

When the Floodgates Open

Sunday, May 23rd, 2021 || Pentecost Sunday || Pastor Christy Wright

Yes, we are meeting outdoors at 9:30 AM, this Sunday in front of the Church!

For full details, please read below in the Community Announcements Section.

If you are unable to join us in person, we invite you to light a candle at 9:30 AM and join us in prayer online or over the phone for a pre-recorded service. Audio worship, including the prelude and postlude, prayers, and the sermon is available at <https://georgewhitefieldumc.weebly.com/worship-services> or over the phone at (978) 990-5000, access code 719365#. Just dial in, enter the access code on your keypad, and you will hear the service begin with music. Note that we may not be able to include the hymns in pre-recorded services - thank you for your understanding.

Announcements

Opening Hymn

Scripture Reading - Acts 2:1-13

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound, the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphlyia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

Sermon

I don't know about you, but the past couple of weeks have been a whirlwind. Last week, the CDC made a significant announcement regarding the wearing of masks, and just a few days later, Gov. Baker announced the official reopening of the State of Massachusetts at the end of this month. In the midst of all of this information, I'm left in a haze: is this really happening? Are we actually, truly, nearing the end of the pandemic? Are we on the other side of this thing?

As I reflect on the past year, it feels so disorienting to believe that yes, indeed, we are truly beginning to see a new day dawning. But the evidence is right in front of me.

While I was on vacation this past week, I had the joy of reconnecting with friends and family, some of whom I hadn't seen for over a year: some whose toddlers had crossed the threshold into school-aged kids, and others who adopted new pets or added an addition to their home. A lot had changed over the past year, and though we had all kept in touch over the phone or through cards and letters, we still had so much to share with one another. We were all fully vaccinated, and as we took off our masks, we realized what we had been missing all this time. I met up with a friend for nearly five hours at a local restaurant, where we dined outside and shared our greatest joys of the past year and our most heartbreaking moments. We also visited with family friends twice while I was home, and each time, we were there for over three hours. I can't neglect to mention the hours and hours of conversation I shared with my parents and family - over coffee, over meals, and just while doing laundry or dishes. It was like a floodgate had opened - a new line of communication that had been muffled by face coverings and marred by distance was now crystal clear.

I think we are, indeed, on the other side of the pandemic. The questions, the doubts, the fears - none of them are erased, but perhaps they are eased a bit. The tragedy, the pain, the suffering, the loss - none of it is forgotten, but perhaps it hurts just a little bit less as we look toward the future.

As we celebrate Pentecost today, we are also celebrating the inauguration of a new day. Just as the Holy Spirit blew through the early Church of the first century, and startled and confused the followers of Jesus, so too, we can expect a bit of a haze as we enter this new chapter. We will still have hesitations, questions, and uncertainties about how we go about the future. But the best part is that we know that we can trust the answers in the wind, the Holy Spirit blowing in the wind.

But the Holy Spirit doesn't just give us guidance. The Holy Spirit opens up lines of communication within and among us, and between God and us. As we begin to think about starting to remove our masks, the Holy Spirit nudges us to nourish

our relationships once more, to invest in one another and within our community. And the Holy Spirit breathes life into us as well. This year has been a really, *really* difficult year for so many reasons, and at many points, I know this year felt more like death than life. But God does not leave us tired and weary, and God has never left our side. No, be still, and feel God's presence, for God breathes new life into us each and every day. As we inhale, we breathe in God's great love and the gift of the Holy Spirit, & as we exhale, we have the opportunity to breathe God's life & love into all that surrounds us. What a gift.

So whoever you are, whatever you are facing, know that you are not alone. God's great love was made evident from the beginning of time when the Spirit blew over the waters of creation, and God's great love is known now, even and especially in the dawning of a new day. May we recognize the answers blowing in the wind, knowing that the Holy Spirit is guiding us even now. May we nourish the relationships that give us life through God's great love, and may we take heart that even in the midst of death, life is sprouting up all around us, through the power of Jesus' resurrection. Amen.

Hymn of Meditation

In Our Prayers. Thanksgiving for: the gifts that make ministry possible, medical professionals and researchers. Holding in our hearts: those experiencing unemployment, those facing racial injustice and violence, for our world as we continue to combat gun violence, for our congregation as we grieve the loss of loved ones, those experiencing illness or health issues - for Al (and family as they care for him), Dan D. (Vicki's husband), Haley, Kelly R., Lindsey S., Richie B.), those in nursing homes or extended care facilities (Betty, Claire), those caring for others (Carrie G., Crystal, Rachel), the United Methodist Church. *Note that this list will renew each month.*

Benediction

And now, may the peace of the Lord Christ go with you wherever God may send you; may God guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm; may God bring you home rejoicing at the wonders God has shown you; may God bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors.

Community Announcements

- **PLEASE KEEP MASKS ON.** The CDC and State of Massachusetts have released a wealth of information over the past week or two, but the Reopening Advisory Board has not had a chance to meet yet to interpret this information. Therefore, we are kindly asking **everyone to please keep your masks on for today's service and remain socially distant.** Please be patient with the Reopening Advisory Board, as we meet tomorrow evening to discuss all of the information before us. We also recognize that not everyone has been fully vaccinated. **In an effort to love our neighbor, we are asking that everyone please continue to wear your masks.** It is very likely that we will amend our protocol for our very next church service on May 30th, especially as Gov. Baker has announced a lifting of all remaining Covid-19 restrictions on May 29th.
- **FOR TODAY:** We are meeting **outside in front of the church.** Regardless of vaccination status, **masks and social distancing are required** in order to limit our risk factors. Remember to bring your lawn chair, wear your mask, and be sure to set yourself up at least six feet from folks who are not part of your household. Should weather become a concern, Pastor Christy will begin a phone chain by Saturday at 4 PM prior to the service. Indoor worship possibilities are still being explored. As always, if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns about in-person worship, feel free to reach out to anyone on the Reopening Advisory Board: Jane Dolan, Tom McKeon, Diane Mundell, Melissa Quilitzsch, or Pastor Christy.
- **Ad Council Meeting (and others who wish to join).** Ad Council will be meeting on Sunday, May 23rd after church in the fellowship hall. All are welcome as we make important decisions. **Masks are required.**
- **Reopening Advisory Board Meeting.** The Reopening Advisory Board will meet on **Monday, May 24th at 7 PM** by phone to discuss the latest guidance at (978) 990-5000, access code 719365#.
- **Transition.** By now, you will have heard the news that Pastor Christy is being appointed to First United Methodist Church in Stoughton, MA, and we will be receiving Certified Lay Minister Sandy Dam and Coordinating Pastor John Lucy on July 1st, 2021! We are very excited to meet Minister Sandy and Pastor John, and we look forward to their ministry! In the meantime, please continue to be in prayer during this transition as we work out details and prepare for their arrival.
- **UPDATE ON MAILINGS.** In order to save on postage, mailings will now be available on Sunday mornings for pickup at our outdoor services. Mailings will no longer automatically be sent out; if you are unable to join us in person, mailings will be dropped in the mail on Monday mornings so all folks can continue to be part of our connection.
- **Pastor Christy's Office Hours: MAY.** Pastor Christy's office hours have shifted to **Mondays and Tuesdays** from 8 AM to 4 PM and **Fridays** from 8 AM to 12 noon. If you have an emergency outside of office hours, please call her cell phone, leave a message, and she will get back to you as soon as possible.

(508) 867-3667

(860) 908-7531

pastorchristygwumc@gmail.com

- **Prayer Chain.** As a church, we are a wonderful community of prayer. When a need arises, we send it through the prayer chain so we can all meditate together. If you would like to be a part of this prayer chain, reach out to Jane Dolan, who will put you on the list.
- **THANK YOU for your continued generous donations to the work of the church!** We are so grateful for your gifts, for they make an impact near and far. As a reminder, you can mail your offerings to PO Box 576, West Brookfield, MA 01585. Thank you!

Sonshine Phone Calls and Cards List

If you know of anyone who could be added to our Sonshine list, let Pastor Christy know.

Betty Hubbard
47 E Main St.
West Brookfield, MA 01585

Kelly Rice
98 Lake Shore Drive
West Brookfield, MA 01585

Claire Wirf
(508) 791-8131 (mornings)
838 Mill Street
Worcester, MA 01602

Richie Buzzell
16 Ragged Hill Rd.
W Brookfield, MA 1585

Daily Devotionals:

A Community Of Prayer from Around the Connection

The Upper Room Daily Devotionals official magazines are still being distributed.

If you would like a copy, please let Pastor Christy know.

Monday, May 24th through Saturday, May 29th || Written by Various Authors in the Conference

We invite you to light a candle at 9:30 AM daily, meditate on our given scripture, and join us in prayer

Monday, May 24th, 2021

Rev. Natalie Hill, LICSW, Deacon serving the Wesley Foundation, Cambridge, MA

Read Romans 8:22-27

O God who created us: How long have our bodies been groaning? How long have we longed to be set free? Those of us who have received a vaccine are grateful to be the first crop of a harvest of thanksgiving that will come to fruition when we can truly gather and sing your praises. How many times in the last year have our prayers been unexpressed groans? How often, even now, do we pray in sighs too deep for words? We do not know how to celebrate our own survival, our own growing freedom to return to something called "normal," while we see this pandemic wreaking ever more devastation. How can we be glad when our siblings in India experience more grief and loss than we can fathom? How can we celebrate that we are saved while so many are lost every day? Holy Spirit, we lift our cries and our sighs for what we do not yet see, but what we envision in hope. Though we try to wait with patience. every day that brings death is a day too long. Hear our cries, and join our pleas for your children, O Spirit, our Advocate, our Comforter. Come, now, to help us in our weakness. Amen.

Tuesday, May 25th, 2021

Rev. Kathleen Decker-Szakas, Highland Avenue UMC, Gardiner, ME

Read Acts 2:1-13

Holy Spirit, flame and breath, burn in my life and warm me to your presence. Melt the barriers which restrain me from participating in your kingdom. Consume the crates and categories which keep me from seeing your image in each of your children. Enter my being in every inhalation and bring these bones to life so I may participate in your healing work. Free my tongue with every exhalation that I might speak your language of grace and bear witness to your glory. I remain alive in you. Amen.

Wednesday, May 26th, 2021

Pastor Christy Wright, candidate for commissioning/membership as a provisional elder

Read Psalm 93

God of Love and Light, of wind and waves, Your great majesty envelopes all of creation. You are with us. From Your first words of "Let there be light," to the very breath with which You filled and continue to fill humanity, You are with us. Though Your power sometimes seems too grand to grasp, Your gentle love is close. You are with us. Remind us that we are never far from Your peace, Your presence, Your vastness. You are with us. Encourage us to share Your great love with all whom we encounter, for You are with all of us. Amen.

Thursday, May 27th, 2021

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Rev. Jill Colley Robinson, Green Mountain District Superintendent

Read 1 John 4:11-13

For a whole year of our lives — more than a year — to love one another has been to wear a mask, keep our distance, stay home whenever possible, keep our singing and our eating to ourselves, clean our hands and much-handled surfaces, keep in touch without touch, get our temperatures checked, get tested, and now get vaccinated, keep planning to be outside

pray

work

pray

wait

pray

will ourselves to keep going

pray some more.

And so we pray some more: Abide in us, O God, as we seek to love one another perfectly in an imperfect world. Abide in us, O God, as we mourn the thousands who die every day. Abide in us, O God, as we face our fears, trusting that your love casts out fear. Abide in us, O God, as we assess the risks of being together again after all that has been lost. Abide in us, O God, as we strive to have patience with one another and ourselves. Abide in us, O God, as we tell the truth in love and hold each other accountable in grace. Abide in us, O God, as we realize that we do not yet and will not have all of the answers. Abide in us, O God, as we recognize that not everyone is or can or will be vaccinated. Abide in us, O God, as we recoil from the reality that perfect safety is elusive, and always has been. This is not your gift to us. Abide in us, O God, as we receive the gift you do offer freely — love — and go on to perfection only ever through it. Abide in us, O God of love. Abide in us.

Amen.

Friday, May 28th, 2021

Pastor Michelle Ashley, candidate for commissioning/membership as a provisional elder

Read Acts 10:44-48

God of water and spirit, God of astonishment and unforeseen adventures, God of pandemics and vaccines, God who mourns with us in death's shadow, and God who rejoices beside us in the sun, we praise you for your unfailing presence in our lives in good times and in bad. We gather today to worship you with all that we have and all that we are. This season, many of us will enter our sanctuary for the first time in a long time. Others continue to worship from their homes and on-the-go. Some arrive like Peter, full of passion and things to say. Others are more quiet. We watch from the sidelines of our pews and couch cushions, wondering, waiting, perhaps even hoping that you might have a word to speak just to us today. We thank you for being a God who sees each and every one of us: Insiders and outsiders, Popular and unpopular, Remembered and forgotten. Just as your Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentile believers in the book of Acts, we humbly ask that your Spirit would fall upon us today. Remind us that we are loved and accepted as your children. Remind us that those who we see as "outsiders" are also loved and accepted as your children. Inspire us to dream your dreams, speak your words, and imagine your vision for our world. Help us, God, by your grace, to love you, and to love one another as you have loved us. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Saturday, May 29th, 2021

Pastor Jamie Michaels, candidate for commissioning/membership as a provisional elder

Read Psalm 1:2

Immeasurable love, you have shaped the world with beauty and delight, so that even when we are sorrowful we cannot deny the splendor of creation. Even your laws are beautiful: Care for each other. Honor all life. Be guided by gentleness. Pour out generosity. Welcome, welcome, welcome all. Today may my roots reach deep into the ground of your word. May the soil of your love nourish me, so I may stand strong in the storm, so I may bend without breaking, so having been blessed by you, I may bless your world with joy and delight. Amen.