

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2023
10:00 a.m.

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

PENTECOST SUNDAY

GATHERING

PRELUDE “Let’s Enjoy God Together” Joint Choir

*Words: Margaret Clarkson Music: Tedd Smith, choral arrangement by John F. Wilson.
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CALL TO WORSHIP

One: The day has come, and we are together.
All: We are listening for the sounds from heaven.
One: We feel the winds of God blowing among us.
We sense the tongues of fire empowering us.
All: Surely God is in this place!
One: The breath of God fills us with confidence.
All: The Spirit of God fills us with amazement.
One: God sets us afire with wonder and awe.
All: The Spirit creates new life within and among us.
One: So come, Holy Spirit!
All: Grant us your peace.
One: Come, Holy Spirit!
All: Give us your power.
One: Come, Holy Spirit!
All: Grace us with your presence.
Unison: Come, let us worship God.

***OPENING HYMN** “Come, O Spirit, Dwell Among Us” GtG 280

**1. Come, O Spirit, dwell among us;
come with Pentecostal power;
give the church a stronger vision;
help us face each crucial hour.**

(continued...)

**Built upon a firm foundation,
Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone,
still the church is called to mission
that God's love shall be made known.**

- 2. We would raise our alleluias
for the grace of yester-years;
for tomorrow's unknown pathway,
hear, O Lord, our humble prayers.
In the church's pilgrim journey
you have led us all the way;
still in presence move before us,
fire by night and cloud by day.**
- 3. Come, O Spirit, dwell among us;
give us words of fire and flame.
Help our feeble lips to praise you,
glorify your holy name.
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Three in One: what mystery!
We would sing our loud hosannas
now and through eternity.**

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UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Even with new life all about us, O God,
we hesitate and doubt.
In spite of your promises we seek self-assurance.
We confess our preference for the predictable.
We want to manage our own lives and assure our own safety,
so we still cling to old ways.
You send the Holy Spirit to enliven our existence.
But the darkness of doubt obscures the new light the Spirit brings.
And we are afraid that you will ask more of us than we are willing to risk.
Forgive our fear and our lack of courage.
Embolden us to trust the Spirit to fill us and use us.
Renew our hearts and free us from the grip of sin,
that we may embrace you and your way;
in the name of Christ we pray. Amen.**

SILENT CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON *(from Acts 2)*

One: Sisters and brothers,
in the grace of repentance,
God offers forgiveness of our sins.

All: **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”**

One: Accept God’s grace,
and be restored to abundant life.

All: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and freed. Thanks be to God!**

THE PEACE

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS Numbers 11:24–30 Acts 2:1-21

NUMBERS 11:24–30 (New Revised Standard Version)

²⁴ So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. ²⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.

²⁶ Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ And a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” ²⁸ And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, “My lord Moses, stop them!” ²⁹ But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put the spirit on them!” ³⁰ And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

ACTS 2:1-21 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² 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. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each

one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ... In our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “People of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ ‘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 people shall see visions,
and your old people shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will 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.’”

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON by Pastor Bill Vincent

A good day.

We have gathered on a good day.

We have gathered together – and that’s a good thing – acknowledging our connection, our unity, our bond in Christ.

We have gathered to worship – and that’s a good thing – acknowledging God’s presence in our midst and God’s call in our lives and God’s work in our work.

And we have gathered to celebrate.

We celebrate in our singing and in our hearing.

We celebrate in our coming together and our gathering around this table.

We celebrate the goodness of God and our joy in community.

We celebrate this Pentecost Day.

But are we clear what it is we celebrate on this Pentecost Day?

We celebrate the power of God. (Can I hear an ‘Amen!’?)

- power of the wind and the fire;
- power to speak...and to hear;
- power to repent, and unite in community.

We celebrate the renewal of God. (Can I hear an ‘Amen!’?)

- new life for people;
- new possibilities;
- new community.

We celebrate the surprise, and the unexpected, of God. (Can I hear an ‘Amen!’?)

- Yes, there was anticipation by the disciples beforehand. But no one expected what happened.

So we also celebrate...change: change wrought by God. (And I could ask for an ‘Amen!’ here, but I suspect it might be somewhat muted...at best.)

The power for the disciples to communicate was new and different...and involved a change: change in the way people spoke, in the way others listened; change in the way people related. (We could use a change like that nowadays.)

The new life for people was...well, ‘new’...and different ... and it most definitely involved a change. ‘New’ implies change. They were gathering together in ways they had never done before, caring for one another in new ways, experiencing life – and life together – in a different way.

Change.

And change, it seems to me, that we can understand through those images of wind and fire.

Wind and fire.

They are images that evoke power: power that can be delightful...and scary.

They are images that can bring about renewal: both in wondrous ways, and in terrifying.

They are images that can, and do, describe change: change that we need, change that surprises, change that entices, and even change that we just might resist.

The power of God.

The renewal of God.

The surprise of God.

The change by God.

So Peter – the one who denied and fled, along with the rest of them – stands up boldly and proclaims eloquently. He is changed, and renewed, by the power and grace of God.

In our passage in Numbers, God’s Spirit is poured out on seventy elders – on others besides Moses.

And when Eldad and Medad, who had not followed the prescribed protocol of going out to the tent – when Eldad and Medad also receive the outpouring of the Spirit, note that there is resistance, even by those closest to Moses: “It’s different!” “It’s a change!”

But Moses responds, ‘Would that they all would receive the Spirit.’ Perhaps foreshadowing words the prophet Joel would speak; and the experience others would have years later in Jerusalem, on yet another – though decidedly different – Pentecost Day.

Through fire and wind.

The fire which burns. Which lights up the sky, or the night. Which cooks the food and drives the engine. Which entertains the eye and warms the body.

And which also devastates the landscape, and drives the wildlife before it in terror. And explodes the bomb, and propels the bullet.

The fire, which can delight, and devastate. Which can help, or harm.

The fire of God is power. Power which we can relish, especially when it is to our advantage. But power which we can also fear, for who knows what the power of God will do among us?

You see: we hear of the Pentecostal tongues as of fire. And we celebrate their impact on people’s lives, and their ability to reach out and touch and embrace others.

But let us also remember that this fire can burn. And perhaps (guided as it is by the will of God) that, too, is a good thing – though we may not at first experience it that way.

The hymn “How Firm a Foundation” puts it so well when it has God speak, saying,

**“When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
my grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
the flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.”**

(“K” in John Rippon’s *A Selection of Hymns*, 1787)

Gold is good, and we like that: all shiny and such.

But you don’t get to the refined gold without going through the fire. You don’t get to be ‘all shiny and such’ without experiencing the flame. And the dross does not go away all by itself; it has to be burned away.

Fire is good. And we celebrate that.

But we need to remember that part of the reason to cook food is to ‘kill off’ whatever germs are on (or in) the food that might make us sick.

Fire helps...and harms – or so it seems.

At the end of Peter’s great speech on that Pentecost Day, the people ask what they must do. And Peter and the others say, “*Repent...*” (Acts 2:38).

Repent: change direction.

It can be a difficult experience, involving a recognition that I was going in the wrong direction to begin with.

And yes, repentance – changing direction – can even be a blast furnace experience. Just ask Paul, after he got knocked to the ground by a blinding light (see Acts 9:1-9).

But the fire of the blast furnace helps – and heals – even though it may not feel like that initially.

Fire...and wind.

The wind which blows. Which rustles the leaves and splashes the waves. Which corrals the clouds and cools the skin. Which lifts the plane and propels the sailboat.

And which can flatten an entire town, and blow us away – literally.

The wind, which can refresh, and uproot. Which can revive, and demolish.

The wind of God is power. Power which we can relish, especially when it is to our advantage. But power which we can also fear, for who knows what the power of God will do?

You see: we hear the wind of Pentecost blow. And we celebrate its impact on people's lives, propelling them to reach out and touch and embrace others.

But let us also remember that this wind can blow us away, and blow us off course – or blow us off *our* course. And perhaps (guided as it is by the will of God) that, too, is a good thing – though we may not at first experience it that way.

Now I realize not every 'fire' we may experience is of God, and not every 'wind' that blows comes from God.

And the question of how we discern what is 'of God' and 'from God' is an important question...just maybe not a question to be answered today.

But there are also times when the fire and the wind are not so difficult to discern, and they are unmistakably the work, and moving, of God. Yet we want to say 'No!' to them simply because "We don't want to!" or we are frightened or we can't be bothered.

The sailboat might want to go one way, and might even be able to tack against the wind. But sometimes the wind blows so strongly that the only thing to do is sail with the wind and be blown before it in the direction the wind wants us to go.

The question before us, the challenge from our Pentecost story is:

Will we let the fire of God work within us?

Will we allow the wind of God to have its way with us?

For we all know that a ship is not made to sit at dock, but to be out on the water. And for the wind to do its best – its most creative, helpful – work the ship must sail, not in the harbor of oh-so-comfortable familiarity; but out on the unfamiliar sea of life, where the breath of God blows us where it will and we are guided only by the fire of the stars.

One of the 'hard sells' of the Christian faith is the challenge – even the command – to lose your life, to give up your life, to let go your life, and to let go it being 'your' life. And that is scary, frightening, un-nerving. Why would we do that?

But the enticement, the invitation, the good news (and the goodness of the news) is that when we do – when we will let the fire of God be in command and the wind of God blow us

where it will – we come to discover life as it was meant to be, life as we were meant to be, life as God intended for us all along: true life, real life, and that abundant.

All

- by the grace of God
- with the fire of God
- and the wind of God
- for the will of God
- in the presence of God
- with the peace of God.

So what we celebrate at Pentecost is the wind and the fire of the Spirit let loose in the world...and among us.

What we celebrate is a change

- from an old way of life, to a new way of life;
- from clinging to my way, to letting go and letting God have God's way with us;
- from "What do I want?" to "What does God want?"
- from demanding to be the people we want to be, to embracing
who God calls us to be
where God calls us to go
as God calls us God's own...

...by fire and by wind.

Could it be that fire

-not only ignites the fire within us, and energizes and encourages us – stokes the spark of life;

-but also burns away what is not essential to our lives – the extraneous and burdensome: what weighs us down – consuming that dross, refining that gold – that our real self might soar with the wind?

Could it be that wind

-not only breathes the breath of life within us – God's breath, God's life;
-but also blows away the dirt and dust of sin that clings so closely (see Hebrews 12:1), to leave the true me, and to animate who I truly am as a child of God?

This Memorial Day weekend, as you might fire up the grill...

remember: in God's own way, God has fired up the grill.

Shall we see what God has cooking?

The wind (Spirit) is blowing.

Shall we hoist the sails, and see where God's Spirit takes us?

***HYMN** "Wind Who Makes All Winds That Blow" [Tune 163]

(next page...)

1. **Wind who makes all winds that blow--
gusts that bend the saplings low,
gales that heave the sea in waves,
stirrings in the mind's deep caves--
aim your breath with steady power
on your church this day, this hour.
Raise, renew the life we've lost,
Spirit God of Pentecost.**

2. **Fire who fuels all fires that burn--
suns around which planets turn,
beacons marking reefs and shoals,
shining truth to guide our souls--
come to us as once you came:
burst in tongues of sacred flame!
Light and Power, Might and Strength,
fill your church, its breadth and length.**

3. **Holy Spirit, Wind and Flame,
move within our mortal frame.
Make our hearts an altar pyre,
kindle them with your own fire.
Breathe and blow upon that blaze
till our lives, our deeds and ways,
speak that tongue which every land
by your grace shall understand.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the Church.
The same Spirit
who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,**

(continued...)

engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.

**In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.**
**In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"**

(from *A Brief Statement of Faith*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: God of wind and fire...

All: ...hear our prayer.

THE EUCHARIST

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection "As the Wind Song" Barbara Alt & Dorothy Clarkson

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**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**O God, we have thirsted and you provided water.
We have been hungry and you have fed us.
We have been torn and bewildered and you gave us your peace.
We rejoice and give thanks for all your gifts.
May our offerings and our lives witness to rebirth and renewal.
Send us into your world
strengthened and freed by the Holy Spirit
to respond to people and circumstances
as Christ's disciples. Amen.**

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

(The prayer continues...)

The Lord's Prayer (Contemporary)

Our Father in heaven,

**hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

Communion of the People

(You will be invited by the ushers to come forward to receive communion. Those who choose not to come forward will be served at their seats.)

Sing "Come to the Table of Grace" GtG 507

1. Come to the table of grace.

Come to the table of grace.

This is God's table;

it's not yours or mine.

Come to the table of grace.

2. Come to the table of peace...

3. Come to the table of love...

4. Come to the table of hope...

5. Come to the table of joy...

Words: Barbara Hamm, 2008

Music: TABLE OF GRACE, Barbara Hamm, 2008

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Prayer

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** “Spirit of the Living God” GtG 288

**Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.
Melt me; mold me; fill me; use me.
Spirit of the living God,
fall afresh on me.**

Words: Daniel Iverson, 1926.

Music: LIVING GOD, Daniel Iverson, 1926.

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
All: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

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