



PENTECOST 2025

Day by day they were all together attending the Temple. They broke bread in their various houses, and ate their food with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and standing in favour with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being rescued.

Acts 2:46-47 – New Testament for Everyone.

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church Chatham,



Fifty days after Easter, at Pentecost, is when Christians traditionally celebrate the birth of the Church, for it was then that – according to Luke¹ – the Holy Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus. In other words, the *same* divine spirit that descended on Jesus at his baptism, so commissioning and empowering him for ministry, is now generously given to all of Christ’s followers. Commentators often say that the “Acts of the Apostles,” the second volume of Luke’s work, is really the “Acts of the Holy Spirit.” I encourage you to re-read Luke’s account over the summer and follow his literary journey from Jerusalem to Rome, along which the apostles have several remarkable epiphanies. And remember, *we are all a part of that continuing story . . . enabled by the same divine spirit.*

Things were not all plain sailing for the early church, and we are experiencing our own challenges at FPC. They faced *external* pressures from various kinds of opposition – even persecution, as well as *internal* stressors, both pastoral and theological, due to the church’s rapid growth in numbers and complex inter-cultural factors. Even so, Luke sensed that the Holy Spirit was with them every step of the way. Our challenges are *also* both internal and external - a complex, multifaceted topic for a sermon series followed by heavy discussions! We also face something they didn’t have to address: the legacy of church buildings. Though beautiful, majestic, and built to the glory of God, our building – like that of *many* other aging churches – is facing major repairs, such as the roof, and even a heating emergency in the case of our furnace. Even so, I am convinced the Holy Spirit continues to walk with us on our journey.

We are grateful for the Finance and Property Committee, and the Church Trustees, for all their deliberations and ongoing hard work. We receive regular updates in the weekly bulletins, and major decisions concerning the replacement furnace will be made in the near future, both at Session and at a special Congregational Meeting later in June.² Nevertheless, we must always differentiate between the *urgent* and the *important*. While addressing the initial heating crisis was an ‘urgent’ matter, it has now moved to the ‘important’ category, and we are - of course - working hard to have a new system installed and operational before the winter.

¹ See Acts 2. Note that in John 20:22, Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit to his followers on Easter day!

² Provisionally June 22, following the morning worship.

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The work of the Search Committee is also 'important,' and we continue to ask for your patience and prayers on this matter. It is vital that we do our utmost to get this right, rather than to rush. Since the Holy Spirit empowers the people of God and breathes life into - and sustains - all of creation, we can confidently expect the Spirit to care



about *both* people *and* buildings! Even so, we must do our part and *partner with God* in whatever way we can, through volunteering in various capacities - including the Saturday Breakfast program and this summer's Backyard Mission project - caring for others, and the giving of our time and resources: each as we are able, and with a thankful heart. *All* these things are very important for maintaining the health of a vibrant church.

There are so many unsung heroes at FPC. Please know that I appreciate each and every one of you.

Peace be with you all,

Rev. Tim Reddish

DEVOTIONAL

Many years ago, I was leading a weekly Bible Study in another community. I remember that group very warmly for their enthusiasm and warm fellowship. At the beginning of one particular year, I proposed to lead our intrepid little group in an overview of the Old Testament, ...the whole thing! What was the matter with my head?! I had to do a *LOT* of scrambling, boning up on prophets, priests, and kings. But, in truth, I remember it as a joy, revisiting this marvelous book, the Hebrew Bible, the Bible that Jesus read.

As I sit writing this, we approach Pentecost. And, in the immortal words of the Muppets, "It is the season of the Spirit. The message, if we hear it, is make it last all year!" Turning, then, to that Hebrew Bible, I have been enriched by reading again the words of the prophet Ezekiel, "***I will give you a new heart and a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you ...so you will be My people, and I will be your God.***" (Ez. 36:26-28).



In the next chapter, Ezekiel portrays the Spirit coming upon a valley full of dry bones, recreating them with beautiful new bodies and reviving them fully to life and strength. It was the promise of wonderful things to come for the people of God.

In his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul told those early Christians, "***For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.***" (Ro. 8:6).

At Pentecost, we Christians believe – and, in an inexplicable way, we *know* – our lives have been submerged into the risen life of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this wonderful new growth medium, our entire view of the universe is different. It isn't our world, or our life, or our home, or our agenda. It is Christ's. It is made real and substantial by the presence, the infilling, of the Spirit of God, who Jesus promised to send to us. He binds us together into a new community – the community of the Spirit.

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When the Spirit fills our lives, we set foot on the shore of a new continent. We don't know all the continent holds. But, we like where we are. We know it is immense and it will be endlessly wonderful to explore. It is a place we truly know to be home. It is full of life and peace.

Jesus calls us to invite our neighbours to set foot on the new continent, too, and to explore it with us. Hand in hand, in this new land of the Spirit, full of life and peace. **AMEN.**

SYMBOLS OF PENTECOST

Welcome to the third of the great holy-days of the Christian Church. It is Pentecost! Pentecost, as detailed in Acts 2, remembers the monumental day when, according to Christ's promise, the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles and disciples still gathered in Jerusalem following the events of the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. By the end of that monumental day, there were 3,000 new followers of the living Christ!

There are two symbols that are important for Pentecost: flames and doves.

It says, *"And there appeared to them **tongues as of fire** distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit..."* (Acts 2:3-4a). And so, red is the colour for Pentecost, the colour of fire. Just as fire refines gold, purging it of impurities, so the living flame of the Holy Spirit, indwelling the Christian believer, refines and purifies the soul, empowering the believer for loving service.

As for doves, the Gospels record that, at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus came to John the Baptist at the Jordan River to be baptized by him. John the Baptist said of Him, *"I have seen **the Spirit descending as a dove** out of heaven, and He remained upon Him."* (John 1:32).

One thing to bear in mind. People often confuse two different dove symbols from the scripture. One is the dove, flying aloft, carrying an olive sprig in its beak. It's a beautiful picture, remembering the dove that Noah sent out from the ark, but it is not the symbol we are concerned with at Pentecost.

The symbol for the Holy Spirit is **the dove descending**, its head down, with a golden radiance emanating from its mouth. The Spirit **speaks!** Jesus said, **"...He will testify about Me."**

Several years ago, my wife and I toured the great sites associated with Martin Luther in Germany. In most of the great cathedrals and churches there, they had the great, elevated pulpits, into which the priest or minister had to climb in order to preach. These pulpits always had a beautifully carved canopy over them. I was fascinated, having never had opportunity before to be near such structures. And my curiosity was rewarded by the realization of a common theme among them. On the underside of the canopy, directly over the minister's head, all of them featured a carving or picture of a dove, surrounded by radiance. The message was clear: where the Word of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, **there the Spirit speaks!**

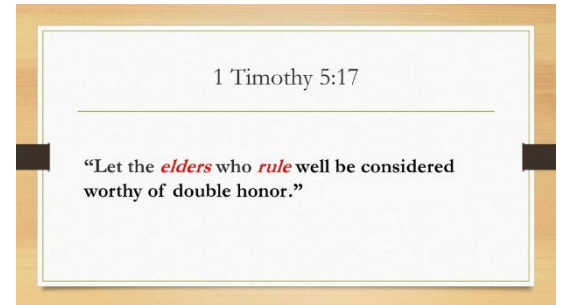
St. Paul said to the Romans, *"...for the kingdom of God is... righteousness and peace **and joy in the Holy Spirit.**"* (Ro. 14:17). It is Pentecost! The Spirit has descended! He ignites a living flame in our hearts! Rejoice!

- Rev. Paul D. Shaw

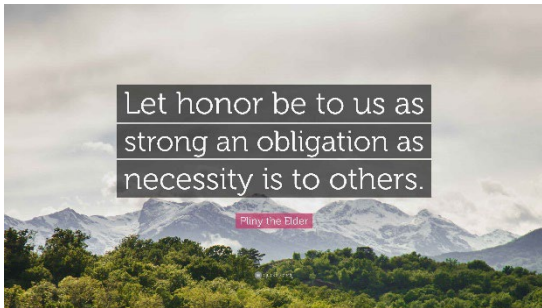
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TELL ME ABOUT... The Clerk of Session

According to the Book of Forms, the primary role of the Clerk is “to take regular minutes of the session’s procedures and hold the same in a permanent record, to take charge of all Session documents and to prepare and issue all extracts of minutes and papers authorized by Session.” Apart from this, the job depends on what the minister requires, but it definitely carries a lot of responsibility. While I still oversee setting up Communion 4X a year, other elders are slowly taking over that role. On the other hand, while we are without a minister, I (along with Rev. Tim) supervise our Administrative Assistant.



... AND THE PERSON WHO HOLDS THE POSITION



Her name is Joan Fletcher!

How far back to your church roots go? Great grandparents, grandparents and parents all attended FPC; my great-grandfather was our first minister, Rev. McColl of the then- Adelaide Street Free Church. I was baptized by Rev. Fulton.

What are your earliest church memories? Sitting beside my grandparents and trying to be still while Rev. Hugh Davidson spoke.

Who were/are your spiritual mentors? Elder and former Deaconess Ruth McDowell, the first to really see me. J.J. Maroney, Mike’s first wife. And a very special group of friends.

What other Church activities are you currently involved in? I serve on the Session Benevolent Fund and run the Prayer Force as part of the Pastoral Care Team.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT



Our year-to-date givings to the General Fund (where salaries, utilities and other expenses are paid from) as of April 2025 are down about \$10,000 compared to April 2024. Our year-to-date givings to the Building fund (where repairs to the roof are paid from) are up significantly over this time last year. And we have yet to vote on replacing the boiler. As church activities wind down for the summer, please take a moment to ensure we receive your offerings on a timely basis, even if you can't be with us in person

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PASTORAL CARE

*Who knows if the human spirit rises upward
and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth? (Ecclesiastes 3)*

Hi, everyone! My name is Snicks, and I'm FPC's newest member of the Pastoral Care Team. I'm still very camera shy, so this isn't me with Jesus (though we look a bit alike. Me and the cat, I mean, not me and Jesus.)

Sue and I have lived together since mid-January and, so I'm told, I'll be 3 years old in June. It's funny what we cats remember and what we don't. I know Sue is curious about my earlier life but all I can tell her is that I was born and lived feral until last November. I don't like boxes or bags, which I'm told is unusual for my species. And have had more than one litter of kittens; that's not something you easily forget!



Sue has had cats her entire adult life, except when she lived (off and on) in university residence, so I'm merely the latest in a proud lineage. I am however her first feral rescue. Fortunately for us both, she's a quick learner. For instance, once I decided not to spend the rest of my life under the bed, I made it clear I was taking over the lease, though she was welcome to stay. To her credit, she did not put up much of a fuss. I must say, she's the most patient human I've ever come across and I've never felt happier or more secure.

So how can a cat possibly contribute to pastoral care? I wondered that myself. A few of my predecessors held the role, but of course they're not around to teach me. Sue's tried explaining but (just like her columns) most of it goes right over my head. Still, as I understand it, my role is two-fold: to provide Sue with emotional ballast so that she can help everyone else; and write condolence notes (in her hand) whenever one of you loses a pet.

I'm not big on visitors or visiting. I'm not a therapy cat, though Sue dearly wishes I were.

Since Sue is unlikely to cede her keyboard to me in future—I have a bad habit of pulling out wires, taking off with anything not tied down, and walking back and forth on her fancy equipment, so I'm not always welcome in her office—I'd like to take this time to share a few thoughts of my own.



There is nothing easy about being a feral cat. You don't know when or what you'll eat. You never completely surrender to sleep. People aren't always how they seem; many will kick as soon as pet you. And since so few of us are fixed, we are slaves to our hormones. Of course, cats born into or raised as kittens by human households can experience abuse and/or eviction. But when uncertainty is all you've ever known, trust is a foreign concept.

I'm guessing some of you know what I'm talking about. Whether you have (or had) a pet, or share experiences similar to mine, you've had to figure out whether or not to trust. At times like that, it can be hard to trust God. So I will tell you what I tell myself: you can trust Sue and, by extension, her Team. (If this weren't true, I'd still be under that bed!) Give them a chance to show you God's love in the best way possible, secure in the knowledge that "good people are good to their animals" (Proverbs 12:10, The Message). You can't help but trust a God who inspires all that!

Snicks Ja'guar the Pastoral Care Cat

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CHRISTIANITY AND THE ARTS

Christianity has inspired the arts for two millennia, beginning with the simple drawing of a fish. At one point, its symbolism was as recognizable to the people of its day as emojis are to us.

I'll bet when you saw the picture of Jesus and the Cat, one of your first thoughts was "are there cats in the Bible?" Short answer: no. Others might be "who painted that?" or "where can I get a copy"?



Welcome to the world of AI art. Given a subscription and an active enough imagination, we can even have Jesus hug a tapir, another animal that doesn't appear in scripture.

First the cat. I found it online and have been unable to identify who (for want of a better term) commissioned it. It's a sweet picture, with Jesus portrayed in appropriate loving fashion. The grey and sepia tones make it look as if someone made a sketch, perhaps implying a fleeting moment (which, if you know cats, is about how long they acquiesce to being held!) But the cat itself... It's far too big in proportion to Jesus—in fact, it's positioned to be as important as Jesus—and not

looking at Him or us. It's looking to get away. Yes, we are happy to see, Jesus loves cats; on the other hand, it would seem cats are still on the fence about Him.

I'm not suggesting kitty look adoringly into His eyes. But take a look at this photo. It's real, both physically and as a true depiction of what Snicks would call complete trust. The cat is still being held but no cat closes its eyes like that under duress. That photo caught a genuine moment.



My point is that with AI, even the least talented among us can create images that look real and send a message we may or may not intend. And Christianity is not immune. Jesus kissing a tapir—I didn't ask for Him to do that!—and doing who knows what with His hands, and the tapir smiling—I didn't ask for that either!—becomes a horrible amalgam of "look what I can do" and several superficial tropes of contemporary Christian iconography. Would a painter come up with something like this? Anything's possible, I suppose. But while creativity is a wonderful thing, and I encourage us all to do more of it, what passes for art may not be.

Pentecost celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit, admittedly upon a chosen few, in dramatic fashion; the rest of us have to work a little harder at it. Through discernment and other spiritual disciplines, we may glimpse what was bestowed upon them: the ability to perceive, understand and judge as if through God's eyes. AI art in and of itself is no better or worse than that produced by any other artist. And like art of any kind, its value lies in truth as much as technique. In the beginning, even He took time from His labours to ensure "that it was good." We should do no less, and ask ourselves the same.

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UPCOMING SERVICES



June 1: The Vocation (Rev. Paul Shaw) / Holy Communion

June 8: The Spirit Comes (Rev. Paul Shaw)

June 15: Trinity (Rev. Paul Shaw)

June 22: Taking the Lid Off (Rev. Paul Shaw)

June 29: Taking It Back (Rev. Paul Shaw)

July 6: TBA (Rev. Tim Reddish)

Rev. Shaw will continue preaching on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians for the rest of July. Sermon topics for August and September will be posted on Facebook.

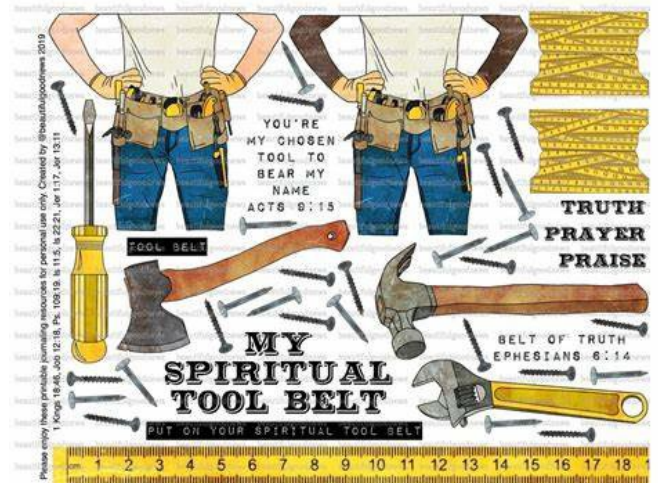
SPECIAL EVENTS

Congregational Meeting



There will be a brief congregational meeting on Sunday 22 June, immediately after coffee hour, concerning the new boiler. P&F will present options, to be followed by a vote.

Backyard Mission



We have a house and a date (15 & 16 August) with the Sunday service to be held at First Christian Reformed Church. Stay tuned for details.

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HOW TO DONATE

- **Weekly Envelops.** If you attend most Sunday services and would like to pay by cash or cheque, you can request a box of envelops; also included are special envelops for Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Anniversary Sunday. The first envelop in your box is labeled Initial Offering, which is used to defray the cost of continuing to offer this option. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at office@firstchatham.org
- **PAR.** If you would like to support us on a monthly basis and prefer the convenience of automatic withdrawal, you can sign up for PAR. This is the most cost-effective option, from the church's point of view. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at office@firstchatham.org
- **Occasional, Fundraising or Memorial Donations.** If you are in the sanctuary on Sunday morning, you can use one of the spare envelops in your pew. You can also drop by during office hours, or mail it in (cheques only).

We can provide tax receipts for any amount, if you give us your full name and contact information.

OTHER WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Of course, your tithes and offerings are essential to ensure the smooth running of our building, programs and activities. And without volunteers, none of those programs and activities would be possible. However, no contribution is too small.

- **Stamps:** The Canadian Bible Society accepts used stamps, selling them to collectors and vendors and using the revenue to purchase bibles for the Canadian prison ministry. Ten pounds of stamps = approximately 6 bibles for distribution. While it takes a lot of stamps to equal 10 pounds, every little bit helps! CONTACT: Cindy Reid
- **Recycling:** Terracycle Canada will accept the following items: used Brita filters/broken pitchers; used Crest dental products, including packaging; used Burts Bees products, including packaging. CONTACT: Sue Easun
- **Outreach for Hunger:** Our Session regularly sends a financial donation. However, you can help by donating in non-perishable food items and toiletries.
- **Saturday Breakfast Program:** In addition to a good meal, our guests can choose from among a variety of toiletries & hygiene items, pantry staples, and new/gently used clothing & blankets. CONTACT: Rebecca Ladd

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BECOME INVOLVED

- Audio Visual: Barb Capeling (Team Lead)
- Bible Studies: Rev. Paul Shaw (Pulpit Supply)
- Christian Education: Maureen McLachlin (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
- Coffee Hour: Judi Aitken (Coordinator)
- Decorating: Judy McCarthy (Team Lead)
- Mission & Outreach: Oscar Njumba (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
 - Backyard Mission: Oscar Njumba & Barb Sargent
 - Saturday Breakfast Program: Bruce Davidson & Rebecca Ladd
- Music & Worship: Julie Collins (Team Lead & Session Liaison)
 - Choir: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)
 - Praise Team: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)
- Newsletter: Sue Easun (Editor)
- Pastoral Care: Sue Easun (Team Lead, pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)
 - Visitation
 - Prayer Force: Joan Fletcher (pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)
 - Prayer Shawls: TBA
 - Widows & Widowers: Judy McCarthy
- Property & Finance: Ed McLachlin (Chair & Session Liaison)
 - Health & Safety: Ross Simpson
- Social Media: Sue Easun & Mike James
- Sunday Greeters: Ross Simpson
- Sunday Livestream: Mike Fry & Ed McLachlin

Each of these Teams is short one member: You!! Please give prayerful consideration to giving a little (more) of your time.

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STAY IN TOUCH

Do keep us informed of births, deaths, and anniversaries. We will only include them in the Bulletin with your permission. CONTACT Linda Weeks at office@firstchatham.org

Do let us know if you or someone you know is in hospital, sick or in need of comfort. We will only share this information with designated pastoral folk: Rev. Reddish, Rev. Shaw, and/or Sue Easun. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at office@firstchatham.org or Sue Easun at pastoral.care@firstchatham.org

In need of prayer? For yourself or someone else, our Prayer Force is near at hand. CONTACT Joan Fletcher at pastoral.care@firstchatham.org

Wondering what's going on? There are lots of options!

- Website: www.firstchatham.org / typically updated Mondays and Thursdays
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChatham / typically updated Mondays and Thursdays
- YouTube: www.youtube.com/@fpcchatham9093 / livestream every Sunday morning

The Office also maintains an email distribution list that sends out the Bulletin and livestream link every Friday, as well as special announcements. CONTACT: Linda Weeks at office@firstchatham.org

WHO'S WHO

Interim Moderator: Rev. Tim Reddish

Pulpit Supply/Hospital Visitation/Bible Studies: Rev. Paul Shaw

Administrative Assistant: Linda Weeks (office@firstchatham.org, 519.352.2313, ex 1)

Christian Education Coordinator: Allison Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 3)

Music Director: Adam Shaw (519.352.2313, ex 4)

Custodian: Benson Tarrant

Clerk of Session: Joan Fletcher

Roll Clerk: Ernie Koehler

Pastoral Care Coordinator: Sue Easun (pastoral.care@firstchatham.org)

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