words to the songs. However, our musicians have chosen music to fit the scriptures. We invite you to look up the words in your worship book and ponder them. If you do not have a worship book, ponder the words to one of your favourite hymns and listen for God's voice. Those who have internet may find the songs on YouTube.

Portions of this worship service are taken from, Rice Is Heaven, A worship service for Asian Heritage Month that uses rice as a symbol of life and harmony.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

The Holy Spirit, thank God, often enables people to forgive even though they are not sure how they did it.

~Lewis B. Smedes

BEFORE WE WORSHIP, WE REFLECT...

Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Crossing all boundaries that would separate us, the Spirit brings the wideness of God's mercy to places we least expect it—to a crowd of strangers of different lands and tongues, to dry bones, to our weak hearts. Jesus promises his disciples that they will be accompanied by the Holy Spirit, and that this Spirit reveals the truth. We celebrate that we too have been visited with this same Spirit. Guided by the truth, we join together in worship, and then disperse to share the fullness of Christ's love with the world.

CALL TO WORSHIP

We have come from different places to worship God.

We have brought our own cultural heritages.

We have gathered to seek God's concern.

We have come together to become peacemakers and community builders.

We open ourselves to God's wisdom.

We open ourselves to the Holy Spirit. Come, let us celebrate God's presence among us!

CHILDREN'S SONG *This Little Light Of Mine*

CENTERING PRAYER

God of life, you sustain us through the harmonious work of heaven, earth, and human beings. You enrich community woven by different cultures and traditions. Today we come together to celebrate Asian Heritage Month in remembering who we are. Enhance our joy of journeying together for the common good. In the name of Jesus, our companion, we pray. Amen.

A NEW CREED

We are not alone; we live in God's world.

We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S CHAT

Today is the birthday of the Christian Church! Yep, today the Holy Spirit came upon the people and they were united in Christ and called to go out and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Now, imagine you are sitting in front of a birthday cake. You have to blow out the candles by sucking IN! Yes, you heard me correctly. You can't blow OUT the candles. You must suck in a breath and extinguish them. Think it's easy? With your parents' help with the flicker doodle, try to suck in and blow out a candle. Let me know how that works for you.

Or, imagine this fan in front of your face. When I turn it on, you notice it blows OUT and blows my hair out behind me. What would happen if this fan sucked IN instead? Well, if my hair was long, it would get sucked into the fan and get pulled out of my head. That would hurt – a lot!

My point is this. The Holy Spirit blows, the Spirit does not suck! We are blown out into the world to share the Good News of Jesus. We are blown into our communities to help be the best place to live, ever! We are blown into situations where there is very little love in order to bring love to those who need it. You picking up what I'm putting down? We are to blow out Christ's love to the world. When we suck in the Good News, it is all about us. Me and Jesus and nobody else! That isn't how the Holy Spirit works. The Spirit's power is in sharing the love of Jesus. So, go home and start practicing blowing out a candle. Get those lungs in good shape for proclaiming to the world, "Jesus Loves You!" Amen.

MISSION AND SERVICE CELEBRATE DEAF CULTURE ON PENTECOST

"Whenever you deprive a community of its language, you automatically deprive it of its culture."

On Pentecost, diverse languages proclaimed the presence of God's Spirit. So it's the perfect day to celebrate the glorious variety of languages and cultures through which God blesses the world, including Deaf culture.

Few churches welcome and include people who are Deaf. That's why your gifts through Mission & Service support the Quinte Deaf Fellowship in Belleville, Ontario. Since its inception in 2007, the fellowship has provided a point of cultural and spiritual connection for people who are Deaf and a place to celebrate Deaf culture.

When Peter Skarp visits a friend or attends a club, every conversation begins and ends with a hug. That's not unusual in his circles. "It's just something we all do," explains the Canadian Hearing Service staff member. He continues to share insights about Deaf culture, identity, norms, and rules of behaviour. "Deaf people value their eyes because they are their window on the world and their hands because they are extremely important tools," he says.

History has not always recognized Deaf culture or considered sign language important. Did you know that in 1880, 164 deaf educators from eight countries gathered to make the landmark education decision that would ban sign language from classrooms around the world? Then, it was decided that oral (lip-reading) education was better than manual (sign) education.

"Whenever you deprive a community of its language, you automatically deprive it of its culture," says Phil Wilson, a United Church minister whose father wasn't allowed to use sign language in residential school. Wilson, whose parents were Deaf, considers American Sign Language his cradle tongue. "I consider myself bicultural," he says.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been especially hard on Deaf communities. Isolation rules make it challenging to access health care, support programs, and basic information. Online learning is also an issue.

"While some provinces provide online learning opportunities, unless a qualified teacher who is proficient in sign language is available, these are often not accessible to Deaf children and youth," says the Canadian Association of the Deaf in a statement.

Language matters. Especially now. Your generous support through Mission & Service means Quinte Deaf Fellowship continues to be a place of belonging, connection, advocacy, and care when it is needed most. Thank you.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READINGS AND PSALM

First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

The Hebrew word rendered as ruach means "spirit," "wind," or "breath." This reading plays on the different meanings of the word. Just as the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision are given new life, flesh, and breath (or spirit), so God will give the exiles God's own spirit and will bring them home to the land of Israel.

¹The hand of the LORD came upon me, and brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²The LORD led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³The LORD said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O LORD GOD, you know." ⁴Then the LORD said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the LORD GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶I 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."

⁷So 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. ⁸I 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. ⁹Then the LORD said to me, "Prophecy 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." ¹⁰I prophesied as was commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹Then the LORD 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.' ¹²Therefore 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. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I 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."

Psalms 104:24-34, 35b

Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth. (Ps. 104:30)

²⁴How manifold are your works, O LORD!

In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵**Yonder is the sea, great and wide, with its swarms too many to number,
living things both small and great.**

²⁶There go the ships to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you made for the sport of it.

²⁷**All of them look to you
to give them their food in due season. R**

²⁸You give it to them; they gather it;

you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

²⁹**When you hide your face, they are terrified;
when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.**

³⁰You send forth your Spirit, and they are created;
and so you renew the face of the earth.

³¹**May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
O LORD, rejoice in all your works. R**

³²You look at the earth and it trembles;
you touch the mountains and they smoke.

³³**I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will praise my God while I have my being.**

³⁴May these words of mine please God.
I will rejoice in the LORD.

^{35b}**Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Hallelujah! R**

Second Reading: Acts 2:1-21

Originally Pentecost was a Jewish thanksgiving-type festival celebrated seven weeks after Passover. On this particular Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the entire community of believers just as Jesus had promised and the scriptures had prophesied. Empowered by the Spirit, the entire community bears witness to God's activity in multiple languages.

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷In 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.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,

blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' ”

Gospel: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

While speaking to his disciples before his death, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Helper” and describes the difference the Spirit will make in their lives and in the world.

[Jesus said,] ²⁶“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{16:4b}“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to the One who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send the Advocate to you. ⁸And when the Spirit comes, the Advocate will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, the Spirit will guide you into all the truth; for the Spirit will not speak on the Spirit's own accord, but will speak whatever is heard, and the Spirit will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴The Spirit will glorify me, because the Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that the Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

SERMON

Daily Covid announcements updating the numbers of those infected and those who have died.

Corruption in the justice system.

Warring factions taking their toll on people and buildings.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people around the world has topped **65 million**.

Plastic is slowly killing our planet. Pollution is rampant and greed is destroying our drinking water.

Racial tensions are high all over the world and violence is the norm.

World Drug Report 2017: 29.5 million people globally suffer from drug use disorders, opioids the most harmful.

Indeed, our bones are many and, indeed, they are very dry.

The valley of dry bones. We know the story, we know the song. But, do we know why Ezekiel is placed, in Spirit, in this valley, and how these bones got there?

Old Testament Professor, Rolf Jacobson, writes the following:

This vision dates to the period of Israel's history known as the Babylonian Exile. In 597 BCE, the armies of Babylon forced the surrender of the rebellious city Jerusalem and deported the Judean king and many Judean leaders to Babylon (2 Kings 24:10-16). Ten years later, in 587 BCE, after Jerusalem had rebelled again, the Babylonians razed Jerusalem and its temple and deported a second wave of Judean leaders. Among the first wave of the deported was the young Ezekiel, whom God later called in Babylon to the office of prophet. For those deportees forced to live in Babylon, the future seemed a black hole

into which the people were destined to disappear. A century-and-a-half previously, many citizens of Judah's sister kingdom Israel had been similarly deported, had lost their identity, and had faded into the mists of history--the so-called lost tribes of Israel. The exile was more than just a crisis of physical suffering and communal identity. It also necessitated a crisis of faith. The key symbols of Judean faith--Jerusalem, its temple, its people, and the Davidic monarchy--had been destroyed (cf Psalms 89 and 137). According to the theological rationality of the ancient world, many exiled Judeans assumed that their deity had been defeated by a stronger deity from Babylon (cf. Ps 42:3, 10; 79:10; 115:2). The people wondered if the Lord was truly lord and truly faithful.

Over 2,500 years later, have we learned anything? Dry bones, people, very, very, dry.

It's not rocket science. When 2% of the world's population owns 90% of the world's wealth, the scales are going to be very unbalanced. When countries, let alone individuals, choose to be self-focused and not compassionate or generous, the scales are going to be very unbalanced. When we, like the people of Israel, are tempted and choose to follow and trust in human predictions, world market financial stability and ignore the God who created all and who desires abundant life – not abundant STUFF, for all, the scales are going to be very unbalanced. And then, we whine.

Do something!

The Holy Spirit is downright amazing! Without the Spirit we may stand tall in flesh, blood and bone, but we do not have life. Without the breath of God, we are nothing. Not only that, we learn that God desires our help. We are a means for miracles and the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit into the lives of those who have given up hope. We are asked to prophecy; we are asked to proclaim the word of God. And what is that word?

*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. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I 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.”*

The Holy Spirit was given to people that some Christians felt should not receive it. Thankfully, God doesn't care what we think. Christ came and through his ministry made the point very clear that God is ALWAYS on the side of the poor and oppressed, and that if the rest of the world would share and cease in their desire for power over the other and immense wealth, there would be no poor and oppressed.

Do something!

That is EXACTLY our calling as Christians – to do and be and think and live contrary to the self-centred norm. It means being prepared to be ridiculed, criticized and rejected for standing up for the underdog, advocating for **God's** justice, and challenging one another to put aside learned prejudices, assumptions and old thinking and embrace compassion, factual information, study to overcome ignorance and look for solutions, not succumbing to despair and hopelessness.

We are proclaimers of God's word, we are doers, we help God to resurrect hope in this world. I may not have money, but when a righteous cause is asking for signatures, I sign. I put my name out there. Why, because that is what I am called to do.

Do something!

With the help of God, we are, and will continue to do so. Amen.

HYMN OF THE MONTH MV 40 *Never Ending Joy*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Gracious God, you give the Holy Spirit to your church, filling it with many and varied gifts. In the church throughout the world, strengthen us in our visioning and dreaming, that it may discover anew the Spirit's creative work. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of life, your mighty works are too numerous to count. The earth is full of your creatures, living things both great and small. Open your hand and give them the necessities of this life. Send your fresh Spirit over the face of the earth. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of the nations, at the sound of the rushing wind, people speaking different languages proclaimed and heard together your deeds of power. Fill the leaders of nations with your Holy Spirit, so that they exercise your gracious will in the lives of people. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of faithfulness, you tend to the needs of your people, even the sighs of our hearts. Hear those who cry out to you in distress. Restore to wholeness all who are in any need this day especially Larry McCrady, Mike Froese, Brooke Alexiuk, Dwayne, Tracy Skoglund, Matthew Grossman, Lorraine & Walter Pokrant. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of love, fill this congregation with gratitude for the gifts we have received from you. Renew our ministries, heal our divisions, and open us to the needs of our neighbors. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of hope, those who have died in you raise their eternal song of praise. We give you thanks for the many gifts of your people and rejoice in the witness of your saints. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

SENDING SONG *MV 155 Unbounded Spirit, Breath of God*

BENEDICTION

May God's healing hand rest upon us; May God's life-giving powers flow into every cell of our body and into the depths of our soul, cleansing, purifying, restoring us to wholeness and strength in God's peace. Amen.