Worship Resources for June 8th, 2014—Pentecost

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-40; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

The Day of Pentecost has come! Celebrating the spring harvest festival in Jewish tradition, the Jews from across the Roman Empire have gathered in Jerusalem, and the followers of Jesus are there, gathering in one place. And suddenly, the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and besides the visual effects of the divided fiery tongues above them and the violent rushing wind being felt, they also are able to speak in each other’s languages. They are able to speak in the languages of all the Jews across the Roman Empire, and people begin hearing their own language being spoken. This is incredible, because these followers of Jesus, the disciples, are all from Galilee but are speaking everyone else’s language. Peter clarifies for those who are confused or questioning that this is the power of the Holy Spirit, that this is a sign as prophesied by Joel, that God is doing something new.

Numbers 11:24-40 tells of a time when God’s spirit came upon Moses and seventy elders, and that two others were also prophesying, who weren’t part of the seventy. But Moses rebukes Joshua who is complaining about this—because wherever God’s spirit is, good things are being done. God’s spirit cannot be contained by our own desires or actions, but God’s spirit can move through us and do wonders. The passage also implies that God works outside of our own knowledge and design, and that we must be the ones to recognize where God is at work, not predict where God is at work.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b speaks of the creative work of the spirit—wherever God’s spirit moves, creation happens. God renews the face of the ground (vs. 30). The same spirit that was at the beginning of creation in Genesis 1, moving over the face of the waters, is continuing to move over the face of the waters and above the dry earth and is still creating. God is still doing something new and renewing life all around us.

1 Corinthians 12 tells of the gifts of the spirit. Paul makes it clear that it is the same spirit—God’s spirit—but God’s spirit gives a variety of gifts. We are given gifts for teaching, preaching, healing, speaking, prophecy, etc.—and we are called to work together, and we need each other. God created us to be diverse, not the same, and has given us a diversity of gifts to do God’s work in this world.

John 20:19-23 is the account of Jesus appearing to the disciples after the resurrection, after Mary had already seen him and proclaimed that he was alive. Jesus greets them with “Peace be with you,” and then breathes on them so that they receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus also lets them know that with the Holy Spirit comes the ability to forgive others.

John 7:37-39 is Jesus’ proclamation that if any are thirsty, they can come to him for Living Water. The writer says that Jesus was speaking about the Spirit which had not come yet. We know from scripture that God’s spirit is present in Genesis 1 in creation, but that perhaps the Spirit was made known in a new way through Jesus.

The Hebrew word *ruach* means wind, breath and spirit—so does the Greek word *pneuma.* God’s spirit is present from the beginning of creation, and continues to be at work in God’s creation and renewal. Jesus tells us that we will know the spirit in a new way, and we understand the Holy Spirit to be at work in us, as individuals, as a church body, in the gifts we are given to continue Christ’s work in this world. However, we also know that God’s spirit was made known in a new way to Moses and the people, and that God’s spirit, time and again, cannot be contained by our understanding or words or predictions. Instead, we are called to recognize God’s spirit at work when we see it, and to honor, appreciate, and celebrate it at work in others.

Call to Worship (from Genesis 1:1-2, Psalm 104:24,30; Joel 2:28)

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,

The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep.

**Then the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters.**

O Lord, how magnificent are Your works! In wisdom You made them all,

The earth is full of Your creatures.

**When You send forth Your spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the ground.**

God will pour out the spirit on all flesh

**Our sons and daughters will prophesy**

**Our old shall dream dreams,**

**Our young shall see visions.**

Come, O Holy Spirit, Come!

**Renew in us Your Spirit today! Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we continue to try to put You in a box. We tell others how to know You. We believe our way is the only way. We do not recognize or look for You in the face of others or at work in other people around us. Forgive us for thinking we have a corner on the truth. You are the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Break open our box. Tear down our walls. Breathe into us the newness of life in the Spirit. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God is always doing something new. God will open to us visions and dreams, and the promise of new life is made known all around us. We are forgiven, we are set back on right paths, and we know that we go forth with the love of Christ in our hearts. Go with this good news. Amen.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, come upon us. Breathe new life into us. Help us to share this new life in all we do and say. Help us to be creative, as You are our Creator. Help us to inspire others, as You inspire us. Help us to be a new creation, for You have made us a new creation in You. Call us away from the competitive ways of the world and into the collaborative ways of the Spirit. Help us to build up rather than to break down, help us to be renewed and refreshed when we are worn down and tired. Call us into the way of New Life, through the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.