

Pentecost Sunday, 31 May 2020

Service presented by South Moreton Presbytery

Here is an outline of the service, and the main text. Participants from across the Presbytery led each different part.

CALL TO WORSHIP

SKIT: PENTECOST THEN ... AND NOW?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

SONG: HEARTS ON FIRE (David MacGregor)

God of life, you're the light that shines
Love afire in these days, these times
Spirit kindling within our hearts
fire of your love.
Spirit of welcome across this land,
Different we are, yet as one, we stand ...

With our hearts on fire

With our hearts on fire

***Oh ... come Holy Spirit,
set our hearts on fire***

We long to keep, Lord, your flame alight
Speak for truth, set injustice right
Share compassion in Christ each one
Reaching out with joy
Living the life that Jesus lives
Living the love as Jesus gives ...

With our hearts on fire

With our hearts on fire

***Oh ... come Holy Spirit,
set our hearts on fire***

Come - be walking God's holy ground
Come - be sharing God's hope around
Stoke, O Spirit, our burning light
'cross this ancient land
So the oppressed, the detained go free
Spirit of God bringing liberty

Set our hearts on fire

Set our hearts on fire

Oh ... come Holy Spirit, set our hearts on fire

Come Holy Spirit, set our hearts on fire
Come Holy Spirit, set our hearts on fire

David MacGregor

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PRAYER OF THANKS, CONFESSION AND DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:1-21 (verses read in different languages)

TONGAN HYMN 404

Come, Holy Ghost, all-quickening fire,
Come, and in me delight to rest;
Drawn by the lure of strong desire,
O come and consecrate my breast;
The temple of my soul prepare,
And fix thy sacred presence there.

If now thy influence I feel,
If now in thee begin to live,
Still to my heart thyself reveal,
Give me thyself, for ever give;
A point my good, a drop my store,
Eager I ask, I pant for more.

Eager for thee I ask and pant,
So strong the principle divine
Carries me out with sweet constraint,
'Till all my hallowed soul is thine;
Plunged in the Godhead's deepest sea,
And lost in thine immensity.

Come, then, my God, mark out thine heir;
Of Heaven a larger earnest give;
With clearer light thy witness bear,
More sensibly within me live;
Let all my powers thine entrance feel,
And deeper stamp thyself the seal.

Charles Wesley

SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-13

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE – puppets

SONG: HOLY SPIRIT, COME DOWN (David MacGregor)

Holy Spirit come down

Holy Spirit come down

Holy Spirit come down
Holy Spirit come down
Holy Spirit come down
Holy Spirit come down
Holy Spirit come down
Holy Spirit come down

Spirit burn in us with holy fire
Fill us with your power
Touch our hearts and make us one,
renewed each day ... each hour

Spirit blow your thrilling wind through us
Catch us in your breeze
Breathe on us God's love anew
May the world in you, believe
Holy Spirit come down ...

Spirit lead us onto roads untrod
Guide us on our way
to places where we'll serve you, God
with passion new each day
Holy Spirit come down ...

David MacGregor

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SERMON – REV. JOHN MAVOR

See Appendix

REFLECTION ON THE WORD – DANCE AND SONG

GOD AT WORK – 5 people speak about the Spirit's presence while we're scattered

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

For the world

Gracious God, we thank you for the world and that even in this time of crisis we are able to do this in the sure knowledge that no matter what happens you are our one true hope. We remember all who are affected by COVID19 – those who have lost loved ones, those who are currently ill, the frontline workers who put their lives at risk every day, our governments who are called upon each day to make difficult decisions and all who live in fear of what the future holds.

We pray for UnitingWorld and their partners in Asia, Africa and the Pacific who have so little to combat the effects of this virus. As programmes are put on hold and partners reach out to meet practical needs of food, handwash and personal protective equipment may they know that we in the Uniting Church are praying for them and supporting financially as best we can.

We thank you that when we are overwhelmed and don't know how to pray that you, Holy Spirit, intercede for us in accordance with God's will. This is our prayer and we pray it in Jesus' name.

Prayer for people and communities impacted in Australia

Compassionate God as we begin to see restrictions loosen in our country, remind us to make haste slowly. Help us to understand we are running a marathon in dealing with the ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic and that the disease itself is still with us.

We grieve with Australian families who have lost beloved members to the virus and we feel the sorrow of those whose health has been so impacted by their brush with the disease they are unsure what their future holds.

We weep with hospital workers who have worked long hours, witnessed such deep grief and fear during the pandemic and continue to face the daily sense of loss and hope of hospital life.

We lament with businesses and workers who have lost their livelihood and still cannot see the way back to recovery so that they ability to support themselves and their families.

We mourn the ongoing impact and limitations on our daily social interactivity and sense of community. Help us to be patient.

Gracious God help us to see beyond the immediacy of our own troubles into the struggles of others within our community and make us beacons of your life and love to others.

We pray for the global and national church in this disrupted context

Lord, for churches of all denominations around the world, we pray for their leaders and members as they try to make sense of the current health pandemic and what it means for their communities. We pray that God's love might shine through the actions of individuals and groups as they witness to God's peace which passes all our understanding. We pray that a spirit of collaboration, generosity and compassion might assist wise decision making.

We pray too for our own Uniting Church and its leaders as they continue to speak in to our national life as Australians, particularly at this time when there are so many vulnerable families and individuals. Lord we particularly think of our church's agencies such as Uniting Care, and Frontier Services and the work being undertaken with First Peoples and Refugees. Grant them wisdom and compassion in their discernment of priorities and communication.

Lord, there are many questions for all of us in the Church. Help us to find new ways of collaborating, innovating, communicating that we might use this time to listen to what you are saying to our church.

We pray for the life and work of the Uniting Church in this Presbytery of South Moreton.

O Holy Spirit descend upon us afresh, to encourage and inspire that part of your Body which expresses itself through this Uniting Church Presbytery of South Moreton. Help us to join our differing talents insights and views so as to effectively do your work of declaring the Good News to a broken world.

We pray that we may operate not so much as an Institution, but as a community of faith which demonstrates your love of people and your desire for reconciliation to you through Christ our Saviour.

We pray especially for this Presbytery, its Councils, and its Congregations during this time of pandemic and isolation, that we may more clearly discern your plan for us, in this particular corner of your vineyard. Help us to see Christ in each other and to listen respectfully and positively to each other in that process of discernment.

Lord God, we particularly uphold to you, those people who minister to us in fulltime ministry of Word and of Sacrament; also those who serve in roles of leadership, responsibility and community service within the Presbytery and who right now are hard pressed to carry out your mission during these difficult times. Please protect, bless and encourage them in their work.

Lord we know that you have already provided all we need, but we pray that you grant us the enthusiasm, tenacity, and wisdom to use those provisions to carry out your plans for us both individually and corporately.

WORD OF MISSION: SKIT – COMING HOME FROM PENTECOST

SONG: PILGRIM'S PRAYER (David Busch)

Singing Spirit, tune us,
To your joyful strain,
Let grace be our anthem,
Teach us love's refrain.
Play your song within us,
Sing us homeward bound:
Holy Spirit, come,
Holy Spirit, sing in me.

Dancing Spirit, move us,
Take our arms and lead,
Move us to God's heartbeat,
Pilgrims dancing free.
Turn our faith to footsteps,
Show each step to take:
Holy Spirit come,
Holy Spirit, dance in me.

Stirring Spirit, shake us,
Turn our lives around;
Rescue us from comfort,
Plough our shallow ground.
Keep us ever open,
Restless and renewed:
Holy Spirit: come,
Holy Spirit: stir in me.

Present Spirit, guide us,
On the pilgrim way,
Building your tomorrow,
Be our hope today.
As we live within you,

May your purpose grow:
Holy Spirit: come,
Holy Spirit: grow in me ...
Holy Spirit: grow in me.

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BENEDICTION

May the Spirit,
who hovered over the waters when the world was created,
breathe into you the life God gives.

May the Spirit,
who overshadowed Mary when the eternal Son came among us,
make you joyful in the service of the Lord.

May the Spirit,
who set the Church on fire upon the Day of Pentecost,
bring the world alive with the love of the risen Christ.

And may God give hope to your dreaming;
May Christ Jesus set rivers of life flowing within you,
and may the Holy Spirit unite you as one body and set you ablaze with joy.

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

South Moreton Presbytery: Pentecost Service 31 May 2020

Sermon by Rev John Mavor

I'm pleased to be able to share with you today on this occasion, on the occasion of Pentecost. We often think of it as the birthday of the church.

And what I am sharing today is from Acts chapter 2 verse one: "When the day of Pentecost had come, they (that is, the apostles) were all together in one place."

You probably think that's a strange text to have when we can't be together in one place. That's why we're doing this through all of this technology, and so on.

But whilst the apostles were all together in one place, that is not the end of the story. That was the start of the story.

But it goes well beyond that. The apostles travelled. Thomas went to India – I've been to the chapel where they remember his ministry and where he was speared to death. James went all the way to Spain and the Camino Walk, that so many pilgrims do, remembers the journey he made to the town of San Diego.

The apostles not only gathered in one place, but they also travelled according to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Later on, Paul went to Rome.

And I remember the doctor, George Brown, who was the missionary in Samoa, went to New Britain in what is it today Papua New Guinea.

They were all together in the one place, but that is not the end of the story

Because when they gathered they were mindful of the words that Jesus had given them: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and in Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

The call of Jesus to his followers is to be his witnesses in that geographical sense

and also in the wider sense of being available to people who need to learn about the love of God and the care that Jesus Christ has for them.

"You will be my witnesses," said Jesus. Jesus not only sent them out as witnesses, but he made a promise to them and the promise was that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

I mentioned the witness of George Brown, a missionary in Samoa, who heard about the needs of the people in New Britain and in his heart was a great passion to go to minister to those people.

He had to persuade the Mission Board. They were unwilling for him to do that, at first. They believed that the work they had in Samoa and Tonga and Fiji was enough to keep them busy.

But George Brown had this passion in his heart to go to New Britain. Having persuaded the Board, he had to raise money and he had to recruit workers.

So he went to the pastors college in Fiji. That country had only received the gospel a few years previously, but at the pastors college George Brown told the story of what he wanted to do.

And then when he had finished talking to them, he asked who was willing to come with him on this venture, and the whole student body stood up.

The principal said, "Let's talk to our families and pray about it tonight," and the next day they were all still willing to go. A group was chosen by the principal and George Brown.

But the English administrator, as they had in those days in Fiji, heard about this and ask them to come and see him. When

he saw them, he told them of the sickness of the dangers.

And one of the Fijians spoke up and said, "Dr Brown has told us all these things, but we are still willing to go with him. If we live we live, if we die we die."

A number of them died of malaria, some were killed by a disgruntled chief. But today we have a strong church in New Britain, because of the witness not only of George Brown but of his wife and his accompanying missionaries and the missionaries from Fiji who came to be with him to share the good news of Jesus.

Why, when the apostles gathered in one place, did the Gospel go to Spain, to Rome, to India and to the ends of the earth? Because that was what Jesus expected of his followers.

"You will be my witnesses," he said, "in Jerusalem, all Judaea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

But it's not only a geographical vision.

We are to be the witnesses of Jesus Christ to people groups who do not know about Jesus. Each new generation growing up, each new group of young people, needs to know of the saving power of Jesus Christ and we are called to be witnesses to them.

Today's paper had an article about the great problem of mental health that's emerging as a result of the coronavirus crisis. It is predicted that there will be more suicides after this crisis than there were people who died from the virus.

Mental health issues are very much in the fore of many people's minds at this time, and it must be in the minds of those of us in the church.

How can we be witnesses to those who have lost their job, to those who can't find work? How can we be witnesses to those

who run small businesses, who have seen their business collapse?

These are vital questions. "You will be my witnesses" is not only a geographical thing, it's also something for all the people who need the good news of Jesus.

We are called to be witnesses. So that is why the Gospel spread from that upper room.

But what was the power behind it and how did it happen?

Jesus made a promise to the disciples. Before he said that they would be his witnesses, he said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you," and then it is to be the witnesses of Jesus Christ.

This is our word for the day of Pentecost. The church receives the power of the Holy Spirit and that enables us to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

As congregations, when we can gather together again, we need to be thinking: who are the people who need us? The people who need us need the love of Jesus in a special way.

Our minister challenged us in one of those sermons you get on the YouTube. He challenged us to make a pandemic of love. Not just a pandemic of virus but a pandemic of love and care and compassion; to join with other Christian people in sharing that good news across the world to all the people who need it.

I was the recipient of one of these actions of love. I don't know about you, but when I go to the supermarket and do my shopping, I do what I call supermarket statistics. You know, when you line up there and you're next to the column of the people with 12 items or less, and you find yourself counting how many items are in their trolley. Or when you're coming to the

checkout, you calculate which line will you join.

Well, I joined the line following a woman who had a huge trolley full of things, and so I waited while she went through. And then my turn came to go through I only had a few things, about \$50 worth. But when I came to pay, the woman said, "No, you don't have to pay, the lady who has gone through has paid for you."

What an amazing thing! How blessed I felt. I don't know who she was, she'd gone and I could not run after her and thank her.

But that was an action she was willing to do. I don't know if it was because I looked like an old man, or what it was, but it didn't

matter. It was an act of kindness and care and love, and I appreciate it immensely.

And now it is up to me and up to you, for us to carry this care and compassion on to other people.

We are called to be the witnesses of Jesus. We don't have to be nervous about it, we don't have to be crazy about it, but we know the Spirit's power is with us and we can be the witnesses of Jesus to the people who need to hear about him and who need to experience his love and care and compassion.

It started when they were altogether in one room. But that's not where it ended.

God bless you. Amen.