

Bethel Church Worship Guide – May 31, 2020
Pentecost Sunday

Peace verse: Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives:
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness,
and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Light a candle in your worship space to represent the peace of Christ in your midst today.

Call to Worship: from Kathy L

Greetings Bethel Family! Welcome to worship on Pentecost Sunday! Today is the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit, which is celebrated the 49th day after Easter Sunday. This gift of the Spirit's presence in our everyday lives is such an amazing blessing! In the *Leader* guide for worship, Joani Neufxldt shares imagery describing Pentecost:

*"Have you ever sat by a campfire in the dark just staring at the flames? Watching the way the colors interact with each other, one blending into the next. From white-hot to deep red-orange, the colors shift as they will. We cannot coerce the flames to a color that is pleasing to us – not by ourselves at least. You can add something, though, that creates a rainbow in the flames – little packets that create a chemical reaction when thrown into the flames. It is the most fun to sneak them into the fire when no one suspects. Slowly colors of purple, green and blue are added to the red, orange, yellow and white. There are exclamations of surprise and awe. Questions are asked: What? How? Why? And there are always expressions of admiration for the beauty. That is what Pentecost is – the taking of a simple fire and adding the Holy Spirit to make something amazing and beautiful."*¹

May we all be blessed by the amazing and beautiful work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today.

Opening prayer:

We are waiting for your presence, mysterious God. We wait:
Patient, like a lover sitting by the telephone, waiting for the voice of their beloved.
Attentive as a farmer watching clouds for rain, waiting for relief from dryness.
Intent as a child standing by the road, waiting for the parade to appear.
Empty as a satellite dish scanning the heavens, waiting for a message.
Poised as the still arms of a windmill, waiting for the wind's power.
Open as the wide sand beach, waiting to be washed with refreshing water.
Come Holy Spirit, come!²

Song: Holy Spirit, come with power – Hymnal Worship Book #26

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9ISMSdJo7U>

Holy Spirit, come with power, breathe into our aching night.
We expect you this glad hour, waiting for your strength and light.
We are fearful, we are ailing, we are weak and selfish too.
Break upon your congregation, give us vigor, life anew.

¹ Joani Neufxldt, *Worship Resources: Pentecost*, in *Leader* Spring 2020, 45-48.

² Carol Pennxr, "Come, Holy Spirit, Come," *Leading in Worship* blog, July 24, 2019.

Holy Spirit, come with fire, burn us with your presence new.
Let us as one mighty choir sing our hymn of praise to you.
Burn away our wasted sadness and enflame us with your love.
Burst upon your congregation, give us gladness from above.
Holy Spirit, bring your message, burn and breathe each word anew
deep into our tired living till we strive your work to do.
Teach us love and trusting kindness, lend our hands to those who hurt.
Breathe upon your congregation and inspire us with your word.

Confession of Faith: Acts 2:22-24, 32-33³

Jesus of Nazareth was a man commended to us by God
***through the powerful acts, wonders, and signs
God did through him in our midst –
as we ourselves know well.***

This man, according to the declared purpose and foreknowledge of God,
was handed over, crucified and killed
by the hands of lawless ones.

***Yet God raised him up,
releasing him from the birth pangs of death
because it was not possible for him to be taken over by it.***

This Jesus God raised up,
and of that we are all witnesses.

***Being therefore lifted high at the right hand of God,
having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father,
he has poured out this that we both see and hear.***

Offering: God welcomes gifts of time, skills, finances, prayers, advocacy, love.

Offering Prayer: Kathy L

Lord, as we gather together, in person or by phone or tablet or computer, may we be aware of your Spirit entering in mysteriously. Let us see your Holy Spirit at work in others and in ourselves. Help us to grow the fire of your love so that we share your Spirit's movement within our congregation, community and world. And may our offerings be used by you to further your reign. Amen.

Children's Time: (for young and old and in between!)

The Holy Spirit is a spirit, and since we can't see it, we use symbols to represent the Spirit of God. Last year we pictured the Spirit as a wild goose – an untamed, noisy creature that flies without our controlling it. This year, we have the image of the Spirit as a colorful flame of fire that ignites the gifts we have and makes them stronger and more beautiful!

³ *Take Our Moments and Our Days: an Anabaptist Prayer Book, vol. 2, p.703*

Attached with this week's Worship Guide email is a Pentecost-themed coloring page.⁴ You are invited to print off the black & white copy, get out your crayons or markers, and enjoy coloring the flame. As you color, pray that we will indeed be "Filled with the Holy Spirit"!

Scriptures: Numbers 11:24-30, and Acts 2:1-21

Rebecca's Reflections and Questions for your reflection:

1. "Will the fire change you?" That theme phrase has been in my head for several weeks. If a fire is a symbol for the Holy Spirit, then the theme suggests that an encounter with God's Spirit is an opportunity for change – that we should expect change – if we truly allow the Spirit to do its work. This leads to several other questions: How open am I to being changed by the Spirit? What kind of change am I eager for? What change am I resisting? What change is the Spirit trying to work in my life, and beyond, at this time? I invite you to ponder these questions.
2. When you read Numbers 11:24-30, what phrase or image caught your attention? What questions do you have about the passage? The passage from Acts 2 is more familiar to us. What phrase or image caught your attention this time?
3. Briefly look at the context of Numbers 11:24-30 (what happens before and after it). It takes place while the Israelites were traveling in the wilderness; but "*the rabble among them*" complain about the lack of meat to eat (Num.11:4-6). Eventually God provides quail for the people to eat (11:31-32). But in the middle of that story is this interesting account in which Moses' spirit is divinely shared with 70 elders, enabling them to prophesy on this one occasion. Num. 11:14-17 indicates that one reason for the 'sharing of the spirit' was to empower the elders to help shoulder the burden of leadership. Think of a time when you felt the Holy Spirit helped you be an effective leader. What characteristics do you look for in a Spirit-filled person?
4. Both the Numbers 11 passage and Acts 2:17-18 talk about people being given the ability to prophesy. Do you think "to prophesy" means the same action in both passages (or has the same purpose in both situations)? What comes to mind when you think about prophesying? Do these passages change your thinking at all? How would you describe the connection between the pouring out of God's spirit and prophesying?
5. In Num. 11:29, Moses expressed a desire "*that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!*" If we understand prophets to be people who listen well to the voice of God, and who truthfully convey God's word to the people, what does that tell us about the vision or hope Moses held? Do you share that vision?
6. In thinking about how the Pentecost experience in Acts relates to our day and context, Pastor Christopher Wyckx wrote that the appearance and giving of the Spirit "is primarily about the ability to communicate in ways that will overcome barriers and bring people

⁴ Obtained from www.illustratedministry.com. 2020

together.”⁵ In Acts, the Spirit enabled ordinary Galileans to speak foreign languages, bridging linguistic and cultural barriers. Wyckoff says we don’t have to literally learn a 2nd language (though I would say that is very useful), but the church’s communication needs to focus on healing the brokenness, bitterness and woundedness in our highly divided society. Pentecost was about bringing people together; it’s the event that gave birth to the church – a body defined, not by ethnicity or language or social position, but by the presence of the Holy Spirit within its members. Being filled with the Holy Spirit includes being able “to communicate with those to whom we have been sent as witnesses!”⁶

7. Will the fire of God’s Spirit change us? I pray it does. In the biblical languages, the same word is used for spirit / wind / breath. I couldn’t ignore the irony and horror that this week, as we prepared to celebrate the breath of God’s spirit blowing at Pentecost, a black man lay on the ground begging to be allowed to breath. Again. As if a deadly virus that attacks our breathing isn’t enough, the virus of racism, injustice, and violence also continues. So maybe, before the Spirit can fill us and gift us with her fruit (Gal. 5) we need to repent, as Peter told the crowd: “*repent ... so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38). In a recent email, Cesar Garcix, of Mennonite World Conference, wrote: “Life, hope, courage, strength and a new future are possible because the Spirit is moving” – let’s make ourselves, individually and collectively, ready for God’s fire to change us.

Response: Let the waving hands and scarves of these “Pentecost people” remind us that God’s spirit lives and moves within each person. Consider wearing the colors of Pentecost (red, orange, yellow) during this week to celebrate the gift and flame of the Holy Spirit. (Photos by Tesa Jordxn.)



⁵ Christopher Wyckx, “A New Pentecost: Preaching Acts 2 in an American Context”, May 5, 2020. www.workingpreacher.org.

⁶ Christopher Wyckx, (as above)

Song: Beauty for brokenness – Sing the Story #115

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kVHKuldZyw>

- V.1. Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair, Lord, in the suffering this is our prayer.
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace, sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.
- V.2. Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills, work for the craftsmen, trade for their skills.
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.
- Chorus: God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray,
melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain.
Come change our live from a spark to a flame.*
- V.3. Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear, cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing fields, scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.
- V.4. Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans & streams, plundered and poisoned,
our future, our dreams. Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed;
make us content with the things that we need. (*Chorus*)
- V.5. Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame, until your justice burns brightly again;
until the nations learn of your ways, seek your salvation and bring you their praise. (*Chorus*)

Intercessory Prayer: you are invited to offer your own prayers now, and/or join the Bethel group sharing and prayer time at 11:00 am by calling or logging in to GoToMeeting.

See the Friday email for prayer requests.

Sending Song: Move in our midst – Hymnal Worship Book #418

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUjZKOxc5bk>

- V.1. Move in our midst, thou Spirit of God. Go with us down from thy holy hill.
Walk with us through the storm and the calm. Spirit of God, go thou with us still.
- V.2. Touch thou our hands to lead us aright. Guide us forever, show us thy way.
Transform our darkness into thy light. Spirit of God, lead thou us today.
- V.3. Strike from our feet the fetters that bind. Lift from our lives the weight of our wrong.
Teach us to love with heart, soul, and mind. Spirit of God, thy love makes us strong.
- V.4. Kindle our hearts to burn with thy flame. Raise up thy banners high in this hour.
Stir us to build new worlds in thy name. Spirit of God, O send us thy power!

Benediction:

As you go forth into the world
may the wind of God's Spirit startle your senses and blow through your life;
may the fire of the Spirit scorch your complacency and light your way.
And may the blessing of the Holy One – Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer –
rest with you now and forevermore. Amen.⁷

⁷ Joanna Haradrx, "Wednesday Worship Piece: Pentecost," *Spacious Faith* blog, June 8, 2011.