**Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

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**At Home Worship May 31, 2020**

**WE GATHER**

In these days of knowing, not knowing, we, like the buds on the trees, are eager to burst forth into the world.

Hold us gently in place until we are certain in the ways of loving our neighbor.

Let us not toss ourselves and neighbor into thoughtless harm. Let us recall that all life is sacred in your eyes, not only that of the young child, but also those with lines of life lived etched upon their hands and faces, and including those whose immune systems are compromised.

These, too, are your beloved, whose care we are blessed to bear.

And we seek blessing upon those who have answered a call to care for us in our times of physical healing, no matter our opinion, our ideology, our hardship, Lord.

These, we hold in our care as neighbors.

Help us to hear that caring for one another is your command on our lives.

Open our ears to hear the tragedy in this time of coronavirus, and not only our own anxiety and grief that may come on blustering words and tired rhetoric. Instead, let us think on how we will make the world a better place.

Instead, let us think on what kindness, however small, we might offer someone.

Instead, let us remember that our life is not our own, but belongs to you.

Instead, let us dream how we might enter our communities to be a beacon of hope for those living in disorder

to come alongside them while they find order; alongside them while they reorder their lives.

Help us always, Lord, to remember our promise to you that we will care for our neighbor as ourselves. **Amen.**

*~ by Reverend Brenda Torrie, First United Methodist Church in Newcastle, Wyoming*

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.  
O God, on this day you open the hearts of your faithful people by sending into us your Holy Spirit. Direct us by the light of that Spirit, that we may have a right judgment in all things and rejoice at all times in your peace, through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**WE HEAR THE WORD**

**First Reading:** Acts 2:1-21

**Psalm** 104:24-34, 35b

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthian 12:3b-13

**Gospel:** John 20:19-23

**SERMON:** *(see last page)*

**REFLECTION:** There are certainly spirits abroad in the world and even in our own lives that do not work for the common good. There are certainly people — and perhaps we have been among them — who think that only their own language and culture can speak the truth and that people unlike them cannot have visions of hope that matter: “they are just drunk.” But this attitude does not mark the Spirit of God, the Spirit given us when we are drawn into the word of God and into faithful prayer. God’s Spirit comes from and bears witness to the risen Christ. It enables forgiveness — God’s forgiveness of us, our forgiveness of each other, and our ministry of forgiveness to all the world. That Spirit gives us all differing abilities to use for building each other up. It gives vision and wisdom for all. In our baptism into Christ, God’s Spirit has formed us into one body, and that body is quite alive even in our present distance from each other. Now we, in turn — even in this time — are to bear witness to our neighbors and greet the world with peace.

**Discussion Questions:** Medical interpreter Helen Sweeney notes that a recent patient recognized her not by her appearance but by her voice. What are some things that are distinctive about \*your\* voice that you think would help someone recognize you? In your life, whose voice is the most recognizable and what are the key signals that help you know that voice? Are there voices that just by hearing them they provide more anxiety than relief or joy? Who has the most comforting voice you know, regardless of what they’re saying? Whose voice most inspires you?

**HYMN**: O Holy Spirit Enter In <https://youtu.be/0LKMVXCYq68>

**WE RESPOND**

**APOSTLE’S CREED:**

We confess our shared faith with the words of the Apostle’s Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,**

**suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father,**

**and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,**

**the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

On this day of Pentecost we unite in prayer, asking God to send the Holy Spirit on the church, the world, and all who are in need.

We pray for the church around the globe:  
For the Eastern Orthodox churches, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**  
For the Roman Catholic church, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**For Protestant and Anglican churches, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit**!  
For Pentecostal churches, we pray, **Come, Holy Spirit!**For evangelicals and independents, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**For our own congregation, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**And for everyone who searches for you, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Restore with your breath the whole creation, especially the lands and waters laden with pollution and the animals whose habitats are threatened.

For your earth, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Send your Spirit on the leaders of nations, on legislators, and on judges, that the people of the world will benefit from your justice and your peace. Turn those in power away from the abuse, silencing, and killing of racial minorities.

For the nations of the world, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Visit all who are suffering, all who feel hopeless, and all who face death. Send healing to those we name here before you, especially those listed in our newsletter and all who mourn the loss of Cliff Gresham and those we now name aloud or silently. . .

For all who are in need, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Restore to health those who have contracted the virus. Uphold health-care workers, grant jobs to those who are unemployed, and assist researchers in discovering a vaccine.

For all who are confronting the coronovirus, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Bless those who are graduating from schools and universities, especially Abby Kasparek, Echo Mecklenburg and Jake Rehm. Give our youth hope for their future.

For our graduates we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Show our nation and our churches how to connect with those whose language we cannot speak, whose culture is different than ours, who seek the same safety and possibility for prosperity as we do.

For the speakers of every language under the sun we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Receive our praise for all who for centuries have gone before us in the faith, from the first Pentecost, throughout Christian history, and up to this week.

That at the end we and all the saints will rejoice in your presence, we pray: **Come, Holy Spirit!**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen**

**OFFERING** Part of our worship of God is giving of our talents, our passions, our gifts, our possessions, our time. Please take a moment to commit to healthy ways give back to God through service or financial gifts.

**Offering Prayer**

Generous God,

here are our gifts of time;

here are our gifts of talents;

here are our gifts of money;

building stones for Your Kingdom,

awaiting shaping and placing

within Your loving purpose. **Amen.**

*~ written by Rev Dr Derek Browning, and posted on the Church of Scotland’s* ***Starters for Sunday*** *website.* [*http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/*](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/)

**LORD’S SUPPER**

*On this festival day of Pentecost we not only remember, but we proclaim, we preach to each other and ourselves, Christ is present for us in, with, and under this simple bread and wine. You are invited to use any bread, juice or wine you choose and proclaim that Christ is “for you”!*

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and 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.”

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be 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.**

*Knowing you are in spirit with all the company of saints and Christians around the globe, share the bread and cup with these words:*

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

**PROMISE OF PRESENCE**: In the commands to love one another, in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus is promising to be present. When we feel scared, alone, isolated, or anxious Jesus has promised to be with us. And through our care of each other and through the sacraments, God is with us – Emmanuel! Martin Luther in his Small Catechism emphasizes the words “for you” and explains that a person “is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words: ‘for you’ and ‘for the forgiveness of sins’”. What does it mean that Christ died and was raised “for you”?

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION:** Lord Jesus, in a wonderful sacrament you strengthen us with the saving power of your suffering, death, and resurrection. May this sacrament of your body and blood so work in us that the fruits of your redemption will show forth in the way we live, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**HYMN**: Spirit of Gentleness <https://youtu.be/UTbQiUVdVMQ>

**WE ARE SENT**

Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The God of all grace  ☩ bless us now and forever. **Amen.**

Send forth your Spirit, O God, **and renew the face of the earth.**

**Sermon– May 31, 2020**

Welcome to Pentecost!

Today is a big deal in the church.  Today, Pentecost, is second only to Easter and Christmas.  Not that the church is as crowded today that you’d see on those other holidays.  But this is recognized as the birthday of the church.  And actually, if I was going to be more accurate, I really should call it the baptism of the church.  On Pentecost, those many years ago, the disciples received the Holy Spirit after Jesus had ascended, rose up, to the Father.  This has been the inheritance of the church ever since.  On Pentecost we, the church, receive the holy spirit

But I want to make sure you walk away today with at least this one point:  There hasn’t been just one Pentecost, 2000 years ago.  Our full communion partner denomination, the United Church of Christ, proclaims that “God is still speaking”.  God’s Spirit is still using scripture, people, events and so much more to unfold God’s character and good will for us.

Our Lutheran tradition also speaks about the ongoing nature of the Holy Spirit.  Good old Dr Martin Luther says to remember your baptism daily.  And not just that you’ve been freed from sin and shame and whatever binds you, but we proclaim that in baptism you have been given the Holy Spirit.

So there hasn’t been just one Pentecost, 2000 years ago.  The Spirit is being poured onto us today. This is our Pentecost.

 Just as the crowd those many years ago, we expect to see and hear God in certain ways, and only in certain ways.  We often only listen to those who have training or expertise.  “We can’t be expected to interpret God’s actions!  There are important other people for that!” one might say.

But Pentecost breaks open that idea that only certain people can speak about God’s actions, about what God is up to.  All flesh -- boys and girls, young and old, free and slaves -- whether they are women or men -- are gifted with the Spirit’s direct connection to the prophecies, visions, and dreams of God.

This was totally countercultural, against all normal social rules back then.  And certainly is resisted by most, if not all, institutions today!  But in this story, God doesn’t care about, or pay attention to, our structures, hierarchies, or status quo. God’s unstoppable drive to make a new creation is made known through this totally strange experience where God’s revealing goes even beyond language and culture and nationalities and ethnicities and hierarchies and social codes.  God speaks through us.  God speaks through us and doesn’t even pause at what we think are unbreakable walls.  These unbreakable walls of language and culture, of hierarchies and social codes, are after all, human inventions.

Peter gives a great interpretation of God’s actions.  He uses the words of the Prophet Joel to show these Jewish crowd how God’s actions in this weird experience of fire and language, are consistent.  And he uses the word Prophesy.

And this word often conjures up images of angry men on street corners predicting the end of the world, or television personalities wanting to tell your future.  But Peter’s power of prophecy is not future but present.

Peter's more interested in saying that the Spirit helps us make sense of the present. Because that's what his whole Pentecost speech does: it offers an explanation of what God is making possible in the here and now. He's naming places and ways in which God is active or visible in the world now that Jesus has gone and the Spirit has arrived.

We can call what Peter is doing in Acts 2 "prophecy," insofar as Peter is interpreting the bells and whistles of that day, and interpreting the more ordinary-looking work that lies ahead. He gives an explanation of the crowd's experience. It's a theological explanation, saying that the day's events point beyond themselves to suggest something about God and God's purposes. Yes, unusual stuff is afoot. But that's what happens when God shows up.

God seems to say, “you thought things got crazy at the resurrections, just you wait!”

And the scripture from John has a word for the Holy Spirit.  Paraclete.  Paraclete is a compound Greek word that literally means, “to come alongside another.” In this sense, the Paraclete can be an advocate, or comforter. But the one who comes along side might also do so to strengthen you for work, or to muster your courage, or to prompt or even provoke you to action.

The image of an Olympic coach has been suggested.  This coach has complete influence over the athletes they train.  They control their practice schedule, where they live and go to school, sometimes even their diet.  But they do this to provoke and encourage, to guide and build up.

The Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, is the one who comes along side of us to encourage and equip us for the task of ministry.

But take note, as in the readings today, so also in our world: if we heed the word and work of the coming-along-side Holy Spirit, we will inevitably be pushed beyond what we imagine and end up stirring things up. We tend to think of the Holy Spirit as the answer to a problem, but what if the Spirit’s work is to create for us a new problem: that we have a story to tell, mercy to share, love to spread, and we just can’t rest until we’ve done so!

Because as Peter told the crowd, the young and old, rich and poor, men and women, don’t just prophesy and tell what God is doing, but dream.

And remember also: there hasn’t been just one Pentecost, 2000 years ago.  The Spirit is being poured onto us today.  This is our Pentecost.

Pentecost is an invitation to dream. We, individually, and as a whole faith community are invited to dream.  Like any good dream, these dreams involve adopting a new perspective on what's possible.  We may not simply need a new doohicky for the whatsit.  A new Bible study, a new coat of paint, a new program.  We may need to reach even beyond what could possibly be expected.

 These dreams help us see that maybe what we thought was crazy and unimaginable actually lies within reach. Maybe I can find freedom from what binds me. Maybe there can be justice. Maybe I can make a difference. Maybe a person's value isn't determined by her income. Maybe the future of our economy or our society or our planet is not yet determined. Maybe God is here with me, even if my current struggles never go away.

The Christian faith has its roster of exceptional dreamers, who, like Jesus, insisted that God could make possible the things that other people couldn't see. The last century gave us Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Mother Theresa, Oscar Romero and so many others.

But dreams don’t always have be dramatic.  And telling about these dreams, these descriptions of a new, God-given possibility coming to life, is not limited to public figures with magnetic personalities.

Remember, God promises the Spirit to "all flesh." It belongs to a whole community.  Young and old, rich and poor, men and women, and all the other categories we use to divide human from human, Child-of-God from Child-of-God.

 And remember also.  There hasn’t been just one Pentecost, 2000 years ago.  The Spirit is being poured onto us today. This is our Pentecost.

Our Bible translation, the NRSV, describes the crowd as “bewildered” (v. 6), “amazed and astonished” (v. 7), and “amazed and perplexed” (v. 12). The Greek terms describing their reactions could be appropriately rendered as confused, in an uproar, beside themselves, undone, blown away, thoroughly disoriented, completely uncomprehending.

I hope you all aren’t quite that far gone.  But this story has to be opened up, and shown to be disorderly, primal and prophetic.  And given present day life.  God is opening up a freedom-filled, open ended buffet of possibilities through the unlimited Spirit of God.

And if this totally scares the, the . . . the STUFF out of you, and I’m right there with you.  But then there is nothing in history or scripture that says if this community's dreams are smaller, more localized or slower to develop, they can’t still be revolutionary.  Did you hear that?  We could be revolutionary, even while being small-town nice.

We will look back in time on Pentecost, as we should. But we’ll also need to be looking at the present, dreaming with our eyes open and daring to consider where God may be found today.  You can prophesy about God’s activity in the world today.  You can dream about God’s creative and redeeming work.

And remember, there hasn’t been just one Pentecost, 2000 years ago.  The Spirit is being poured onto us today. This is our Pentecost.

Invite you now to take a moment and prophesy.  Take a moment and dream.  Remember, there hasn’t been just one Pentecost, 2000 years ago.  The Spirit is being poured onto us today.  This is our Pentecost.  Where do you see God’s Spirit moving?  Where do you see God creating things new?  Where do you see healing and reconciliation?  Where do you see justice and mercy being done?

May the God of hope keep you in all joy and peace in believing so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.