

# “Celebrating Oneness in Christ”

June 5, 2022  
King City United Church  
York United Ministries  
Rev. Andrew K. Lee

## **Prayer for Illumination**

Holy God, whose voice is heard in the thunder and in the silence, speak to us now, by the power of your Spirit, that we may hear your word for us today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## **Scripture Readings**

### **John 17:20-26**

<sup>20</sup> “I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, <sup>[a]</sup> so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

<sup>25</sup> “Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them.”

### **Acts 2: 1-4**

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

This is the word of God  
**Thanks be to God.**

### <Reflection>

When scattering humans who were building the tower, Babel, God confused them in language. Humans experienced separation in language; however, at the event of the descending of the Holy Spirit, the disciples spoke "other" languages, and it symbolizes the unity in the power of the Holy Spirit. Now you may experience the separation, confusion, and Christian unity. Get ready!

(Teaching the song in Korean.)

*"He Knows My Name"* by Tommy Walker

I have a Maker; he formed my heart. Before even time began,  
my life was in His hands.

He knows my name; He knows my every thought. He sees each  
tear that falls and hears me when I call.

I have a Father. He calls me His own. He'll never leave me no  
matter where I go.

He knows my name; He knows my every thought. He sees each  
tear that falls and hears me when I call.

How do you feel? Did you feel some separation and unity? Today is Pentecost, celebrating the coming of the Holy Spirit among us. According to Bible, the Spirit came upon us like the rush of the violent wind and filled the entire house. The wind, the power, accelerated Jesus' movement 200 years ago, confirming the reason to gather together. We believe that the Spirit is still giving power and wisdom to us to serve the Kingdom of God until now.

"Why do we have to go to church?" In the very first year, I asked the youth and young adult group in York United Ministries to all send their questions about Christianity and church life to me. I didn't want to pre-judge them by their questions, so I gently asked them to send it anonymously.

Their questions ranged from simple queries to quite biblical and theological questions. The shortest and most shocking question that I didn't expect was this question: "Why do we have to go to church?" At first, this question reminded me of my younger age. I didn't want to wake up early on Sunday mornings, but my mom pushed me to be ready to catch the bus for the worship service. It took an hour and a half to get to the church. I still remember the bus number: 33-1. Taking the bus had never been easy because it was packed with church people. The membership of my church counted to nearly 500,000. And from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., the church had eight worship services on Sundays. I was in Gr. 9, and the worship service I attended had 3,000 members of Gr. 9 students. Can you imagine that? In order to attend church on Sunday morning, I had to wake up at 7 a.m., and it was around 2 p.m. when I came back home with my growling stomach. Almost always, I complained at 7 a.m. on Sundays. "Do I have to go to church?" And when I came back home from church, I re-confirmed myself, thinking, "it was good to attend." I assume that passion and enthusiasm made me a church minister today.

"Why do we have to go to church?" I read the question and silently smiled. I haven't officially replied to that question through our YouTube channel; however, I have to touch on it briefly. How would you respond when someone asks you this question? It's a loaded question, and it has more weight after the pandemic of COVID. My minister colleagues are crying out that "People are not coming back!" Yes, people are not the same. They are everywhere but church. Being stuck in their rooms, buying more food and toilet paper at COSTCO, meeting others after the restrictions have lifted, or walking trails declaring that they wanted to find God in nature, not in church. And deep in their hearts, they repeat an old mantra saying, "I'm not religious but spiritual."

"Do I have to go to church?" Two years ago, I smiled at the question, but now we've noticed that it is gradually becoming serious. We are aware that the question is testing the fundamental ground of our Christian faith. Subsequently, the question makes us reflect on the following question: why have I attended church? Today is Pentecost, celebrating the Holy Spirit who has worked for the churches over the world, so it is one of the best moments to reflect on the question of why have I attended this church? Have we sought the glory of our own? Or have we sought the glory of our God? Have we pursued egoistic benefits for our own sake? Or have we pursued the common good that God intends?

Also, we have to answer ourselves: Am I that good to live a spiritual life for a long time without God's word, without being encouraged by the congregation? Am I that strong; am that I innocent; am that I knowledgeable; and am I that great?

What is Jesus' answer? John chapter 17 is Jesus' direct and most prolonged prayer in the Gospel. This prayer is well known as Jesus' high-priestly prayer. It is an important one because, first of all, Jesus intercedes for others before God, as a priest would. Second, it sounds like the last detailed prayer just before the crucifixion. This long prayer has three paragraphs; a prayer for God's glory, for the disciples, and for all Christians beyond Jews.<sup>1</sup> We read in the third part that Jesus prayed for the children of God all over the world. It was Jesus' excellence that the Gospel didn't spread at the moment of the prayer, and yet, as I mentioned, Jesus foresees and visions the future of evangelization and of unity. In the third paragraph that we read, Jesus' prayer has three points; make us believe, make us one, and

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<sup>1</sup> The three paragraphs are John 17:1-5, 6-19, and 20-24.

love each other. Can you find any good reason not to come to church and have your faith at home without any interaction with other Christians? Rather, Jesus' last will just before the crucifixion is about our consistent faith, harmonious and unbreakable bond, and self-giving love. Faith, oneness, and love make a church, and you are being rewarded mentally, physically, and spiritually.

"Do I have to go to church?" Well, no, if you can save your body and soul, in other words, if you are Jesus Christ, you don't have to. But yes, if you are not Jesus Christ and you are Christians, as long as you are healthy enough to come to church. Another radical question which is one of my favourites is; what is a church? Is the church in our hearts? Is the church in nature? Isn't church invisible? Yes, we cannot limit the boundary of the church, so when we say the church is in our heart, in nature, or at the spot where we stand, then that is not wrong. And at the same time, those claims are not perfectly correct. A church cannot be replaced with human hearts or nature. We need to have a space to be in, that gives safety and comfort. We need a sacred space to gather together and center our hearts. We need a specified holy spot where we can freely open our hearts, share our joy, and shed our tears.

A few weeks ago, I was informed that a young man came to King City United sanctuary around 7 p.m. Some people gathered for the council meeting at the small chapel, having an ice-breaking conversation. And the man slowly walked into the sanctuary and asked to stay a bit silently. Rev. Bruce was with him for a moment, and the young man sat in the corner of the sanctuary. Soon he started praying and weeping. Although he left his name, he hasn't come back, but I pray for him that God is with him today.

The sacred space, the church sanctuary, gives a safe and sturdy spiritual space for the unknown children of God and for us.

How about Jesus' disciples and followers? Jesus' disciples gathered together to love and encourage each other. Thanks to their faithful and enthusiastic witnessing of the resurrected Jesus, Jews and Gentiles like us, Europeans, Africans and Asians became the inheritance of the Kingdom of God. And that was the vision of Jesus Christ in the passage today, who foresees the oneness in Christ.

Brothers, sisters and friends! Don't be afraid. You don't have to present the ultimate answer to the difficulties that North American Christians are experiencing in the 21st century. Instead, on the Pentecost Sunday, I gently invite you to expand your horizon of perspective on the world as the Holy Spirit has expanded the circle to the nations. Remember that Christians in South and Central America, Africa, Europe, especially Asia are working together. And look at me: I am one of the proofs that the Christians all over the world are standing together, envisioning Jesus' love of oneness. So let's tirelessly gather together to encourage each other and seek God's glory, rejoicing in God's promise of the Kingdom of Heaven until it is allowed to us; until our lives allowed to us.

Let us pray:

Oh God, through Jesus Christ, you showed us a vision of oneness, a vision of unity. Holy Spirit united all of us, regardless of race and gender, with the vision of unity as the children of God. Come, Spirit; come to me, come to us, come to King City United Church. Let this be done in me, in us, and on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.