

**WESTMINSTER CHURCH
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 3B5**

**“Trusting God, nurturing disciples for Christ,
being empowered by the Holy Spirit”**

**June 5th, 2022
Pentecost Sunday
...We Gather to Worship God...**

Call to Worship:

We've come to worship God, who makes streams flow from rock, who turns the parched earth into springs of water, who sends the rain from heaven and makes the wilderness blossom and flourish.

As the deer thirsts for flowing streams, so we thirst for You, O God.

Come, let's worship our life-giving God, who pours out living water on all who thirst.

Announcements: We are glad you are with us today and welcome your online voices joining with us in praise and in prayer.

Birthday Train: We celebrate 2 birthdays this week: Robert Cameron (June 5th) and Gordon Hoffman (June 8th). Happy Birthday to Robert and Gordon and may Christ bless your day with Peace.

Communion: June 12th

Offerings and Tithes:

Our Session would like to encourage our members and friends to prayerfully consider your contributions to our ongoing ministry here at Westminster. Contributions may be made in person, by mail, or by e-transfer to office@westminsterchurch.ca. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Hymn: 390 Spirit divine, attend our prayers

Opening Prayer

O Lord, all the earth is full of your glory and the heavens resound in the praise of your name. Streams, rivers and brooks ramble along the course you designed for them; leaves whisper of your many and varied ways; fields murmur as you pass through them; in the skies the thunder

sounds its applause. With countless tongues and voices creation welcomes your presence. We join that through this morning and lift up our chorus: "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!"

God of wisdom and understanding, have mercy upon us as we confess our sin. Your children are scattered; language keeps them apart. Forgive us for the cultural pride that refuses to learn the language of another. Forgive us for the barriers of insensitivity that repel those whom you seek to call through us. By your Spirit's power undo the plight of Babel by the miracle of Pentecost, to the end that all may hear the gospel of your good news in Jesus Christ and praise him with one voice. Hear us now Father as we pray to you as your Son taught us to pray saying: Our Father . . .
Amen

...We Listen to God's Word...

Word of God:

Old Testament: Genesis 11:1-9

New Testament: Acts 2: 1-21

Hymn: 389 Breathe on me, breath of God

Message:

If there is a word that is celebrated in the business community and schools it is creativity. We want our children to be creative, we cannot stifle what appears to be creativity - unless of course it is crayon on the living room wall or pencil or marker... We want people to see us as being creative. Routine is seen as missing opportunities. We are told to grab new opportunities, think outside the box, push the boundaries. This is what is needed to survive in the new business paradigms, maybe even in our new society.

Many make this sound like something new, but our Biblical history shows us that this is not new. No matter what we call it - thinking outside of the box, pushing boundaries, finding new limits, - humans have always been like this.

One of the oldest stories in the Bible is about a group of people trying to find new limits. They want to make a name for themselves. They want to push boundaries. They want to build a tower that is taller than anything that has ever been done. They want to build a tower that will reach the heavens!

The tower of Babel is a fascinating story, one which old and young alike can appreciate. Everyone understands the fascination with building something bigger and higher than anything else. Yet, in the end, of this story, the project comes to a halt. The language of the workers is scrambled, no one can talk to each other and everyone is scattered. All that is remembered is Babel is where everyone's language was confused.

One article that I read about this particular story, noted that the fundamental problem with human beings is that they do not like boundaries or set limits implying that we are sinning when we are pushing the boundaries. Certainly in the story of the Tower of Babel this was the case. They tried to push the limits so that they could gain fame and glory. They wanted to be able to point to their tower and say ‘we did that all by ourselves’, ‘we do not need anyone’s help’, we are superior’.

This author rightly points out that human beings united around the wrong kind of centre can create all kinds of havoc and do unspeakable horrors. Many have pushed all sorts of boundaries, laws and limits because of a mistaken believe in their own superiority and self-righteousness. In their wake, they have left chaos, destruction, confusion and disorder. History is full of all sorts of people fighting for unity, believing in their own superiority. And the human chaos that has resulted is incalculable.

Yet, our story from the book of Acts shows us that when it is God who calls us to think outside the box , to look beyond our usual boundaries—then wonderful amazing things can occur. And when God calls us to do this it is always for human good, even if it may appear somewhat unsettling at times.

The disciples spent ten days waiting for this Holy Spirit which Christ had promised them. They were not too sure what to do with themselves so they went to an upper room in an house and spent time in prayer perhaps also spending some time talking and thinking about what they thought the next step might be. They picked another disciple to replace Judas, and they waited for the religious day of Pentecost.

The feast of Pentecost is why so many people were in Jerusalem on this day. Pentecost was one of the three major feast days, pente meaning fifty, referring to fifty days after the Passover feast. At Pentecost, the Jewish people would commemorate the giving of the law to Moses as well as give thanks for a good harvest. It was actually a religious requirement to get to Jerusalem 3 times a year, Pentecost being one of these required times. Since traveling conditions were at their best and Pentecost was a feast where no servant work should be done, there were a huge number of people in the streets of Jerusalem coming from areas all around Israel.

Little did the disciples know that this would be a feast day like no other. The Holy Spirit would come to them and announce himself to every Jew that was there in Jerusalem. The people heard about the saving grace of Jesus in their own native language, remember some would have journeyed from faraway places with different languages. They did not need a translator, they did not need to learn another language. God came to them in their own language, recognizing each and every culture that was there. It is the absolute reverse of the Tower of Babel

God had worked in the box, giving his message to the Jewish people for a time but he never intended it to stay there. The Israelites were always intended to point towards the Light of the world and to welcome those who would accept Him. In the New Testament, there is no mistake about God’s message of grace being for more than just the Jews. Christ pushed the boundaries,

taking time to talk to tax collectors, Samaritans, divorced women and Roman soldiers. His message was for everyone.

When the Holy Spirit comes, more boundaries are pushed. Everyone heard in their own language. All the Jews of all the various countries and also the converts to Judaism.... Arabs, Romans, everyone heard about God's mighty deeds in their own language. There were no outsiders any longer, God was giving his message to everyone. There were no longer any boundaries for God's message of love.

The disciples had an interesting time reaching out to all of the places that had heard about God and wanted to know more. They would be sent to places and would sit down and eat with people that they never would have before. Only in Christ, could they get past the boundaries and see that God's message was for all.

A number of years ago now, Rev. Pauline Brown received the order of Canada for her 50 years of work with the Beal people in India. And she will not be forgotten by the Beal people of India. In the caste system of India, the Beal people did not even register in the list of the castes. They were the lowest of the low. They were not even treated as humans most of the time. However some Christians, including Pauline, came to tell them that in Christ there is no caste system. They were beloved children of God and they deserved to have schools and hospitals and facilities just like everyone else. It took someone inspired and called by the Holy Spirit...thinking outside the box, someone looking past the boundaries that humans had created to reach these people with the good news that to Jesus they mattered. In Christ they have become human, even the Indian government recognizes them and is willing to talk to them now.

The government, of course, is still trying to understand why someone like Pauline Brown has spent fifty years working in a strange country for a group of strangers who counted for nothing in India. Why has she done this? Why have the Beal people become Christian and not stayed with their traditional religion? Well their answer to the authorities was this..."...their religion said that they were nothing, Christianity said that they were treasured human beings and loved by God and strangers came and stayed and provided schools, clean water, medical care to prove it" and that is why they accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This is part of the ongoing power of the Holy Spirit at work today and always.

The Holy Spirit blew into Jerusalem with the sound of a violent wind and tongues of fire having no intentions of finding its resting place there. Jerusalem was just the beginning. The Holy Spirit had plans for the disciples to overcome all sorts of boundaries. After all humans are never content with set limits.

When the Holy Spirit is active in us and we take His curiosity, creativity, and that urge to look beyond the box and put it all to use for Christ it is pretty surprising where it can take us.

...We Respond in Service...

Collection & Dedication

Prayers of the People:

Holy One, we are not sure what it would be like if the Holy Spirit blew through our churches again as it did on the day of Pentecost.

However, we want to speak the language that you have given, louder, and more clearly in our lives and church.

So we pray, come Holy Spirit come, pour out your fire of love upon us to be the body of Christ in a world that is hurting, hungry, and lonely.

We want to bring the good news to the poor, heal the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to captives, bring recovery of sight to the blind and set free all who are bruised.

As your disciples, we pray for all who suffer, are poor, despairing, burdened, blind and battered, especially today we remember those who suffer in war in Ukraine, and those who suffer the unfathomable grief of the murder of their loved ones and children in the US.

In your loving breeze, we pray for health and wholeness for those who are physically ill, for those who are mentally ailing, for those who are grieving, for those who are spiritually unwell.

We pray for your healing. Healing from this pandemic, healing from war, healing for your creation, healing for our community. May we know the winds of your Spirit blowing through all that we do.

In Jesus Name, Amen.

Hymn: Holy Spirit rain down

Benediction: May the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen

Holy Spirit Rain Down

Chorus: Holy Spirit rain down rain down
O Comforter and Friend
How we need Your touch again
Holy Spirit rain down rain down
Let Your power fall let Your voice be heard
Come and change our hearts as we stand on Your Word
Holy Spirit rain down

Verse: No eye has seen no ear has heard
No mind can know what God has in store
So open up heaven open it wide
Over Your church and over our lives

Ending: Let Your power fall let Your voice be heard
Come and change our hearts as we stand on Your Word
Holy Spirit rain down

CCLI Song # 2405227

Prayers – Wednesday June 1, 2022

Thank you Lord that your word tells us in Matthew 18:20 “where two or three are gathered in your name, you are in the midst”. Because of that promise, we know you hear our prayers.

Praise reports

Grateful for prayers for safety as my oldest nephew biked a 50 km event in Toronto last Saturday raising funds for youth mental health – no incidents or injuries with almost 1,000 participants.

Praise for the ordination this week of Rev. Tom Mason who participated with our prayer group and found it a blessing during his studies. We pray your blessing Lord as he takes on the two point charge of Elmvale and Floss, ON.

Birthdays this week

Thank you Lord for the gift of dear friends whom I celebrated with this past Sunday and I pray that Grace Scoffield had a time of blessing on her birthday this past Monday.

Prayers

Lord we are mindful of the world beyond here where we live so peacefully in Sault Ste. Marie, we are grateful for our community and are so aware of those who are facing a life in war torn countries, in places where terrible tragedy has occurred such as the recent mass murders of innocent people. Help us not to forget as we pray for others, give them hope and comfort Lord we ask.

We pray for Fran Burns who is having surgery this Friday. While not anxious about it, Fran has asked we remember her before you Lord. We pray all goes well with excellent recuperation.

We pray for Josie who is still in the hospital and ask Lord that her care team continue to work with her for recovery and rehabilitation. Watch over Josie Lord, we commit her and her family to you as they support one another.

We lift up a fellow who is struggling with depression and feelings of negative self-worth. Lord we pray he will seek you and hear you whispering in his heart and mind that he is loved because you first loved him. Give this fellow hope Lord, bring people alongside to offer support and encouragement.

Lord we lift up those dealing with cancer. We think of Melinda's, Uncle Ronny, who has moved to ARCH. We pray Lord for Ronny and his wife and family to know your comfort and peace on this journey. Lord please make this a precious time for their family, a time where their love for one another is evident and your love for them is revealed.

We pray for a young girl Charlotte, who was diagnosed with multiple cancers a year ago now. She is currently on a maintenance program which is a miracle in itself, however the demand on the family financially and emotionally and logistically is a challenge due to travelling to London ON every month for her chemo treatments. We pray Lord for your ongoing watch care and encouragement over Charlotte and her family. We pray for a young man Grayson, and for Peter's sister-in-law, as each have been battling cancer for some time. Lord, please help them to know your presence and please give them and their loved ones hope as treatment plans continue. We pray for the medical leaders overseeing their care, give them wisdom.

Lord I lift up a friend's husband who has just received a terminal diagnosis of lung cancer. Draw him and their family near to you and to one another. I pray they will know your comfort and peace that goes beyond human understanding.

We pray once again for Mel's friend Charity who has recently had spinal surgery and now must have more intervention because the incision became infected. She is scared and discouraged and asks for our prayers as she returns for more surgery. Lord please put your healing hand upon her. Holy Spirit, we ask for your presence with Charity such that she is aware she is not alone and knows you are with her. Lord, we commit Charity to you. Speak to her heart and mind Lord, give her your peace.

We pray for Mary Anne, whose husband has to have open heart surgery in Sudbury. Be with them as they attend a consultation this week.

We lift up Les Dool and pray for complete healing from shingles around his neck. It has been several months of extreme pain and is persisting. Help Les not to lose heart, to know your loving presence with him and assure him, healing will come.

We pray for Jackie in his ongoing health struggles.

We continue to pray for Emily Michaud as she recovers from her broken ankle.

We pray for Emily's friend who needs an apartment, she has a temporary place but Lord, help her to find a place to live.

Lord I pray for a marriage of 50 years that is filled with sadness and disappointment. I pray for this couple to find you in the midst of their hurt. Help them to seek to love as Christ loved, with a sacrificial love. Heal this marriage Lord I pray.

We pray for Carol and Adam Lord. Help Carol to know how to relate to her son in such a way that she can engage him and inspire him to grow. Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit we ask for your intervention in this situation. Give Adam insight from You Lord.

Lord, we pray for Melinda as she heads out to B.C. to see her sister for the first time in six years, flying for the first time in 32 years. May every detail of her travel go well and may she find delight in people she meets along the way. We pray her visit is satisfying and fun for her and for Laurie too.

Lastly Lord, we lift up our brothers and sisters at St. Paul's and Victoria churches as they are without a minister at this time. We pray for Rev. Dr. Charlene as she is the moderator who will be assisting them through the process. Help them to wait upon you Lord and hear your voice through one another as they seek your will going forward.

Amen.