



Order of Worship

Pentecost, May 31, 2020 Trinity/Church of the Isles UCC



Welcome/Announcements

Shelly Wilson: <https://youtu.be/4G2U2YKTKu4>

I am so pleased you have joined Trinity and Church of the Isles United Churches of Christ for our online worship service for Sunday, May 31. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome at our churches. We hope you will join us in person for worship when that is possible. I am grateful for of your patience, help, and support! Thank you for your faithfulness! Your courageous spirit and encouragement help me and one another. We will come through this hard time! Welcome to worship!

Welcome to Worship

(Rev. Beth Merrill Neel) <https://youtu.be/SBXATVLZ70Q>

Today... in a new day of light. We see light, hope, and joy; we bring heart and soul, mind, and body; we share blessings and fears; We bring faith and doubt. With all that we are and all that we have, let us worship God.

Prelude “The Church’s One Foundation” (Stone)

Don and Shirley Hand <https://youtu.be/nhnZGFekfec>

Elect from ev'ry nation, yet one o'er all the earth, her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one birth; one holy Name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses, with ev'ry grace endued.

Call to Worship

By the Florida Conference Ministers https://youtu.be/JCFSDc_MrKU

On Pentecost Sunday, we “gather”

- Consciously
- Cautiously,



- And collectively,

To celebrate and prayerfully expect that God is doing a new thing in our world. TODAY.

Today.

Today, it may be easy to see the tragedies and endings and hardship and diagnosis all around us as the end of the story – but, Today.

We are reminded again to never place a period where God has placed a comma.

Today we are reminded that God is still writing, still sighing, still loving us and all that is into redemption.

Today with people all around the world who believe in God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit – we are a people for whom the story *isn't* ever finished.

“We are a people for whom there is always more.

Within our suffering, there is always more,
when we think our lives are hopeless there is always more,
when the plot points of our lives don't end up the way we planned, there is always more,
when we feel powerless there is always more.

Why?

Because after the suffering of the cross – there was more – after Christ was laid in a tomb there was more – and after the Pentecost flames - there. Was. More.”¹

There is more.

On Pentecost Sunday, may the chaotic gathering remind us that no circumstance is beyond God's presence,

On Pentecost Sunday, may the divided tribes and different tongues that gathered years ago remind us that we are equipped uniquely, and we are most powerful in the community of one another.

On Pentecost Sunday, may the howling winds of the Holy Spirit remind us that God spirit is blowing through our midst.

And as we worship from our homes and in our hearts, may we remember,

THERE IS MORE!.

Would you pray with us, please?

¹ Quoting and building upon “A Pentecost Sermon on The Great Unfinished Story”. Given by Nadia Bolz Weber. 5/18/15. As found on www.patheos.com/blogs/nadiabolzweber/2015/05/a-pentecost-sermon-on-the-unfinished-story.



"We name you wind, power, force, and 'God.' We name you and you blow...
blow hard, blow cold, blow hot, blow strong, blow gentle, blow new...

Blowing the world out of nothing to abundance,
blowing the church out of despair to new life,
blowing to make things new that never were.

So blow this day, wind, blow here and there, power, blow even us, force, Rush us beyond ourselves, Rush us beyond our hopes, Rush us beyond our fears, until we enact your newness in the world. Come holy Spirit, come. *Amen.*²

Hymn Singing "In the Midst of New Dimensions" (-Julian Rush)

Don & Shirley Hand (please feel free to sing-along at home!) <https://youtu.be/Gxi6ptBamPs>

In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways. Who will lead the pilgrim peoples wandering in their separate ways?

[Refrain] God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar, We your people, ours the journey now and ever, now and ever, now and ever more.

Through the flood of starving people, warring factions and despair, Who will lift the olive branches?
Who will light the flame of care?

As we stand a world divided by our own self-seeking schemes, Grant that we, your global village might envision wider dreams.

We are man and we are woman, all persuasions, old and young, Each a gift in your creation, each a love song to be sung.

Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in pain, May your blazing phoenix spirit, resurrect the church again.

Prayers of the People

Shelly Wilson <https://youtu.be/-j2pjoEn7vc>

We pray for Shirley F. as she prepares for surgery; Virgil B. as he moves to a new home; for Jennifer and Steve as Steve struggles with COVID 19; for Marla B.'s sister living with cancer; for all who travel; all who have lost homes, jobs, and beloved ones; those most directly affected by inequities, violence, and pain.

² From *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*, for Pentecost



For Light by Fr. John O'Donohue

Light cannot see inside things. That is what the dark is for: Minding the interior, Nurturing the draw of growth Through places where death In its own way turns into life.
In the glare of neon times, Let our eyes not be worn By surfaces that shine With hunger made attractive.
That our thoughts may be true light, Finding their way into words Which have the weight of shadow To hold the layers of truth.
That we never place our trust In minds claimed by empty light, Where one-sided certainties Are driven by false desire.
When we look into the heart, May our eyes have the kindness And reverence of candlelight.
That the searching of our minds Be equal to the oblique Crevices and corners where The mystery continues to dwell, Glimmering in fugitive light.
When we are confined inside The dark house of suffering That moonlight might find a window.
When we become false and lost That the severe noon-light Would cast our shadow clear.
When we love, that dawn-light Would lighten our feet Upon the waters.
As we grow old, that twilight Would illuminate treasure In the fields of memory.
And when we come to search for God, Let us first be robed in night, Put on the mind of morning To feel the rush of light Spread slowly inside The color and stillness Of a found word.

A Time for Children/Youth Mindy Picardo

Special Music “Love Divine, All Love's Excelling” (Wesley)

Shirley & Don Hand <https://youtu.be/GNSfTDMgevk>

Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven to earth come down; Fix in us thy humble dwelling; All thy faithful mercies crown! Jesus, Thou art all compassion, Pure unbounded love Thou art; Visit us with Thy salvation; Enter every trembling heart.
Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit, Into every troubled breast! Let us all in Thee inherit; Let us find that promised rest. Take away our bent to sinning; Alpha and Omega be; End of faith, as its Beginning, Set our hearts at liberty.

Offering Financial support for our churches is essential, now more than ever. Thank you for your faithful support that keeps our ministries going! Please mail in your offerings to your church:

Church of the Isles

Att. Barb Templin

200 24th Ave.

Indian Rocks Beach, FL 33785

(or give online via Pay Pal—on Church of the Isles website)

Trinity UCC

Att. Marty Seyler

3155 Featherwood Court

Clearwater, FL 33759



Scripture Reading

Acts 2:1-21 Jan Boyson

¹⁻⁴ When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

⁵⁻¹¹ There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, "Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues? "They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!"

¹² Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: "What's going on here?" ¹³ Others joked, "They're drunk on cheap wine."

¹⁴⁻²¹ That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: "Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk—it's only nine o'clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen: "In the Last Days," God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams. When the time comes, I'll pour out my Spirit On those who serve me, men and women both, and they'll prophesy. I'll set wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, Blood and fire and billowing smoke, the sun turning black and the moon blood-red, Before the Day of the Lord arrives, the Day tremendous and marvelous; And whoever calls out for help to me, God, will be saved."

Music: "The Real Question"

Dan Wilson <https://youtu.be/ftB2emfa1Ws>

We've never been tested, took a test like this before.
We've never been taken to the limits and beyond there's nothing more.
And if the questions were the best we could imagine
who could blame us if the ending had a twist?
'Cuz, the real question is: what if we survive this?
What if we survive this? What if we survive?
If we make it, you and I have got to promise to make new promises.
We've never been broken, been broken all the way down,
Never found out what was under the foundation in the ground below the ground
And when we wished that we could only see the morning,
Do you think we could have made a bigger wish
'Cuz the real question is what if we survive this? What if we survive?
If we make it, you and I have got to promise to make new promises.



Sermon “The Year of Reverse Pentecost”

Shelly Wilson <https://youtu.be/CzhguP7hYQw>

Of course, we do not know for sure what the end of this may look like, and sometimes I feel survivor’s guilt and other days, elation that I am not dead. Maybe you, too. And, it is not lost on me that the musings of this sermon require a solemn disclaimer—that the wonderings I am raising here arise from a context in which I have food and a roof over my head. Others’ realities are harder. Much harder. It is important to note that truth. Still, in some form or fashion, we experience what Wendell Berry speaks for us all: those moments “When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be...” We wonder what is next in a world where truth is manufactured and sold, where scientific facts are fictionalized, where black and brown people are not safe to even go outside for a run or sleep in their own beds, or birdwatch or vote or expect, after all these centuries, to be treated like human beings, where church attendance and public health are political commodities to be twisted and bought and sold, as if just coping with virus itself were not enough. It’s a lot.

But the other day, I heard something beautiful and challenging and that penetrated the noise and reminded me that there are spiritual matters to be considered in our lives daily, too--challenges to answer that connect devotion and activism and dealing with our own mortality and the time that comes before that inevitable end, should it be from Covid 19, or not. My friend Gary Kirkland for years has gifted his ministers and ex-ministers with music, introducing us to new and interesting artists and tunes. And he created a sort of Coping with Covid playlist for May and in it was the song called “The Real Question,” by Dan Wilson, the youtube of which we are using for this worship service today. <https://youtu.be/fTB2emfa1Ws> Dan wrote this song like two weeks ago when the strangeness and fear that have moved in with most of us, moved in with him. And that real question he posed is this one: “What if we survive this?” What if we survive?

Because statistically speaking, we will. And if so then, what? What new possibilities might emerge? How might our brokenness find a way forward? What will we no longer be willing to accept or ignore? What will no longer be, for those of us in the majority culture, the panacea of white fragility and privilege? What about making new promises that will be kept in real ways? What will it take? Well, sometimes, making our way to new learnings and developing a new courage begins with a close call or many. Because having a close call... does that to a person, offers a breathless and sober clarity that some of us didn’t have back when we were having a so-called normal day. A close call invites us closer to truth, because we didn’t die. If you’ve come back from a heart attack or walked away from your crumpled car unscathed, I am guessing that it changed



you so that you asked different questions, not so concerned about the small stuff, not anymore. But make no mistake, close calls change things.

So, I'm thinking the followers of Jesus had their own "The Real Question" kind of moment after the death of Jesus and since they themselves did not die, but were changed and called, then they started asking the question... what if we survive? In the midst of that period of fear and anger at what was happening in the empire as it was threatened by people like Jesus, the disciples gathered with others from around the region-- to take refuge as we long to do now, in their faith traditions, and when they met up in Jerusalem from all over, with differing understandings and languages, they came together to celebrate Shavuot, a festival that commemorates the giving of the Law to Moses. Then, what happened-- was Pentecost. Shavuot and Pentecost both happen 50 days after Passover, after Easter, but this year, all religious festivals all over the world are very different for all of us. We are alike in that way, now, whether we are celebrating Eid as Muslims or Shavuot as Jews or Pentecost as Christians. Wherever the celebrants are, now, still, though the communities are apart, the old stories will be read and old traditions honored.

For us, today—Pentecost marks the birthday of the church, in effect, when the community first understood itself to be a visible realized outpouring of Spirit, that is to unite and celebrate diversities of peoples, to offer generosity for the stranger, the immigrant, the other. This is a holy time that ritualizes what ideally will happen for people of all faiths and of no faith, in the time of pandemic and in ordinary time--that we will awaken to the realities of life and death and then act in the midst of our differences lawfully, truthfully, and for the common good. It is a story that answers the question: What if we survive this?

In the Pentecost story, God comes to the big gathering of the faithful from everywhere and pours out the restless, fiery, dancing Spirit of love and diversity of language and thought, and justice and peace. God also comes to us now, in the loneliness and in the separation, in the somber jolting opportunities for change, God comes to ask us to promise new promises to each other. To work for understanding, to push back against inequities and disparities that killed other creatures and people and hurt the planet BEFORE the pandemic, and to move ourselves away from those injustices and toward the mighty wind of the Spirit of Love.

Feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson writes, "Whenever a human community resists its own destruction or works for its own renewal, when structural changes serve the liberation of oppressed peoples; when law subverts racism, sexism, poverty, and militarism; when swords are beaten into ploughshares or bombs into food for the starving; when the scores of old injustices are healed, when enemies are reconciled once violence and domination have ceased; whenever the lies and raping and killing stop: wherever diversity is sustained in koinonia; wherever justice and peace and freedom gain a transformative foothold—there the living presence of



the Spirit is mediated.” That is Pentecost that begins in the heart, when we are separated in this time of pandemic, Spirit calling and relentlessly asking the question: “What if we survive this? How will we become God in this world in new ways, wanting to set our hearts on fire, like the first Pentecost, inspiring our youth and us elders to dream new dreams, to prophesy and to work for the earth, the disenfranchised and left-out? To intervene for those being targeted by prejudice and disparities and the wiles of the empire that every day subvert truth and persecute those who dare to resist it? What if we survive? Then, will it be back to our “normal” Or will it be pressing toward a Pentecostal day that speaks new words and opens the closed spaces, and takes the church outside in new ways—for a revelation-revolution?

Happy birthday this year, Church! That is what we claim Pentecost is. What if this year, like for so many people, this is a different birthday for the Church? What if this year, in the reality of not gathering together, still Spirit has shown up wherever we are, and like our forbears, what if we make new promises because we have survived? What if, in memory of Jesus and of all those who have died, we resist business as usual, religion as prescribed, prejudices as expected, and hatred as legislated, and determine that we will not go back to the predictable ways of the empire and the finalities of the obvious. May we have faith and then act on the conviction that there is something more. Someone more...--that Pentecost more than ever is the antidote to hostility and hypocrisy and that the mighty Spirit-wind can blow through and between us, even when we are apart from one another. Normally, when we have read it before, this story has been about the Spirit that does the work of putting back together all the broken apartness in the world, but it is also about the desert and the wildness and unpredictability, and the challenge, and the courage, and the miracles that happen in even in the face of death and that we have another chance because we survived, to love, help heal, experience, see and hear, in new ways. Fear can be overcome by love, and Spirit, blowing between us, is inviting the Church to come out—to refuse to sit down in the sanctuary and behave and resign ourselves to irrelevance in a world rapidly losing its sense of compassion, subsumed by fear and greed. We know how to do the work—Jesus’ work: speaking truth to power, healing and peace, and resilience and inclusion and making a way where there was no way. That is Holy work. That is what the church was made for. We don’t have to stay together inside to do it.

In the medieval church, Pentecost was the most dramatic celebration of the whole year. The practice was to paint heavenly scenes on the great domed and vaulted ceilings of cathedrals to inspire the worshippers and to disguise these little trap doors that were up there. During the Pentecost service, at the appropriate high moment in the liturgy, the trap doors would open and there would be released live doves and down out of the painted skies and clouds would swoop, dive, and soar the living symbols of the Spirit, and simultaneously, the



choir would break into a whooshing, drumming sound of a windstorm, and then, to symbolize the little tongues of fire, through the ceiling trapdoors, bushels of rose petals would be showered down upon the congregation. These openings to the skies in these cathedral ceilings were called Holy Spirit holes.

What if we survive this? What if this is a reverse Pentecost and we do not need to huddle inside or cut holes in the ceiling to simulate letting Spirit in because we are already out there where Spirit lives and breathes and is blowing in the wind and burning in the fires of justice, and speaking in many languages, and uniting us in healing. Spirit is not gathering us together this year. Spirit is calling us into the world. May we have the courage to follow. Amen.

Postlude “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (van Dyke)

Don & Shirley Hand <https://youtu.be/3MXdHZHwsxo>

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love; Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee, Op'ning to the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the dark of doubt away; Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day!

All Thy works with joy surround Thee, Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays, Stars and angels sing around Thee, Center of unbroken praise. Field and forest, vale and mountain, Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea, Singing bird and flowing fountain Call us to rejoice in Thee.

Thou art giving and forgiving, Ever blessing, ever blest, Wellspring of the joy of living, Ocean depth of happy rest! Loving Spirit, Father, Mother, all who love belong to you, Teach us how to love each other, by that love our joy renew.