Worship Resources for May 15th, 2016—Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:1-21 or Genesis 11:1-9; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Romans 8:14-17; John 14:8-17 (25-27)

Narrative Lectionary: Gifts of the Spirit, Acts 2:-14; 1 Corinthians 12:1-13 (Mark 1:4-8)

On this day of Pentecost, the Jews celebrated the first harvest of the spring and many pilgrimaged to Jerusalem. The followers of Jesus had also gathered there, and suddenly, as they were gathered, there was a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were able to speak in the languages of those who had gathered around them, Jews from all over the known world (the Mediterranean) who now hear these followers of Jesus speaking to them in their own language. Some dismiss them as drunk, but Peter, who often was rash in the Gospel accounts, now speaks boldly, assuming leadership, and declares that this is the Spirit of God as declared by the prophet Joel.

Genesis 11:1-9 is the story of the Tower of Babel. The last of the four great creation stories in Genesis (Creation of the World in Genesis 1; Creation of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2; Re-Creation after the flood in Genesis 7-9), we learn how the world came to be populated with people who speak different languages. Also, in these great creation stories, God speaks in the plural, “Let us.” The people had wanted to be gathered in one place and make a name for themselves, but God has decided to scatter the people and confuse their language, to not let them become as great as those in the heavens.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b sings praises to God who has made all of creation, including creatures in the depths of the sea that we do not know exist. All of creation looks to God, and all rely on God to have their needs supplied. God is the one who gives the breath of life, and takes the breath of life.

Romans 8:14-17 declares that all who are led by the Spirit are children of God. For Paul, those who are Gentiles are adopted through the power of the Holy Spirit, grafted onto the family tree—it is through the Spirit that we are kindred of Christ, joint heirs with Jesus.

John 14:8-17, 25-27 is part of Jesus’ final discourse with the disciples, who still do not understand who Jesus is. Jesus has already declared that he and the Father are one, but still Philip just wants to see the Father. Philip wants Jesus to cut to the chase, and Jesus questions Philip: “You still do not know me?” Jesus declares that if they love him, they will keep his commandments, and the Advocate, sent in Jesus’ name, will continue to teach them, and remind them of what they already know: God and Jesus are one, and we are one in Christ’s love.

The Narrative Lectionary focuses on the Gifts of the Spirit. Beginning with Acts, we recount the experience of the arrival of the Holy Spirit, a sound like a violent, rushing wind, the divided tongues appearing, and how those early followers of Jesus could speak the languages of those around them.

1 Corinthians 12:1-13 speaks of the variety of gifts, but all given by the same Spirit, and how God has made each of us unique. For we are members, one of another, and part of the body of Christ, and we all have been given unique gifts.

Mark 1:4-8 contains Mark’s account of John the Baptist, arriving from the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance of the forgiveness of sins, and declares that the one coming after him will baptize with the Holy Spirit. John can only perform a baptism of water, a symbol of dying and rising with Christ, of being washed clean. With Jesus, we are baptized into the Holy Spirit, and receive the gifts of the Spirit, called to serve God with those gifts in this world.

The Holy Spirit draws us together in union as the church. The Holy Spirit gives us all unique and varying gifts to serve God by serving those in need around us. And we know God is present through the good works of those around us, gifts of the Holy Spirit in one another. The Holy Spirit continues to teach us what Jesus has made known in us: we are called to love one another, and in doing so, we love God.

Call to Worship

God’s Spirit is poured out onto us:

 **The youth are prophesying and seeing visions; the old are dreaming new dreams.**

God’s Spirit is poured out onto us:

 **The Spirit of God continues to teach us to love one another.**

God’s Spirit is poured out onto us:

 **We have a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit binds us together as one.**

Come, let us celebrate the Holy Spirit among us:

 **Come, let us worship God in Spirit and in Truth.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

We confess to You, O Christ, that we have not been one. We confess to You, O Christ, that we have thought ourselves better than others, that we have divided over petty reasons rather than working together across differences. We confess to You, O Christ, that we don’t always want to reconcile, or forgive, or listen to those different from us; we want to be right and justified. Forgive us for our foolish ways. Remind us of Your humility, humble to the point of death on the cross for us. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

The Holy Spirit breathes new life in us, with every breath. Breathe deeply now; that is the Spirit of God that is in you. Exhale slowly; that is the Spirit of God coming from you into the world. The Holy Spirit is binding us together, breathing new life in us. The old is wasted away, but see, everything is made new, with every breath. Know God’s Spirit is in you. Know God loves you, and forgives you. Trust in the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer

Wind Upon The Waters, from the time of creation You have been breathing new life into the universe. Breathe Your Spirit into us so that we might be made new, with new hearts open to loving our neighbor, new minds open to new ways of thinking and insights. May our own spirits be renewed by Your Spirit within us, so that we might experience new hope, new joy, and new peace in You. Amen.