

A song to sing or to read: Pulsing Spirit

Pulsing Spirit, rippling river, source of mercy's tender might.

Gentle power, humble glory

subtle, ever dancing light.

Healing Wisdom in us flowing

now reveal our human worth.

Play beneath the muddied waters

come renew the face of earth!

Spirit free, unbounded motion

beauty's mirror, heart's delight.

Gift abundant all around us

flood the world with life and light.

Fountain ancient, ever springing

play in new, creative ways.

Lift us, stream of lavish loving

high on waves of joyful praise!



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Closing Prayer

Saviour. Today and everyday forward we all want to share in the water of life. We are thirsty travellers in your world and we know that you meet and travel with us to ensure that we do not lose focus of why you came and taught us, were crucified, died and rose again. We pray for the courage to bear our witness for you, even while we live with doubts and questions. Make us today, a witness for you in every moment. Show us today the way to better serve you.

Amen

With thanks to Dan Eaton for preparing today's reflection



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Church in a Bag
Sunday 31 May
Dubbo Uniting Church

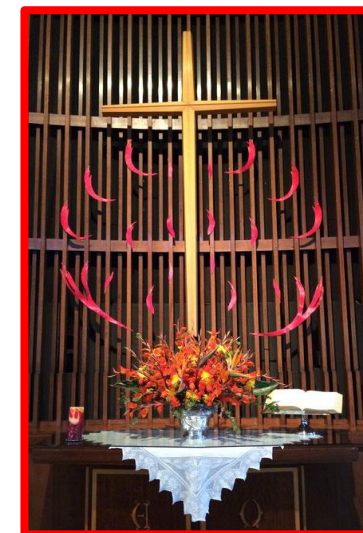


A Gathering

What a wildly wonderful world God, that you made with wisdom at your side. This world is overflowing with your wonderful creations. We, as do all the animals of the world, gather to be fed by you. You open your hand and we are sustained by your daily presentation of presence and bounty. Send out your spirit and we will spring into life in continuing faith and to your word. Let us sing to God in all our life long. We attend to the glory of God. Let us enjoy his creation! Amen

Preparation

Communication, an ability to hear, to know what other people "are getting at" and "where they're coming from" has got to be one of the chief characteristics of the effective leaders. Many of us would like to be good communicators, get the message across and avoid harmful misunderstandings. Yet before that, there must be a good listening so that your response will have purpose. As it has been pointed out there is good reason why we each have two ears and only one mouth.



There are plenty of stories and books written on how to overcome the gender language gap, the generational-language gap, the techno-speak gap or the political language gap. Add in our communication difficulties due to differences in economics, education, race, and class, and what hope is there for us ever to understand one another? The story we read today, the story of Pentecost, is a story about hearing.

Adopted from William Willimon

First Reading: Acts 2:1–21

Reflection

This is a Chinese character for the verb “To Listen”. It is a complex visual that actually incorporates five different elements of ears, eyes, heart, attention, and self. Our language is more than words and both the speaker and the listener have a unique relationship to the words spoken and heard. We use our ears to listen by paying attention not just to the words, but also the tone, pace and emphasis, to help understand. We use our eyes to connect with the person we are listening to and provide that feedback of *close, undivided attention*. We use our mind to consider the words used and ideas shared. We use our heart to sense the emotions being shared. And finally, you place yourself fully into that exchange with an attitude of presence... “I am with you”.



Throughout the Gospels there are repeated examples of how Jesus endeavoured to speak the Word of God to those around him. And yet, there are an equal number of confused listeners from the Pharisees, the new followers and even the disciples and those Christian communities that came after His Crucifixion and Resurrection. So often, Jesus was required to ‘say it again’ in different ways to call upon us to love, serve and obey the Word of God. And today, the mixed messages of communication challenge us. The acts of speaking and listening by themselves without the presence of your open mind and heart and attention to God’s message through Jesus Christ will be just babel. It’s all about the union of these five elements that makes the Message heard and understood.

Second Reading: John 7:37–39

Reflection

A young salesman was disappointed about losing a big sale, and as he talked with his sales manager he complained, "I guess it just proves you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink". The manager replied, "Your job is not to make him drink. Your job is to make him thirsty". So it is with evangelism. Our lives should be so filled with

the passion of Christ that we create a thirst in others for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Adapted from *Bruce Bell*

What comes to your mind when you think about water? The seashore? A beautiful lake? Swimming? Fishing? A cool drink on a scorching day?

If we could ask Helen Keller that question, she would probably say, "a water pump", because it was at a pump that this blind and deaf woman learned that things have names. "W-A-T-E-R", her teacher, Anne Sullivan, spelled into her hand for what seemed like the millionth time. "The thing has a name - W-A-T-E-R." And young Helen sprung to life, understanding for the first time what most of us discover as children - that things have names. She emerged a new person, knowing a new dimension of life and growth at a well that day.

At another well, on another day, Jesus said in effect, "I am the water of life" (John 4:13). He told the Samaritan woman that he had living water and that this would become "a spring welling up to eternal life". In still another setting Jesus said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink ..." (John 7:37). Water has always been important for Christians. Many of the apostles earned their living on water, as fishermen. Many of Jesus’ most famous sayings were spoken and many of his miracles were performed near or on the Sea of Galilee. Christianity began in the desert of Israel where water means life. Most importantly, the Kingdom of God begins in a person through the Sacrament of water - Holy Baptism. Here we focus on Jesus’ words about living water, which is interpreted by the Gospel writer as the Holy Spirit. Jesus is saying, "You who have thirsted after water come now to me for spiritual water. After I am gone, I will send you the Spirit who will quench your thirst for eternal things".

Everyone thirsts for eternal water. God made us in his own image. We all have a spark of the eternal within us. The Gospel of John says that the word, that is Jesus, was the one through whom we were created. Jesus here speaks of filling our need for the waters of life. He ought to know what we need and how to meet that need. He is the one who made us the way we are.