

June 5, 2022 – Queen’s Jubilee, Pentecost

==ORDER OF SERVICE==

Call to worship -- BBP

Acts 2:1-11 -- BBP

O for a Thousand Tongues, LYNGHAM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFJvBwgmK_c&t=47s

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFJvBwgmK_c&t=47s (Chet Valley)

John 3.16 in different languages

German – John T

French – Anany Kasongo

Bulgarian – Elena Markova

Cantonese – Henry Chung

Mandarin (Fu Chow) – Edith Lau

French – Margaret Bowerman

Fante – Dorothy Chapman

Braids Scot – Trish Robb

Prayer -- BBP

Meditation: love languages -- BBP

Queen’s Jubilee anthem

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsdrTn1Zg2U>

Intro to TKC prayer

Thy Kingdom Come prayer

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/mddjwgwwyamtsnx/AACyZlfahren7MrjO0gPsdBEa?dl=0&preview=LP_Methodist_Poem_Jlogo_v7.mp4

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/mddjwgwwyamtsnx/AACyZlfahren7MrjO0gPsdBEa?dl=0&preview=LP_Methodist_Poem_Jlogo_v7.mp4

Sing of the Lord’s goodness – StF 65

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLMDEN8Y5f0> (Joy Everingham)

Benediction – BBP

O For a Thousand Tongues – AZMON

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx0rCabJ16c> (Grace Community Church, CA)

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Call to worship/Introduction

Celebrating Pentecost AND the Queen's Platinum Jubilee today!

Flames of fire and Union Jack bunting!

Both speak of a spirit of celebration of goodness and presence...

Celebrating the Queen's 70 years on the throne,

Celebrating the special coming of God's Spirit at Pentecost –

The day that marked 50 (Pente) days after the Passover when Jesus died...

God's Spirit coming to the puzzled and somewhat discouraged disciples

Huddled together in the weeks after Jesus' resurrection –

Not sure what they should be doing,

But finding support in just being with each other ...

In our worship today, we will celebrate God's Spirit alive and working in our lives

In a variety of situations and throughout eternity!

And we'll focus on the languages God and we use to communicate,

Especially to communicate Love to each other.

Hear the words from the book of Acts:

Acts 2: 1-11

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 Pamphylia, 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.'

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One of our favourite Methodist ways to celebrate God's Spirit coming amongst us

Is to sing!

I've chosen Charles Wesley's famous hymn, "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" –

I first learned this in the United Methodist Churches in Florida

Where it was Hymn no. 1 in the hymnbook

But using a different tune – AZMON –

I was amazed to find a different tune used in this country –

And not just one, but several different tunes!

For my ordination testimony service some years ago, we found seven different tunes –

And did a different tune for each verse 😊

Today we're using LYNGHAM...

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It is an amazing hymn – you can just imagine Charles Wesley bursting with enthusiasm

As he tried to express how much he appreciated God's love...

Enthusiasm – the word means 'God in us'!

The Spirit tumbling out in exuberance!

Charles is saying, "Even if I had a thousand tongues, I couldn't quite express it all."

That made me think about all the 'tongues' of languages spoken around the world –

I've tried to collect a few from around the circuit –

Different voices reading the words of John 3.16 –

which speaks of God's love for the whole world –

and reading in different languages:

"For God loved the world so much,

That God gave his only Son to the world,

So that whoever believed in Him

Would have eternal life."

Listen with me now....

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God of all languages and people and places and ideas,

God beyond our imaginations

Who knows the intimacies of our hearts

And the spoken and unspoken desires of each of us:

Come and be with us today –

Inspire us again to hear your voice

Inspire us to hear each other

Inspire us to find new ways to express

Our love to you and to each other. Amen.

Speaking love in many languages

I wonder what went through your mind a few moments ago
When you heard John 3.16 being spoken in many different languages...
Perhaps you recognised one or two of them... maybe more ...
Perhaps you were intrigued to hear different languages coming from the mouths of those
Who are usually speaking to you in English.
Perhaps you just felt confused – and maybe even a bit angry or left out –
because you didn't understand.
It's easy enough to say, "Well, I'm glad God understands...."
And pass it all off as an interesting exercise that doesn't really change anything.
But that would be to let ourselves off too easily –
Because if the main point is that God creates us all uniquely
Yet loves us all immensely,
Enough to seek to understand all our languages,
All the cries of our hearts,
All our uncertain stumblings to express ourselves,
Then we, who are followers need to learn to love each other as well
In all our diversity.

Still, when we're confronted with something very different than what we know,
Our own pride means we tend to block others who are different or speak differently.
God has often been working with me on that in my life as a minister,
Sending me to new places where customs are different,
Where I need to learn new languages or understand different accents –
Which usually means people find my language or accent or customs strange as well!
We've had to learn to listen hard to each other, to pick up subtle hints –
To understand what's being said, and what's being assumed but *not* being said...
Frequently I've had to learn the *unspoken* languages of new congregations...
I've realised that the more we force ourselves to learn different things --
Different languages and cultures – new ways of listening and doing, the easier it gets.
I've also learned that it's a huge gift to find someone willing to help me learn
that language, that culture, those sets of understanding,
Rather than just expecting I'll know instinctively.

It's like that with listening to hear what God's saying, too.
Sometimes people will say, "I've never heard God speaking to me"
But they might not be listening in the right way...
God isn't restricted to just speaking words,
Indeed God wasn't content with just 'telling' us that we are loved.
Apparently God spoke words to people in the past –
The Ten Commandments written on stone
And the dreams and visions of the Prophets
And these became the words of the scripture
God also spoke through actions and symbols –
Through thunder and storm and stars and through parting of seas
Through silence and through the rushing of the sea...
Through donkeys (remember Balaam's ass?) and doves
And, in today's scripture, through flames of fire and rushing winds...
God also spoke God's love for us at creation by the very act of giving us the gift of life...

Still, we didn't always understand: God recognised we needed another vocabulary for love,
So God decided to *show* us – God came to *be* with us.

God loved us so much that God came to *be* with us in the person of Jesus Christ.

That's what we hear in John 3.16: God loving us – *all* of us –
in our uniqueness, in our diversity,

And wanting us to *know* we are loved,

God loving us enough to know our own languages – how to speak to each one of us.

If even God needs so many ways

to express Godself to us in ways we can hear and understand,

Then perhaps we, too, need to explore different ways of communicating and understanding.

Because God expects us to do the same with each other/

I was thinking of the 'love languages' that are often used in marriage counselling:

The counsellors tell us that each of us has a 'love language' that we understand best –

Ways we can express what we're feeling,

Ways that we can know or 'hear' for ourselves what the other is saying.

Sometimes these 'ways' are words – sometimes they're not...

So I explored again the 'love languages,'

recognising that learning these love languages is important not just for marriages
but for all our relationships...

What says 'love' to you?

As Alfred and I raised our six children,

we've learned that each of them had their own love language:

Some liked hugs, other liked to talk.

Some wanted their birthday celebrated with a big party,
another just wants a few friends.

As they've married, they've discovered that their partners often have different love languages

Is a card essential or a cake or an expensive handbag?

The most successful of the relationships is where they've learned the other's love language

Here's the official list of 'love languages':

1. Words of affirmation: when someone praises or even just recognises what you've done –

If it's words that make you feel loved,

then all the cards and chocolates aren't going to suffice.

You want to hear someone *say*, 'I love you', or 'Thank you'

Or 'you look great today!' or 'I appreciate what you've done.'

If words are important to you or the one(s) you love,

then make it a practice to learn the very best love words possible –
and cherish them when they come your way!

2. Acts of service: when someone does something to help you,

or joins in to help you do something

If it's actions that mean the most to you or the person you love,

Then reduce the verbal content

And focus on what you can do together or for the other.

In this regard, often when someone is going through a hard time,

We say, "Let me know if you need any help."

But the more loving thing to do might just be to go ahead and *do*

what you observe is needed.

If a young mother is at her wits end with a crying child and lack of sleep,
Then your act of bringing over a dinner is a real act of love.
If someone who's ill or bereaved doesn't have the energy to clean the house,
Then maybe coming over to do that is the most loving way to respond.

3. Gifts: receiving and giving, especially a gift that shows some thought behind it –
For some, it's how much the gift cost in terms of money
For some, it's how the gift is wrapped
For most, it's how much the gift cost in terms of the other giving themselves
There's the story of the African student who found a beautiful shell
And walked many miles through the dusty roads
To take the shell to his teacher as a gift.
The gift in part was his recognition of the beauty of the shell
and his recognition that his teacher would appreciate its beauty as well
The long journey was also part of the gift...

Sometimes we don't receive gifts well:

I remember a time as a child when I learned a piece on the piano
all on my own to play for my piano teacher whom I adored...
I was so excited to play it for her,
But when I did, she only heard the bits I'd played wrong!
I remember asking, "But didn't you like it?"

She then realised she'd not heard my love language properly and apologised...

4. Quality time: when someone gives you their undivided attention –
Recently I was part of a safeguarding training session
In which we were asked to take turns listening carefully to each other.
One at a time in groups of three—
One telling a story, one reporting what has been heard,
One asking further questions to better understand.
I've done this exercise in several situations before,
And I'm always struck by the reaction of the one who has been listened to –
It's as if they recognise that they are being valued and respected
In a way we often neglect in daily life.

5. Physical touch: caressing, touching, holding a hand, giving a hug
of course, this is a more intimate way of sharing love,
and not always appropriate in public spaces or general relationships,
but in the intimacy of close personal relationships,
physical touch is an important love language for many.
I remember particularly the way my babies and children responded to touch
When they were young.
It is a 'language' that can speak volumes when other languages fail.

Words, acts, gifts, time, touch – each of these are a different way to communicate with others
Each have an appropriate time and space to be used –
And it's important to know what is appropriate and how to set boundaries –
Because boundaries can also be an important part of how we love.

In the second part of today's reading,
there was another misunderstanding of love languages:
When many people were exuberantly telling of God's love in many languages,
Those who overheard suggested that those speaking so exuberantly were drunk!
Not so, says Peter: they're not drunk on wine
But 'drunk' on recognising themselves as beloved of God
And therefore empowered to be mightily about God's work.

He goes on to recall the words of the ancient prophet, Joel, who had declared:
"In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy....
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Just as we've explored different ways of expressing love,
So this passage begins to unpack some of the different ways we respond
To *being* loved, being heard and given a vision of what can be.
Perhaps this passage from Joel was remembered so well by the community
Because it was learning to be an inclusive community:
learning that different people responded differently to the same love experienced:
Old men and young men responded differently – with the gifts they have been given
Men and women responded differently.
Old and young heard and reacted differently.
Some dreamed, some spoke,
Some prophesied, some saw visions.
It didn't matter so much that there was a difference of expression,
It was the same Lord who inspired the expression
And the same Lord who received their expressions
With love and joy.

Over the past year Connexional office reported that we've had a huge increase
In those applying to be Local Preachers during the pandemic -
Which we all want to celebrate!
Indeed, recently we celebrated the work of Local Preachers in our circuit,
And we are grateful for their contributions week after week...
But we also recognise that it's becoming increasingly difficult
To find people to fill other essential positions in the life of the church:
treasurers and stewards and property officers and even pastoral visitors.
Perhaps we've been too quick to only recognise a single 'love language' of *preaching*
to show our love for God, when indeed there are many....

At the beginning of this service, we sang 'O for a Thousand Tongues'.
This has long been a favourite of Methodists,
But sometimes we forget what the 'thousand tongues' are for:
"To sing my great Redeemer's praise."

This suggests that the reason we have of being able speak in many different ways,
In different languages, with so many different gifts
Is so we can praise the God who 'charms our fears', who 'bids our sorrows cease'
Who forgives our sins, who sets us free to live to God's glory.
One of the best ways we can 'live to God's glory' is to use the gifts we're given
to live our lives as a *reflection* of God's glory, of the divine nature
That is also a possibility for humans –
Because the ultimate glory of humanity is that we have the potential to reflect the divine.

Perhaps that's something of what we are celebrating on this weekend
Which is also the Queen's Jubilee.

We're long past the age of regarding our royal family as 'divine' –
Indeed, only too often we've been reminded that they, too,
are as prone to human error as the rest of us!

With my insider/outsider perspective as an American living in the UK for some 20 years,
I observe that the huge respect that so many have for the Queen
Is not that she is 'divine' but that she has chosen to live her life
As a reflection of God's glory.

Each year, I'm struck by the fact that so many set aside a time on Christmas Day
to hear the Queen's Christmas Message.

Many want to hear her voice,

But I also recognise that the Queen's 'love language' is mostly about 'duty' and 'presence'.
Protocols indicate that it would not be appropriate for her to give us gifts –
Though many, from the smallest school children, want to give her gifts!
The gift she gives is her presence – and her faithful adherence to what she knows
Is good and right and true – what is divine.

There have been many tributes to the Queen over this past week
As we have recognised the contributions she has made to public life
Over 70 years on the throne...

I close these thoughts today with a choral anthem written for the Jubilee celebrations
Which speaks of the duty and faithfulness that has been the Queen's love language
Over the past seven decades...

1. No gilded throne nor gleaming crown of sapphire
Can sure outshine an earthly vow to serve, to live with dignity
With humble stewardship and sacrifice
A pledge of unity, a vow of love.
2. Though earthly ruler's role are often fleeting
Truth comes to those who nobly dare to live a life of constancy –
To love as Jesus has commanded us
A living ministry, an act of love.
3. So every day, we strive to do what's right
Not choosing spite nor breeding hate
A life of faith and honesty as courage is the key to progress –
We'll safely journey on sustained by love.
4. The truth is Christ gives the pattern for our love
And surely love will life sustain with endless grace of heart and mind
A life lived in God's service,
a faithful Child of God to show us holy life. A vow of love.