

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today.

We also pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future.

DIVIDED THEN RESTORED

The Bible begins with a series of ancient stories that tend to surround one fundamental issue – what is wrong with us humans?

We have Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; Noah and the flood – each adding to our general messed up world. Yet, we can observe nature – animals and plants tend to get along together, each playing their part and not wanting to be any different.

Have you read the story from Genesis about the Tower of Babel?

I would like to tell you a little about what happened back then. The full story is found in **Genesis 11**.

There was a time when everyone on the earth spoke the very same language. And at that time, stone was readily available so the people said to each other – come on, let's make bricks out of mud and bake them in the fire then we can build whatever we want.

They figured they would build a huge tower that reached up to heaven to make a name for themselves because they didn't want to be scattered over the earth.

Most of us have a desire to settle in one place, possibly even to make a name for ourselves – individually. Depending how we go about this – it often runs contrary to God's plan for us and the world.

These people wanted prestige and power and to choose their own destiny.

But God had a different plan and purpose.

So He confused their language so they could not understand each other's words and the people were scattered to make different nationalities and cultures.

You may suggest then this led to disunity but it was all part of God's plan.

Now if we continue reading the Bible from this point on, we learn about God's redemption right up to and throughout the New Testament with Jesus as the good news of the Kingdom of God.

And this brings us to today – Pentecost – to the revealing of God's Spirit among us.

Now most Jewish people in Judea and Galilee spoke Aramaic as their primary language, although some also spoke Greek. Hebrew was the language spoken in connection with temple rituals and the study of the Torah.

And this important festival brought people from many lands and many nationalities so many different languages.

Acts 2:1-5

The disciples were gathered together and suddenly heard a loud roar which surrounded the place, like a wind. And it appeared like a flame that spreading from one person to the next. And suddenly, the disciples spoke in different languages – enabling those who were attending this large festival – to hear what the disciples were saying in their own language.

Now we often associate this event as “tongues of fire” but the correct meaning is “divided tongues – as of fire.” The emphasis in Greek is on language – we often say that someone speaks in a foreign language.

And so we see God restoring the supposed disunity to unity.

You see for God to now enable the Gospel, the truth of Jesus to be shared to all the world, He had to bring about another miracle – to enable the disciples the ability to reach all nationalities.

So with the power of the Holy Spirit He enabled all the disciples to speak different languages and the people were finally able to hear the story of the Gospel in their own language, for the first time.

This is the foundation of the kingdom of God because it established the church as a place where God moves on the earth through His Spirit. God moves in people's hearts to transform individuals and communities.

And that is what we are called by God to do – be united in our belief and reach out to others and share the Gospel of Jesus.

To look for every opportunity to unite with others as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sadly, this doesn't happen as much as we would like.

Today is not only the story of Pentecost and how God united people to share the Gospel, today is also a day to support reconciliation and unity with the First Australians, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

For too long this situation has been swept under the carpet, yet God calls us to be active in this regard.

Aunty Glenny Naden from the Wurundjuri Aboriginal Nation, who is a Christian suggests the following as we walk together towards reconciliation.

She cites the things that we have all gone through together – like droughts, bushfires and now COVID 19 – and identifies

many people now have changed views leading to more respect for the environment and for others around us.

And this is something we could learn from the First Australians who practiced this for thousands of years.

These challenges help us all to reflect on our relationship with God and with each other.

The theme that is being used for COVID 19 is “In this Together” and Auntie Glenny Naden wants to remind all of us to focus on reforming our thinking and behaviours so that we learn to value and celebrate our Ancient past, abound in the blessings of God today and look forward with hope and confidence to the future, as we actively seek God’s will for each of our lives.

PRAYER

Today we stand together on common ground.

We come together in the love of Christ and the love of our neighbour.

We confess we have not loved one another as You have called us to and promise to do better.

We long to embrace unity with diversity. We long for acknowledgement, truth, justice, love, and hope.

Lord, give us comfort in our pain and loss, courage for the future and strength for the journey.

Lord, You, are our hope. Amen.