



Pentecost

May 19, 2024 †

9:00 AM

Welcome to our worship of the Lord Jesus Christ on this Day of Pentecost! Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Crossing all boundaries that would separate us, the Spirit brings the wideness of God's mercy to places we least expect it— to a crowd of strangers of different lands and tongues, to dry bones, to our weak hearts. Jesus promises His disciples that they'll be accompanied by the Holy Spirit, and that this Spirit reveals the truth. We celebrate that we too have been visited with this same Spirit. Guided by the truth, we join together in worship, and then disperse to share the fullness of Christ's love with the world.

*Congregational responses are printed in **indented boldface italics**.*

GATHERING

GATHERING MUSIC

GATHERING HYMN: **“Spirit of Gentleness”**

ELW 396

You'll find the music for this hymn on the next page.

INVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT:

Blest are You, Holy and Triune God— the Wellspring of eternal life,
the † Embodiment of death-defying love, the Spirit of rebirth and reconciliation!

And blest is Your Reign, now and forever!

Come, Holy Spirit; shine forth from heaven with Your glorious light.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with new life!

Come, Friend of the poor; come, generous Spirit; come, Light of our hearts.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with new life!

Continued on page 3 →

Spirit of Gentleness

Refrain



Spir - it, Spir - it of gen - tle - ness, blow through the wil - der - ness



call - ing and free; Spir - it, Spir - it of rest - less - ness,



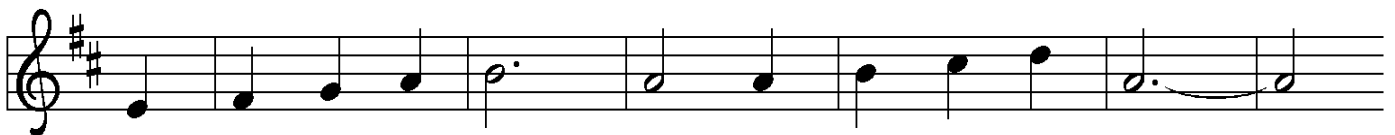
stir me from plac - id - ness, wind, wind on the sea.



- 1 You moved on the wa - ters, you called to the deep,
- 2 You swept through the des - ert, you stung with the sand,
- 3 You sang in a sta - ble, you cried from a hill,
- 4 You call from to - mor - row, you break an - cient schemes.



then you coaxed up the moun - tains from the val - leys of sleep;
and you goad - ed your peo - ple with a law and a land;
then you whis - pered in si - lence when the whole world was still;
From the bond - age of sor - row all the cap - tives dream dreams;



and o - ver the e - ons you called to each thing:
and when they were blind - ed with i - dols and lies,
and down in the cit - y you called once a - gain,
our wom - en see vi - sions, our men clear their eyes.

Refrain



“A - wake from your slum - bers and rise on your wings.”
then you spoke through your proph - ets to o - pen their eyes.
when you blew through your peo - ple on the rush of the wind.
With . . . bold new de - ci - sions your peo - ple a - rise.

Text: James K. Manley, b. 1940
Music: SPIRIT, James K. Manley
Text and music © 1978 James K. Manley, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

After singing this hymn,
go back to p. 1 for the Invocation of the Spirit.

INVOCATION OF THE SPIRIT (contd.):

Perfect Comforter, Wonderful Refreshment, You make peace dwell in our souls.
In our labor, You offer rest; in temptation, strength; in our sadness, consolation.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with new life!

Most kindly, warming Light, enter the inmost depth of our souls,
for we wait faithfully for You.

Without Your presence we have nothing worthy, nothing pure.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with new life!

Wash away our sin; send rain upon the dry ground of our hearts;
heal our wounded souls. With Your warmth soften our stubbornness,
rekindle our apathetic hearts, direct our wandering feet.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with new life!

Shower Your gifts upon all who put their trust in You and receive You in faith.
Grant that we may grow in You and persevere to the end, and give us lasting joy.

Alleluia! Come, Holy Spirit, fill us with new life!

HYMN OF PRAISE: “Praise the Spirit in Creation” →

We'll sing this to the tune of “Angels from the Realms of Glory” ELW 275

*Praise the Spirit in creation, Breath of God, life's origin:
Spirit, moving on the waters, quickening worlds to life within,
Source of breath to all things breathing, Life in whom all lives begin.*

*Praise the Spirit, close companion of our inmost thoughts and ways,
Who, in showing us God's wonders, is for us the pow'r to gaze,
And God's will, to those who listen, by a still small voice conveys.*

*Praise the Spirit, who enlightened priests and prophets with the Word,
Holy Truth behind the wisdoms which as yet knew not our Lord,
By whose love and pow'r, in Jesus, God by us was seen and heard.*

*Tell of how th' ascended Jesus armed a people for His own,
How a hundred men and women turned the known world upside down,
To its dark and furthest corners by the Wind of Heaven blown.*

*Pray we then, O Lord the Spirit, on our lives descend in might;
Let Your flame break out within us, fire our hearts and clear our sight,
Till, white-hot in Your possession, we too set the world alight!*

GREETING AND PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

And so the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ✠ love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit are with you all.

And also with you.

Then let's pray: Almighty and ever-living God,
You fulfilled the promise of Easter by sending the gift of Your Holy Spirit.
Look upon Your people gathered in prayer, open to receive the Spirit's flame.
May Your Spirit come to rest in our hearts and heal our divisions of word and tongue,
that with one voice and one song we may praise Your Name in joy and thanksgiving
through Christ Jesus, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns
with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD AND PRAYER

Before our readings, we'll sing it this Easter canticle three times through:

Behold, behold— I make all things new, beginning with you and starting from today.

Behold, behold— I make all things new; My promise is true, for I am Christ the Way!

FIRST READING:

Acts 2.1-21

NRSVUE

When the Day of Pentecost had come, *the apostles* were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs— in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power!" ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They 're filled with new wine!"

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these aren't drunk, as you suppose, for it's only nine o'clock in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷'In the last days it'll be, God declares, that I'll 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.

¹⁸Even upon My slaves, both men and women,
in those days I'll pour out My Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I'll show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

Thanks be to God!

SECOND READING:

Romans 8.14-17, 22-27

NRSVUE

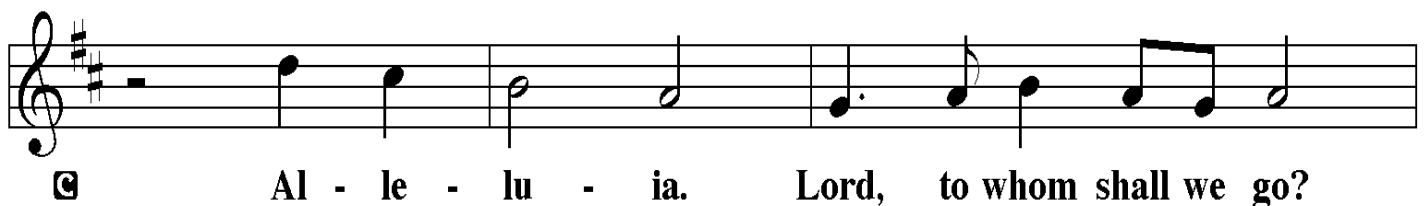
St Paul writes: All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you didn't receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a Spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ it's that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we're children of God— ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him...

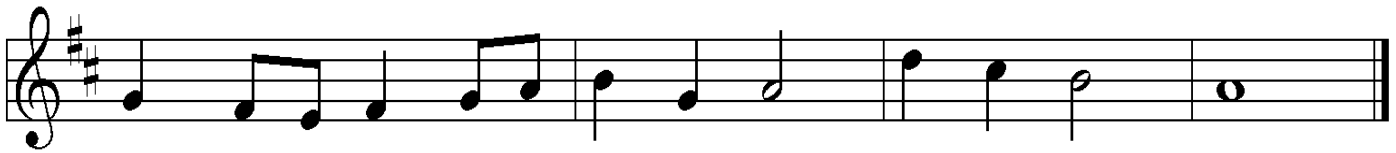
²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that's seen isn't hope— for who hopes for what one already sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do *not* see, we wait for it with patience.

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we don't know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

This is holy wisdom; this is holy word.

Thanks be to God!





You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

THE HOLY GOSPEL: John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15 NRSVUE

The Holy Gospel according to St John, the 15th and 16th chapters.



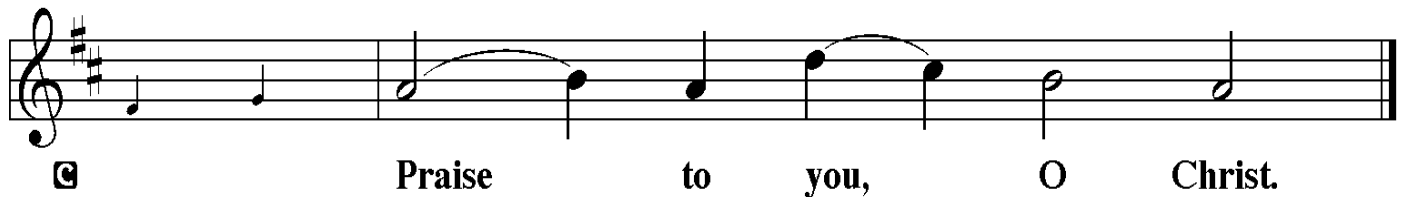
Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

On the night before His death, Jesus said to His disciples, ²⁶ “When the Advocate comes, whom I’ll send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, *the Spirit will testify on My behalf.* ²⁷ You also are to testify, because you’ve been with Me from the beginning... ⁴ But I’ve said these things to you so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you about them. I didn’t say these things to you from the beginning because I was with you.

⁵ “But now I’m going to Him who sent me— yet none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ ⁶ But because I’ve said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it’s to your advantage that I go away, for if I don’t go away, the Advocate won’t come to you; but if I go, I’ll send *the Advocate* to you. ⁸ And when *the Advocate* comes, the world will be proven wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment— ⁹ about sin, because they don’t believe in Me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I’m going to the Father, and you’ll see Me no longer; ¹¹ about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹² “I still have many things to say to you, but you can’t bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, *the Spirit will* guide you into all the truth, for *the Spirit won’t* speak on His own, but will speak whatever He hears, and He’ll declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ *The Spirit will* glorify Me because *the Spirit will* take what’s Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is Mine. For this reason I said that *the Spirit will* take what’s Mine and declare it to you...”

This is the Gospel of our Lord.



PROCLAMATION OF THE GOOD NEWS

HYMN OF THE DAY: “Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling” *ELW 582*

*Holy Spirit, ever dwelling in the holiest realms of light;
Holy Spirit, ever brooding o’er a world of gloom and night;
Holy Spirit, ever raising those on earth to thrones on high;
Living, life-imparting Spirit, You we praise and magnify!*

*Holy Spirit, ever living in the Church’s very life;
Holy Spirit, ever striving through us in a ceaseless strife.
Holy Spirit, ever forming in the Church the mind of Christ:
You we praise with endless worship for Your gifts and fruits unpriced.*

*Holy Spirit, ever working through the Church’s ministry,
Quick’ning, strength’ning, and absolving, setting captive sinners free.
Holy Spirit, ever binding age to age and soul to soul
In communion never ending, You we worship and extol!*

NICENE CREED:

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth— of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father:
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.*

*Through Him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation, He came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
He became incarnate from the virgin Mary and was made man.
For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
He suffered death and was buried.
On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and His Kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS:

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit,
let's bring our prayers before God
who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love:

Gracious God, You give the Holy Spirit to Your Church, filling it with many and varied gifts. Strengthen Your people throughout the world in our visioning and dreaming, that we may discover anew the Spirit's creative work. Give us a spirit of welcome to those whom we meet in the community and the world around us. Surprise us daily with unexpected grace, that we may rejoice in every blessing You send. God of new life,
receive our prayer.

God of life, the earth is full of Your creatures, living things both great and small. Open Your hand and give them the necessities of this life; send Your fresh Spirit over the face of the earth; and make us faithful stewards of this good earth, members of the earth's body rather than extractors and consumers of its treasures. God of new life,
receive our prayer.

God of the nations, wherever we as a people are divided, unite us; wherever we're prideful, humble us. Still the storms of injustice, terror, greed, warfare, and violence in every heart, every family, every community, and every land. Let Your peace triumph in Ukraine, Israel, Gaza, Palestine, Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Ethiopia, Haiti, Ecuador, and violence-riddled homes and communities in our own land. God of new life, *receive our prayer.*

God of healing, You hear the cries of Your people, even the sighs of our hearts. Bless all those who care for others in need, and lay Your hand of healing on all whose lives are broken in any way. Comfort them in their suffering, ease their distress, carry their burdens, and embrace them in Your loving arms, that they may rise to newness of life. We especially seek Your healing grace for our brothers and sisters... God of new life, *receive our prayer.*

God of power and mercy, You destroy war and put down earthly pride. Banish violence from our midst and wipe away our tears, that we may all deserve to be called Your sons and daughters. Keep in Your mercy those men and women who've died in the cause of freedom, and bring them safely into Your Reign of justice and peace. God of new life, *receive our prayer.*

Gracious God, receive our prayers; hear our hearts deep yearnings, yet to be formed into words. Give us the courage to yield ourselves, all that we are and have yet to become, to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit; and carry out in us and through us Your work of new creation through Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

And so the peace of the Lord is with you always. *And also with you.*

Reconciled to God and one another, let's share with one another a sign of God's peace.

MEAL

OFFERING OF OUR GIFTS AND OURSELVES, WITH ANTHEM:

"Holy Spirit, Flame and Fire"

-- Deborah Govenor

OFFERTORY CANTICLE: "Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful"



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles-sing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of all; u -

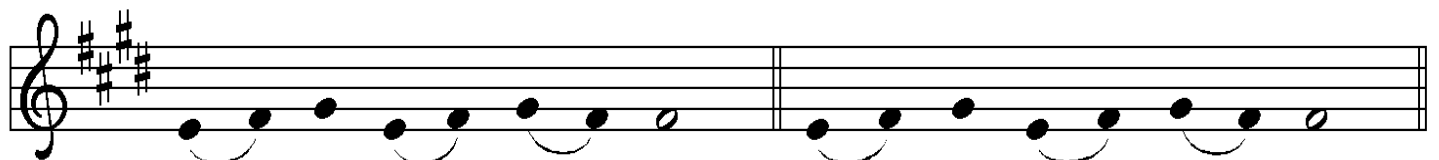


nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER:



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It's indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should always and everywhere give thanks and praise to You, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ Jesus our Lord! Fulfilling the promise of the resurrection, You pour out the fire of Your Spirit, uniting in one body people of every nation and tongue. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with all the faithful of every time and place, we praise your Name and join their unending hymn:

☐ Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might:

Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.

Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes

in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, "Take and eat. This is My body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of Me." Again after supper He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of Me."

And so, remembering all that our Lord has done for us, believing the witness of His resurrection, awaiting His final appearing in glory, we share this foretaste of the feast to come. Now send Your Holy Spirit upon us, that we may receive our Lord with a living faith as He comes to us in His holy Supper. Empower us by that same Spirit to love and forgive, that our lives may anticipate that day when You'll make all things new. All this we pray with joy through our Lord Jesus Christ, who's taught us to pray:

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy Name!
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever! Amen.***

Alleluia! Christ Jesus says, "Fear not; I'm the First and the Last, and the Living One. ***I died, and behold, I'm alive forevermore!***" Alleluia!

The risen Christ dwells with us here! All who are hungry, all who are thirsty, come!

CANTICLE: "Lamb of God"



☪ Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world;
grant us peace, grant us peace.

THE HOLY COMMUNION

*Now we share God's consecrated gifts among God's consecrated people, knowing that our living Lord Jesus is fully present with us in His Supper, giving Himself to us in bread and wine and forgiving love. Today, we'll share the Lord's Supper by receiving the body and blood of Christ at communion "stations" at the altar rail. Come forward a pew at a time; take a glass already filled with grape juice if necessary. Receive **"the body of Christ, given for you"** from the Pastor; then, by dipping the bread into the wine ("intinction") or drinking the grape juice from your glass, receive **"the blood of Christ, shed for you"** from our communion assistant. We'll pause for silent prayer after we've all communed...*

*If you're joining us from your home, we invite you to share the bread and cup with one another. When giving the bread to your neighbor, say **"The body of Christ, given for you."** When giving the wine/grape juice say, **"The blood of Christ, shed for you."** Whatever's left over may be reverently eaten and drunk by everyone after our worship is over. Once we've all shared in the body and blood of Christ, we continue in blessing and prayer:*

SENDING

THANKSGIVING, PRAYER, AND BENEDICTION:

May the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ
strengthen us and keep us in His grace.

Amen.

Wellspring of joy, through this meal You've put gladness in our hearts.
Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses,
that Your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people
through Christ Jesus our risen Lord.

Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Now may the God of life, who raised Christ Jesus from death,
empower you by the Holy Spirit to walk in newness of life;
and Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: “God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind”

ELW 400

See the following page for the words and music to this hymn.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DISMISSAL:

God has a plan.

We're it!

What's our part in God's plan?

Sharing God's love in joyful service!

Then let's go in peace, serve in joy, and live out the new life of our risen Lord!

Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!



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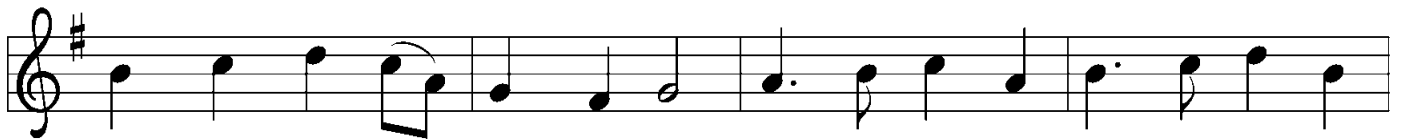
God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind



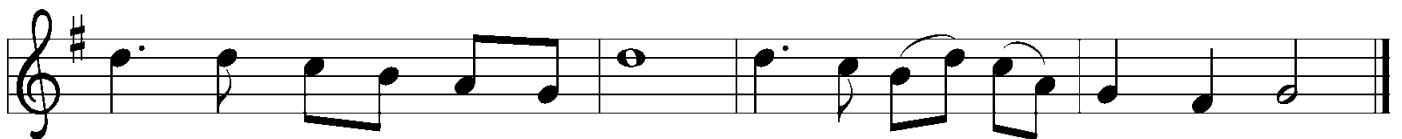
1 God of tem - pest, God of whirl - wind, as on Pen - te -
2 God of blaz - ing, God of burn - ing, all that blocks your
3 God of earth - quake, God of thun - der, shake us loose from
4 God of pas - sion, God un - sleep - ing, stir in us love's



cost de - scend! Drive us out from shel - tered com - fort;
pur - pose, purge! Through your church, Christ's liv - ing Bod - y,
leth - ar - gy! Break the chains of sin a - sun - der,
rest - less - ness! Where the peo - ple cry in an - guish,



past these walls your peo - ple send! Sweep us in - to cost - ly ser - vice,
let your flam - ing Spir - it surge! Where de - ceit con - ceals in - jus - tice,
for earth's heal - ing set us free! Crum - ble walls that still di - vide us;
may we share your heart's dis - tress. Rouse us from con - tent with e - vil;



there with Christ to bear the cross, there with Christ to bear the cross!
kin - dle us to speak your truth, kin - dle us to speak your truth!
make us one in Christ our Lord, make us one in Christ our Lord!
claim us for your king - dom's work, claim us for your king - dom's work!

Text: Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., 1923–2007

Music: CWM RHONDDA, John Hughes, 1873–1932

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When You Send Forth Your Spirit

What images and actions do you associate with the Holy Spirit? Does the third person of the Trinity make you think of doves? Wind? Fire? Oil? When you anticipate the Spirit's activity in the world, do you imagine people speaking in tongues? Confessing their sins? Discerning new callings? Preaching with renewed vigor?

What about communicating across differences of language, culture, tribe, ethnicity, age, gender, politics, and creed? What about building bridges of love and healing across ancient divides? What about discovering that the stranger is your brother? Your sister?

This week, we celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit by fire, wind, and word. Pentecost— from the Greek *pentekostos*, meaning “fiftieth”— was a Jewish festival celebrating the spring harvest. In the New Testament story Luke tells, the Spirit descended on 120 believers in Jerusalem on the fiftieth day after Jesus' resurrection. The Spirit empowered them to testify to Jesus' impact on their lives, emboldened the apostle Peter to preach to a bewildered crowd of skeptics, and drew three thousand converts to the fledgling faith in one day. For Christians, Pentecost marks the birthday of the church.

By any stretch of the imagination, it's a fabulous story, full of riveting details: tongues of fire, rushing winds, accusations of drunkenness, mass baptism. It's easy to get lost in the noise and the spectacle. But here's the detail that stands out to me as the searingly relevant one for our time and place: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” “At this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.”

As Christians, we place great stock in language, in words. Like our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, we're a “People of the Book”. We love the creation stories of Genesis, in which God births the very cosmos into existence by speaking: “And God said...” “In the beginning was the Word,” we read in John's dazzling poem about the Incarnation. On Sunday mornings, we profess our faith in the languages of liturgy, creed, prayer, and music. In short, we believe that language has power. Words make worlds— and unmake them, too.

If this is true, then what does the Holy Spirit's activity on Pentecost signify? Have we grasped the import of what the Spirit did— what the Spirit *insisted* on— at the inaugural moment of the church? What can we learn from the fact that the Spirit led with translation?

If you're bilingual, then you know that there's nothing easy about substituting one language for another. Languages are intricate and messy. They carry the full weight of their respective cultures, histories, psychologies, and spiritualities. To attempt one language instead of another is to make oneself a learner, a servant, a supplicant. It's an act of exploration and of

hospitality. To speak across barriers of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, culture, or politics is to challenge stereotypes and risk ridicule. It's a brave and disorienting act, a risky act...

But this is what the Holy Spirit required of Christ's frightened disciples on the birthday of the church. Essentially, She told them: "Stop huddling in what you call safety. Throw open your windows and doors. Feel the pressure of My hand against your backs, pour yourselves into the streets you've come to fear, and speak! Don't you understand? Silence is no longer an option. You're on fire!"

What I love about the first Pentecost story is that it required surrender and humility on both sides. Those who spoke had to brave languages beyond their comfort zones. They had to risk vulnerability in the face of difference, and do so with no guarantee of welcome. They had to trust that no matter how awkward, inadequate, or silly they felt, the words bubbling up inside of them— new words, strange words, scary words— were nevertheless essential words, precisely ordained for the time and place they occupied.

Meanwhile, the crowd who listened had to take risks as well. They had to suspend disbelief, drop their cherished defenses, and opt for curiosity and wonder instead of fear and contempt. They had to widen their circles, and welcome strangers with accents into their midst.

Not all of them managed it. Some sneered because they couldn't bear to be bewildered, to have their neat categories of belonging and exclusion challenged. Instead, like their ancestors at Babel, who scattered at the first sign of difference, they retreated into denial: "Nothing new is happening here. This isn't God. These are fools who've had too much to drink." But even in that atmosphere of suspicion and cynicism, some people spoke, and some people listened, and into those astonishing exchanges, God breathed fresh life.

The bottom line is, something happens when we speak each other's languages. We experience the limits of our own words and perspectives. We learn curiosity. We discover that God's "great deeds" are far too nuanced for a single tongue, a single fluency.

Of course, I'm stating the obvious when I say that Pentecost is a story for our time. We live in a world where words have become toxic, where the languages of our cherished "isms" threaten to divide and destroy us. The troubles of our day are global, civilizational, catastrophic. If we don't learn the art of speaking across the borders that separate us, we'll burn ourselves down to ash. As I type these words, violence is intensifying across the Israeli-Palestinian divide. Children are dying, landscapes are going up in smoke, and chaos governs the streets. Closer to home, the United States is in a state of political and cultural gridlock so fierce, we seem to have no capacity to communicate across our differences. The consequences, whether they have to do with climate change, racial justice, or economic disparity, are too numerous to count. For many of us, the temptation to retreat into our

enclaves is especially strong right now. We can't see outside of our social media bubbles. We've lost faith in the possibility of genuine dialogue. Our faith is faltering...

But this is precisely why we need Pentecost. What mattered on that first birthday of the church wasn't the rhetorical skills and the religious acumen of the disciples. What mattered is that they followed Jesus' instruction to stay in one place, pray without ceasing, and wait for the Holy Spirit to come with power and do a new thing— both in them and through them. What mattered was that the disciples, bumbling and clueless as they so often were, obeyed the prompting of the Spirit and allowed themselves to be transformed by the wind, the fire, the breath, and the tongues of God. Everything else followed from that.

There's no way to overstate how much we need to gather as God's people right now and ask the Holy Spirit to instruct us, shape us, remake us, and commission us. We need fresh languages of bridge-building. We need new words to rekindle love. We need the wind and fire of God to challenge our complacencies, reset our priorities, ease our anxieties, and move us out.

It's no small thing that the Holy Spirit loosened tongues to break down barriers on the birthday of the church. In the face of impossible difference, God compelled God's people to engage. From Day One, the call was to press in, linger, listen, and speak. Because here's the thing: no matter how passionately I disagree with your opinions and beliefs, I can't disagree with your experience. Once I've learned to hear and speak your story in the words that matter most to you, then I have stakes I never had before. I can no longer thrive at your expense. I can no longer make you my Other. I can no longer abandon you.

At my church, we respond to Sunday morning Scripture readings with these words: "Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people." Can we hear it? Can we dare to hear what the Spirit is saying? Stop huddling. Stop hesitating. Speak! The Spirit has come, and silence is no longer an option. You're on fire!

• *Debie Thomas*

Aly Brown will be in the office on Monday, May 20th, Tuesday, May 21st and Thursday May 23rd from 8am – 1pm.

**“I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort
believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, on come to Him.
But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel,
enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in true faith.
In the same way the Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies
the whole Christian Church on earth,
and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.
In this Christian Church, day after day,
the Spirit fully forgives my sins and the sins of all believers.
On the last day the Spirit will raise me and all the dead,
and give me and all believers in Christ eternal life.
This is most certainly true!”**

- *Luther’s Small Catechism, Explanation of the Third Article of the Creed*