**Worship Liturgy for Pentecost Macedon Ranges Partnership**

**30th – 31st May 2020**

And so our Easter Resurrection journey reaches the peak of Pentecost. We now encounter the Risen one in his Spirit, the Comforter, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is calls and sends on a new journey to continue the mission of Jesus.

You may like to follow our service on our video. You can find it on our Worship Services page on our website at <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services> or on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/diKLwG2Zo1c>.

Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. Allow the stories told to lead you. We suggest reading the passages when suggested below. We are touching on all the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

This week coincides with Reconciliation Week. Many of the themes and issues raised are deeply connected to those of Pentecost.

We acknowledge all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

Come, the devout from every nation!

For there is a stirring from God among us.

Come, with amazement and astonishment

For the promise of Jesus is pouring out upon us.

Come, sons and daughters, men and women, slaves and free,

For the Spirit of God is ready to our love upon us all

Come.

**PRAYER**

Loving God who turns uncertainty into certainty and turns mourning into dancing

We run to meet you as many did at the time of Pentecost.

We long for you to touch our lives so that we may be able to touch the lives of others for you.

You put the fire of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and we again affirm and welcome the Spirit’s power into our lives.

May we be humble enough to accept this gift of yourself in us and equip us to demonstrate the fruit of your Spirit:

Love without condition

Joy like a child

Peace that surpasses understanding

Patience on the journey

Kindness with a smile

Goodness that is not compromised

Faithfulness that does not waiver

Gentleness as a lamb

Self-control that is honouring

That we may be, as Abraham, blessed to be a blessing.

Amen

**MOMENT OF REFLECTION – a prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession**

We pause now to reflect on the week that has been:

Loving God, We give thanks the week that has been. We thank you for the time when we have sensed your closeness.

**With gratitude we pray.**

We pray for forgiveness when we have turned away from you the fire of your Spirit within.

**Forgive us we pray.**

Breathe your breath of life and light, strength and purpose upon us again.

**Reignite our hearts we pray.**

As we slowly begin the journey back to the world, unfastening the locked doors of our home and our hearts.

**Bless us to be a blessing we pray.**

Amen

**PAUSE TO READ THE READINGS FOR TODAY BEFORE PROCEEDING.** They are: Acts 2:1-21, Psalm 104:26-36, 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13, John 7:37-39

**PENTECOST REFLECTIONS by Rev Peter Cannon**

Our scripture readings are seen by many as telling of the birthday of the church in that they tell of its beginning in the giving of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. Let’s consider them.

* **John’s** story comes at the end of his gospel. There is one more chapter to come but many commentators see evidence of earlier drafts in his gospel. It is thought by many that the end of John’s earlier draft of his gospel was this story. How do we know? vv30 - 31 is a conclusion that summarizes and brings together the whole story, highlighting John’s key points in writing *– “these things have been written that you might believe and in believing, have life.”*
* Look then back over the whole gospel and you see several key words and ideas coming together here. Recent chapters foretell the Spirit’s giving; the Gospel opens with the statement of “In the beginning…”, the story of creation and as the Spirit is breathed into creation giving it life, so now the Spirit is *breathed into* the disciples, giving abundant life; the unity Jesus has with the Father is now shared with the disciples; the authority of forgiveness is passed onto them. You may notice more.
* **Acts’** story comes at the start of the book. It sets the tone for the rest of the stories being told.
* It comes after the disciples accept they need to wait for the promised Spirit. They get ready in prayer and reconstitute the 12.
* Some commentators have argued that Acts should be renamed as *“The Acts of the Holy Spirit”.* For throughout the book, nothing progresses without the Spirit initiating, guiding, empowering or driving it. The stories are about the Apostles and followers of Jesus getting on board to what God is doing.

As I mentioned, in **John** the Spirit is breathed into the disciples just as life was breathed into creation by God. It is the very Spirit that gave Jesus the authority to offer forgiveness, or withhold it... Now the disciples have been given the same Spirit and same authority of forgiveness. The Spirit comes as the breath of life overcoming fear; it drives them out into the threatening world, in the peace not known to the world, continuing Jesus’ mission.

In **Acts**, the Spirit rushes around, into and on the whole group of disciples, men, women and the young, not just the 12 men. It is like the rushing of the wind from a fire storm. The following sermon by Peter and his quote from the prophet Joel give meaning to what is happening.

Rev Dr John Flett, professor of missiology at Pilgrim Theological College makes the point\* that in both stories, the blessing of the Spirit is not for the individuals themselves. The blessing is not experienced unless the work of the Spirit is lived out. In John peace is experienced as the disciples leave the locked room and join with Jesus’ ongoing mission of offering forgiveness and abundant life. In Acts the Spirit’s blessing is known in declaring to those who could hear, the good news of Jesus… in their language (and culture), in terms they could understand. The gift of the Spirit was for others, so they can be blessed with abundant life and the presence of God.

In our Epistle reading from 1 Cor 12, Paul affirms this. The gifts of the Spirit are not known as a blessing until they are expressed in building up the church. They are for the community and an expression of love. The gift of *helps* is known in helping someone, the gift of *teaching* is known in educating another, the gift of *pastoral care* is known in the expression of that compassion to others.

The Spirit is given to all who believe. How then can you as a believer allow the Spirit to be a gift and a blessing?

*\*Hear his comments on the podcast from By the Well at* [*www.bythewell.com.au*](http://www.bythewell.com.au)*.*

**QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:**

1. This week is Reconciliation Week. How does the story of the Spirit speaking in the language of those hearing it address the questions raised by Reconciliation Week?
2. As the Covid-19 restrictions are eased and our doors are unlocked, so to speak, how can we go to fulfil the Spirit’s commissioning in sharing life? Keep in mind, social distancing limitations still exist and will for some time.
3. Being Reconciliation Week and aware of the historic and continuing injustices towards our First Peoples as well as following the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse, we are conscious of the abuse perpetrated by leaders of the church and leaders of our communities. How can the commission to forgive and withhold forgiveness be expressed in a life giving way? Keep in mind who Jesus offered forgiveness to and withheld it from.

**PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Loving God as we focus at this time on Pentecost, when God’s Spirit came down and rested on humanity we prayer for:

Our world, that there may be healing amongst nations and their leaders. May they know your wisdom.

**Loving God, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the healing of the earth from pollution and misuse.

We pray for all who have been affected by COVID-19, directly and indirectly. For those who are making the decisions about the next steps for our nation and other nations of the world.

**Loving God, hear our prayer.**

For the communities who have suffered so much this year, through bushfires and floods, through isolation and loss of income and industries. May they know your peace.

**Loving God, hear our prayer.**

For those who have carried to load and continued to work.

For those who have put their lives at risk.

For those who have found it difficult in isolation. May they know your love.

**Loving God, hear our prayer.**

We pray for our local communities in the Macedon Ranges. We pray for grace and patience as we return to the new normal, post Covid-19.

We pray specifically for reconciliation for all peoples of all lands, recognising that we are all children of God. We pray that our hearts may be open, unlocked and ready to give as God has so generously given to us.

May the Pentecost Spirit of Love, Joy, Peace, Kindness, Gentleness, Goodness, Faithfulness and Self-Control dwell in us as people of faith, that we might be blessed to be a blessing. In Jesus’ name, **Amen**

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Say the prayer Jesus taught us in the language of version you are familiar with.

**BLESSING AND COMMISSIONING**

May the God of our wonderful Pentecost Spirit

Cause us to celebrate with bubbling joy;

A new age of hope and joy

And a new time of opportunity.

May things that were trodden down be raised up

Things that are growing old made young again

And may all things return to their premised perfection.

Glorious is the name of God among the children of light.

Go in Peace.

Amen