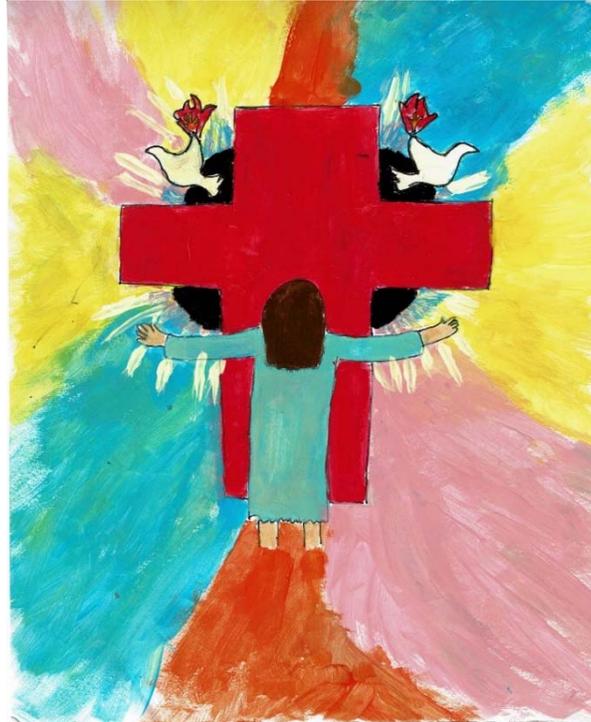


DAY OF PENTECOST



THE SERVICE FOR THE CHURCH'S BIRTHDAY

May 31, 2020
10:45 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas
Link to worship videos available at: www.fpcbryan.org

WELCOME

Welcome to worship this Pentecost Sunday.

Today we celebrate the gift of God's spirit present in our lives, thanks be to his amazing grace.

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP

Amazing Grace

arr. Patricia Sanders Cota

OPENING SENTENCES from John 14

Holy Spirit (*playing softly*)

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Even after the resurrection, when the disciples were weighed down with worry, Jesus assured them that they were not alone: "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you." Even after the resurrection, when the disciples were burdened by their fears, Jesus calmed their troubled hearts: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." Even after the resurrection, when we struggle with our faith, Jesus blesses us with comfort and hope: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." Especially after the resurrection, when our souls are dry and barren, the Holy Spirit blows through our lives, bringing us new life. Alleluia!

HYMN

On Pentecost They Gathered

MERLE'S TUNE

**On Pentecost they gathered quite early in the day,
a band of Christ's disciples, to worship, sing, and pray.
a mighty wind came blowing, filled all the swirling air,
and tongues of fire aglowing inspired each person there.**

**The people all around them were startled and amazed
to understand their language, as Christ the Lord they praised.
What universal message, what great good news was here?
That Christ, once dead, is risen to vanquish all our fear.**

**O Spirit, sent from heaven on that day long ago,
rekindle faith among us in all life's ebb and flow.
O give us ear to listen and tongues aflame with praise,
so folk of every nation glad songs of joy shall raise.**

PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONFESSION

Lord, we approach you today with hearts weighed down with uncertainty, conflict, and good intentions, yet every day we fall short of your will for selfless love. We admit that when life feels complicated, difficult, or frustrating we allow our hearts to harden. We speak without empathy. We act without thought, we move to preserve ourselves without consideration of the whole picture. Lord, this is our nature. Help us to turn to you and not to our own understanding. Help us to share your gospel in this world through the ways of your love. Forgive us, Lord, for forgetting or ignoring the spirit of goodness you have placed within us. Forgive us for the things we have done that hurt you, others, or ourselves and dishonor the vision of your great kingdom. Lord, help us to be better. We come to you in silent reflection now so that we might listen for your presence and guidance. *(...silent prayer...)*

Amen.

Hear and know the good news: that no one, but God stands to judge us and God acts with grace, mercy, and love that is beyond our understanding. Thanks be to God.

SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 2:1-13

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

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

The Church in Me

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Divine Fire, O Holy Spirit of God, make your home within us that we may move amid the ebbs and flows of your grace. Reveal to us the passion buried within for love, kindness, beauty, and gratitude, bringing these to life for your holy purposes. As society moves at hyper-speed, the news changing by the minute, may we keep pace as the faithful, helping to mend the brokenness we feel and see and know. Between all the choices that lie before us, help us to discern rightly by your will to serve you boldly and generously for others before serving ourselves. May we be agents of your divine peace, your transforming love, and your irresistible grace.

We pray for those emerging through the early years and early decades of life who will be influenced by this time. Give them a hopeful spirit for the future to never stop learning, and a cheerful spirit to enjoy the ordinary, which testifies to the extraordinary.

We give thanks today for those you have received unto yourself beyond death, for those who feel their absence, and for those who comforted them in their final hours. We pray for the exhausted healthcare worker, the tired store worker, the weary delivery persons, and the conflicted politicians. We pray for those who feel anxiety, stress, loneliness, hardship, depression, and hopelessness. Bring them peace, comfort, strength, and wisdom.

We pray for the Church; the people who hold you in their hearts and move in step with your spirit in this dance of life. In a confusing time with many challenges and struggles, may we stand together, though physically apart, and persevere in faith through the strangeness of this time.

God, we ask that you hear all our prayers this day, and hear us now praying as Jesus taught:

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, forever. Amen.

**Breathe on me, Breath of God; fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
until with thee I will one will, to do and to endure.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God; till I am wholly thine,
until this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God; so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.**

DISMISSAL AND BLESSING

POSTLUDE

Go Light Your World

arr. Chang Shen

+ + + + +

PENTECOST OFFERING

One of four Presbyterian Church (USA) Special Offerings

This offering helps the church develop and support its young people and also addresses the needs of at-risk children. Presbyterians have raised more than \$15 million for these ministries. Make your check or online payment payable to First Presbyterian Church, MEMO: Pentecost Offering.

Mail your check to First Presbyterian Church, 1100 Carter Creek Parkway, Bryan Texas 77802 or give your gift online. Go to www.fpcbryan.org, click **Give** in the upper righthand corner on the homepage.

Especially in this time, visit the church website, www.fpcbryan.org, for the newsletter, announcements, worship bulletins, devotionals for children and adults, updates, etc.

Like us on **Facebook** at: www.facebook.com/FPCBryan

NEW!!! on **Instagram**: www.instagram.com.

Search for and follow **fpcbryantx1867** and/or **fpcbryan_youth**

FPC-Bryan's YouTube channel needs 359 more subscribers to be eligible for a custom url!

Every subscriber counts.

On www.youtube.com, search for First Presbyterian Church of Bryan, Texas, then click **SUBSCRIBE**

Our newsletter, **The Chimes**, continues to be available online, emailed to FPC-Bryan friends, and mailed to local FPC-Bryan members with the printed bulletin and sermon to those without technology. Until further notice, it will not be mailed to its full distribution list. The deadline for the next issue of the newsletter is **NOON, SUNDAY, JUNE 7**, and will be distributed on **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10**. This newsletter will cover news from June 18 to July 1.

STAY CONNECTED! with others in this community of faith at Church Updates—FPC-Bryan's online tool for church-related announcements, ways to serve, and current prayer needs. This online tool is **"REAL TIME,"** and users receive a weekly reminder email on Thursdays to view new posts.

Login and create your password-protected account at <https://fpcbtx.churchupdates.org/login>. For more information, contact Karen in the church office, 979.823.8073 or office@fpcbryan.org.



A WARM WELCOME!

We are delighted to have you worship with us today.

WORSHIP NOTES

PREACHER

Rev. Emily K. Béghin

LITURGISTS

Rev. Ted Foote

Rev. Dr. George E. Klett

MUSICIANS

HANDBELL ENSEMBLE

Marcia Miculek; Jasen Petersen;
Ulonda Rogers; Jessica Sahn

Ulonda Rogers, *Handbells Director*

Michelle Lassiter, *Pianist*

David Kipp,
Director of Music Ministries

COVER ART

"Pentecost"

by FPC Member Kaitlyn Hendler

CHANCEL FLOWERS

In loving memory of
my grandfather, Martin Cecil,
by

Emily K. Béghin

AUDIO/VIDEO

Emily K. Béghin

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The Presbyterian Hymnal

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THIS WEEK AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

DAY OF PENTECOST, MAY 31, 2020

10:45am ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

5:45pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-DIGITAL

(Watch your inbox for details via email!)

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2020

TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2020

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2020

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2020

FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2020

SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2020

TRINITY SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2020

10:45am ONLINE WORSHIP-

To view, visit www.fpcbryan.org

5:45pm Youth (GR 6-12) Sunday Fun Day-DIGITAL

(Watch your inbox for details via email!)

For regularly scheduled meetings/gatherings,
please be in touch with your group's
moderator, leader, coordinator, or facilitator
to determine alternate meeting options/platforms.

The Church in Me

Rev. Emily K. Béghin
Acts 2:1-13

May 31, 2020
First Presbyterian Church, Bryan, Texas

Here we are, 50 days after Passover and the Last Supper, 40 some days after Christ's death and resurrection, and about one week after Jesus ascended. Before leaving them, Jesus promised his disciples an advocate so that they would never need be alone as they do ministry in a broken world.

And so, they waited for the promised advocate who would come and empower them for the charge of ministry Christ gave to them. The way would be challenging.

Temptations to return to their former lives would have been strong. Even now they say these men are drunk, foolish, and delusional even. They would need all the help they could get for the job that lay ahead, to open the eyes of God's children to gospel truth...

Truly, these were the first church; open, ready to be transformed, and prepared for a life on the move.

Then, whoosh! The advocate arrives in a roar of wind and fire! The power of its influence must have been unmistakable.

Fire has been used as a religious symbol for several thousands of years to point to moments of significant transformation and divine presence... whether a force of mighty destruction or a piece of comfort and light in the darkness... Much like the nature of God, fire has us transfixed, drawing us in, to wonder at its beauty and its power.

- It is a divine fire, the Great I Am, that calls to Moses from a bush, ablaze with light yet not consumed, gentle, yet mighty, never harming the bush nor threatening Moses, but calling him in, drawing him to hear the calling on his life and to equip him for the purposes he will discover.
- In the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar throws Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into a fiery blaze and yet they do not burn and God is seen with them.
- Isaiah's lips were kissed with a fiery coal to give him God's Word and mission.
- Jeremiah says God's Word within him is like a burning fire within his very bones.

In Acts chapter 1, Jesus tells the disciples to wait and be baptized in the Holy Spirit just as John baptized Jesus with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Jesus' baptism was the mark of the beginning of his ministry in many ways. Today, Pentecost marks the beginning of the ministry of the disciples to give the Word to the world.

Some call today the birthday of the church, even celebrating it with song, cake, and fellowship in other years. Preachers remind their congregations today of the gift of the church.

With fire and spirit, with tongues of every land, the church was born. What is the church, exactly? There's a current topic, huh? The church... It is said churches are essential, open the churches.

This rhetoric, this misunderstanding of the church puts a chill through my spine. Let me be painfully clear if I may... a church cannot close, a building can.

A church doesn't die; it lives on in new ways as promised in the resurrection of Christ.

A church... a true church is truly spirit-led; not people-driven... and that is a fine line we dance upon.

Look at this beautiful stained glass in our sanctuary behind me. This is Pentecost, the birth of the church. These are the disciples, believers, each with fire, the Spirit above their heads.

I want you to notice something with me. Where are the disciples looking? They do not look in mirrors or at one another. They don't look to Caesar or to popes or celebrities.

They are looking down in deep prayer or looking up, seeking the divine... unwavering in their gaze, they are completely consumed by the spirit... ready to hear and know the mission God has for each of them, relying not on their own understanding as they now speak in tongues they previously never understood, they now rely on the guidance of their advocate, the Spirit.

Church is what happens when the spirit is alive in us.

So who is the Spirit? What is it?

The Spirit is the one and only thing that you can never be robbed or cheated of.

The Spirit is a gift given freely from God to you, and as evidenced in this text, it is given to all peoples of all nations.

It is mighty, but not forcefully invasive. The disciples were waiting for the Spirit, open and welcoming to its influence in their lives. It must be invited to be wielded in this life. The Spirit is God in us.

Some call her wisdom, others may know her as grace, as an aura, or as the force. She is mighty, she is strong, yet she is love and tenderness too.

So who does that make us?

Well, to state the obvious, we are incredibly complex beings, stuck in a web within ourselves, within our families, within our societies and in our world. We are both loving and driven by unloving desires. We are beautiful and we are sinful. We are hopeful and devastating. We are God's children.

And truly we are children, living and moving in a world we do not understand and in turn much of the world including the faithful does not understand faith, we all act out and try to be good, but always need a loving hand to help us find our way.

Life is complicated and messy. It's filled with choices and the consequences of those choices. Sometimes I think of life like one of those 1980's choose-your-own adventure books.

We read the pages of the story and begin to get invested in the character we play and the situations around that character... then we come to a page with 2 or more choices on it labeled A and B and so on.

We are invited to choose one path and depending on what we choose we go to that page number and the story continues down the path we have chosen.

Sometimes these choices are difficult and twist in ways we struggle to understand. When we come to these choice moments in life, how do we know what is right and what is wrong? What is just and what is gracious? Will it be okay? We get anxious, or sometimes we get careless and even reckless....

It is in these moments in life that we as Christians are called to contemplate the path forward in this certain way: we must ask ourselves 3 questions before we make any choice in life:

- How does this choice serve God?

- How does this serve others?
- And how does this serve me?

These questions could be called a recipe for righteousness... when asked in exactly that order: God, others, self, we can proceed as faithful people. It's hardly ever simple is it? Sometimes what serves God does not serve us or meet with our desires.

This is the continuous battle of the righteous and faithful soul. It is written in our Presbyterian polity that we cannot determine whether the spirit is truly working in another person as one of the chosen, but we will know if we are of that number. How? How do we know?

To even question this gives us an answer, but to live up to that title, to that divine election, that is the true challenge.

If we desire to know whether we have acted in the spirit of God or the spirit of ourselves, let us first examine the things we are most passionate about... the things that animate us, anger us, excite us... what are they?

Why do they affect us so? How do we choose to act and react to these things? How does this serve God? How does this serve others? How does this serve me?

If we struggle to justify the answer to the first question, then we are self-led and closed off to the guidance of the Spirit who struggles within us to keep aflame.

The Spirit is our advocate, not our adversary. To do the right thing, the loving thing, the caring thing, may not always be the most convenient thing and not every choice is black and white. Jesus did a lot of things in his life that did not serve to elevate himself, but he served God. Are we serving God with each choice we make?

There was a comic I saw not long ago. Jesus had just ascended, leaving the disciples and they stand together, and one says, "So, what have we learned?" Another says, "Pretty much, it's love God and love your neighbor."

They all agreed and off in the distance we see figures approach... a priest, a pope, a rabbi and the disciples say, "Uh oh! Here come the theologians."

If we ever wish to confuse ourselves or complicate the simple demand of Christ, to love one another, simply

read a theology book. Each one will give us something different.

This is why we have people who claim to be Christian holding signs of hate. This is why we have people who claim to be faithful holding others as lesser than themselves. This is why the word Christian has become an ugly word to so many.

That comic could be followed up by another one I saw. Jesus is talking to the faithful and he says, "The difference between me and you is you use scripture to determine what love means and I use love to determine what scripture means."

Again, how do we serve God? God's number one mission is love.

Now, I promised to be plain. This country is a mess. We're tired, we're stressed out, and we're fighting. Masks, hydroxychloroquine, money versus safety, life versus livelihood, church safety versus church togetherness...

Temptations of self-interest and advancement are all the more powerful now. The older I grow, the more I look around and see thoughtlessness in people. I see people say things that hurt others out of selfishness and anger. I see people who hold passions that don't serve God and they do it in the name of God... in vain.

I see people pointing fingers, yelling, crying, screaming... All the things we teach our children not to do... we do them and we have become worse than toddlers in a meltdown. No wonder we are called the children of God.

Yet as children, somewhere in our base coding, our fundamental building blocks is the little light of the spirit of love and hope and selfless care. In that way, little children are better than we are. They see the beauty through the ugliness and choose to pursue it.

So, perhaps it's time to shut our mouths, retract our fingers, and actually use the ears God gave us to listen to him with. The Spirit is screaming at us and so many of us have put her on mute. If you're feeling uncomfortable right now... good,

Because she is banging on the sides of your heart with her fists. Are you going to let her out of the prison within you? Or are you going to take the easy road and suppress her while getting what you want?

How can we serve God? How can we serve others? How do these things serve me?

The church is not the building. It never was. The church lives inside the people who listen to the spirit, who act with love first and foremost... a love of God, a love of others, and a love of self. Where have we set our eyes if not on God?

Every day is a new day, every tick of the clock, a new second. Let us be open to transformation. The church was never meant to sit still, never meant to be confined to a man-made building. It was meant to go out into the world, beyond itself and touch others with the light of God's love.

The true church is spirit-led and the spirit is moving in a new and ancient fashion. Which way will you go? Whose spirit will you follow? Who will you serve; the gods of today or the God of no end?

The spirit is your advocate, your coach, your guide, your mentor, and God in you. Let us choose this day and this moment to be born anew in God, to stand before Him and open our hearts to the Spirit that we might be the one true church, not made of brick and mortar, but of flesh and bone and love.

Amen.