

Dorothy Henderson, Team Leader
*The Vine Helpline: Connecting people,
places and programs*
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
dhenders@presbyterian.ca
1-800-619-7301 ext. 271

A Church Family Service for Pentecost/ Christian Family Sunday

Preparation

- Find red candles and, if possible, decorate your worship area in red—balloons, streamers, etc. On the previous Sunday, you may invite people to wear red, and the minister may wear a red stole.
- Hang a taut rope in the worship area. Put snap clothes pins on the rope.
- Provide, for the children and youth, paper “flames” and crayons and hand these out at the beginning of the worship; then invite the children to colour the flames which will be added to the rope during the reading of one of the Scriptures. Also, give each child a paper animal or sea creature. (See Psalm 104:24-34, 35b.) These creatures will be added to the mural during the reading of the Psalm.
- On the previous Sunday, invite anyone in the congregation who speaks another language to bring a copy of Psalm 104 (in their native language) to worship on May 11. Or, you may personally invite two or three people to read the Psalm together, in different languages at the same time.
- On a wall in your worship area, attach a long sheet of mural paper showing pastures, hills, and the ocean.
- Prepare gift boxes, wrapped in red, with a large label, each describing a gift of the spirit—wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discernment, speaking in tongues, understanding language. Do a slightly larger red box for the communion table with “Jesus, live among us” written on it.
- If your congregation has the custom of serving food and coffee after worship, consider breads from various parts of the world. Alternatively, serve a “birthday cake” for the Church.

Gathering

Call to Worship

*(Children, youth and/or families carry in red candles.
These are placed on the communion table.)*

Dance with the Spirit early in the morning.
Walk with the Spirit throughout the long day.
Work and hope for a new life a bornin’.
Listen to the Spirit to show you the way.

Greeting

Worship leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

(The red candles are lit as the worship leader says, "We light these candles to remind us of the loving presence of God's Holy Spirit.")

Opening Prayer

Holy God, we celebrate your Spirit around us and within us.
As we come together to offer you our praise and thanksgiving,
fill us to overflowing with your rushing, blazing Spirit.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hymn

#398 (When the Spirit of the Lord moves in my soul) **OR** #390 (Spirit divine, attend our prayers)

Prayer of Confession

(Invite the congregation to respond with "Pour out your Spirit, O God" after each sentence of the prayer is read.)

God of rushing wind and blazing fire, we pause to confess that we have often forgotten your awesome power.

We confess that we hear the story of your Spirit coming to others and think that this only happened to people long ago.

We confess that we sometimes are afraid of what might happen to us if we truly trusted in your Spirit.

Today is the day when we celebrate your Holy Spirit coming to the church, yet we confess that we often fail to be the church you would have us be.

Pour out your Spirit upon us, God and help us to trust in you. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God sent the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter and Renewer. Through the Spirit, we have new life as forgiven people. Thanks be to God. Amen.

We Hear God's Word

First reading: Based on Acts 2:1-21

Worship leader:

There are many stories in the Bible when God's Holy Spirit came to believers—like the time when the Spirit of God came upon 70 elders appointed to the Israelites (Num. 11: 24ff.) But, the story of the coming of God's Holy Spirit as recorded in Acts is special to Christians because it happened so soon after Jesus' resurrection. Many of us call this time the "birthday of the Church."

Listen for the word of God and hear how the Holy Spirit came, once again, to the people of God.

Jesus' friends had gathered for the Feast of Pentecost, but they did not feel like celebrating. Jesus had gone, and his followers felt lost and alone.

It made them feel better to be in a room together.

Suddenly, something very unusual happened. A wind began to blow and flashes of light like fire moved around the room. "What is happening?" everyone shouted.

God's Spirit, like a flame, seemed to rest on each person, but no one was hurt.

Instead, they began speaking in languages that they could never speak before.

There were people in the city from many different countries. When they heard Jesus' followers speaking in all the different languages, they were astonished, because they could hear of God's deeds of power in their own language.

Everyone began to say, "What does this mean? What is happening?"

Someone got up and shouted, in a nasty voice, "These people are drunk!"

But, Peter, who was standing with the other believers, said, "Of course, they are not drunk! It's only 9 o'clock in the morning. These people are filled with God's Holy Spirit. It is like the prophet Joel promised—God's Holy Spirit is poured out on God's people. These people are so excited that they cannot sit still!

You have heard the amazing story of how God's Spirit came, once again, to the people who believed.

After the story is read, the children are invited to walk to the clothesline and attach a "tongue of fire" which they have coloured, using the clothespins to attach the flames to the rope. Youth or adults may need to help.

Second reading: Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b

(As this Psalm is read in different languages, invite the children to colour the land and sea creatures. Older children can help them tape them to the mural. If they don't complete this activity during the Psalm reading, they may continue as the next hymn is sung.)

Hymn: #275 (*I am the church*) OR #395 (*Fire of God, O sacred flame*)

Third reading: 1 Cor. 12:3b-13

Worship leader: God gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church, but God continues to give many gifts to us today. Listen to this reading about the great variety of gifts given to the church. (As 1 Cor. 12:3b-13 is read, children and youth bring forward the red gift boxes and stack them so all the labels can be seen.)

Fourth reading: John 20:19-23

(As the John passage is read, the final gift box which says—Jesus, live among us—is brought forward and placed on the communion table.)

Meditation: What does it mean to be people who have God's Spirit?

Hymn: #399 (*Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness*) OR #400 (*Spirit of the Living God*)

Responding to God's Word

Prayers of the People

Loving Spirit, we thank you for the energy and new life you send to your people.

We thank you for giving us boldness to tell your good news to others.

We thank you that the discouraged hear a message of hope, that the sick are healed, and that people still continue to grow in love and compassion because of your Holy Spirit.

We pray for others who have not had the experience of receiving energy from your loving Spirit. May they know your presence.

We pray for those who need to feel the fresh movement of your power.

Come among us, Holy Spirit, like a mighty, rushing wind.

Come among us, Holy Spirit, like a blazing fire.

Come among us, Holy Spirit, like a still small voice. Amen.

Offering

Offering Prayer: God of rushing wind and blazing Spirit, we thank you that we can respond with these gifts of our resources. May they be used to further the reign of Christ in (name your community) and around the world.

Preparing to Go Out Into the World

Hymn: #384 (*O Breath of life, come sweeping through us*) OR #389 (*Breathe on me, breath of God*)

Commissioning and Benediction

