

Faith Bible Study Guide
For the Week of May 19, 2024 - PENTECOST SUNDAY

“Pentecost for Everyone!”



Be still [2 Minutes]: As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

CENTERING WORDS:

In rushing wind and tongues of fire, the Church is born through the power of the Holy Spirit.

OPENING PRAYER:

God of wind and flame, ignite a fire in our hearts and fill us with your courage and power. On this day of Pentecost, may our young people see visions and our elders dream dreams. Blow open the doors of our shut up hearts and send us into the world to spread the good news of your saving love. Amen.

Be the Word: New Testament Reading: Acts 2:1-21

When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. 4 They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

5 There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. 7 They were surprised and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? 8 How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), 11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!” 12 They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, “What does this mean?” 13 Others jeered at them, saying, “They’re full of new wine!”

14 Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, “Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! 15 These people aren’t drunk, as you suspect; after all, it’s only nine o’clock in the morning! 16 Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams. 18 Even upon my servants, men and women, I

will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and a cloud of smoke. 20 The sun will be changed into darkness, and the moon will be changed into blood, before the great and spectacular day of the Lord comes. 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

L: The Word of God for all people

P: Thanks be to God

Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]

1. Take a deep breath. How is it with your soul?
2. Do you speak other languages? (Or have attempted to?)
 - What are they and have you ever used them in context?
3. List some things that you are fiercely passionate about?
 - What about these things/people/opportunities/experiences/issues make you feel passionate about them?

Be rooted: [Bible Study]

1. What words, phrases or images struck you when hearing the passage from Acts?
2. Do you like to travel? Has language ever been a barrier to you in travel? If so, what helped you break through that barrier?
3. Did the linguistic parts of today's Pentecost story remind you of the Tower of Babel?

Dean Edgardo Colon-Emeric, of Duke Divinity School writes:

The writer Luke's Acts 2 account of a gathering in Jerusalem of Jews from every known nation evokes the story of the tower of Babel. For the people of God, Babel stood as a beacon for false forms of unity. When God created human beings, he commanded them to "fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28 NRSV). Migration is at the heart of the human story from the beginning. The Table of Nations in Genesis 10, which names the descendants of Noah "by their families, their languages, their lands, and their nations" (10:31), paints a picture of a diverse, because dispersed, human family.

The tower of Babel was built as a bulwark against multiculturalism. The project failed spectacularly because of God's intervention. The confusion of languages was not a curse. It was judgment and a mercy on the headlines of the day. The story of Babel in Genesis 11 is followed by the election of Abram in Genesis 12, in whom "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (12:3). The one is chosen for the sake of the many. What God rejected in Babel, God promised to Abram and wondrously fulfilled in Pentecost.

4. What does this mean?
5. Last week talked about Love, Prayer, and Unity. How does this text connect us with unity, especially in the spirit of languages?
 - Is it easy to decipher languages if you don't speak it?
 - How about accents?

More thoughts on Pentecost dealing with language: *Pentecost promises unity without erasing difference. In the logic of Babel, cultures and languages are ranked. Today, for example, some languages are regarded as classical (Greek, Latin), some as research (German, French) and some as dialects (Kiche, Quechua).*

The logic of Babel extends to accents. In the first century, the Galilean accent was distinctive enough that

Peter was recognized as a disciple of Jesus because of his accent (Matthew 26:73). According to theologian Virgil Elizondo, people from Galilee slurred hard consonant sounds in ways that made them sound provincial and uneducated. I am not sure whether this is true, but respectable Israelites like Nathanael had a low opinion for what could come out of the borderlands of Galilee (John 1:46).

In any case, the disciples of Jesus shared a common and undervalued cultural background. They were recognizably Galileans before and after Pentecost (Acts 2:7). The Spirit's fiery tongues did not burn off their particularity. They gained the ability to communicate cross-culturally but did not lose their accents. Pentecost is God's plan for unifying the dispersed human family. Goals for inclusion, programs in belonging and projects in decoloniality strive for what the Holy Spirit promises: unity without uniformity, dispersion without disconnection, diversity without divisiveness.

6. What does Pentecost mean to YOU? (And not just the translation of the Greek word for "Fiftieth")!
 - Doesn't Jesus call his Disciples to LEAVE the room in which they are hiding from the world?

Pentecost's power moves to the margins. When John Wesley first stepped out of the walls of the church in order to reach people working in fields, mines and markets, he preached from the passage from Jesus' inaugural sermon: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). This textual choice was not free from controversy. The 18th century dismissed those who talked about the ongoing work of the Spirit as ignorant and irresponsible.

Against the theological currents of his day, John Wesley refused to limit the Spirit's presence and power to the age of the apostles or the institutions of the church. The rise of Methodism was for him proof that the power of Pentecost was still at work in the world. The Spirit was still active in history, particularly among the marginalized.

According to Scripture, the love of God is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 5:5). For Wesley, the social dimension of this love is made visible through works of mercy. Pentecost's power is at work when we feed the hungry, visit the sick and welcome the stranger. It is also at work when we call sinners to repentance and encourage Christians in the way to holiness.

Wesley discovered a gospel correlation that Christians too frequently forget. If you are anointed with the Spirit, you embrace the poor. If you claim Pentecost's power, you move to the margins.

7. *The church is not simply an aging, failing institution; it is the dawn of the new creation. In the words of C.S. Lewis, "The church will outlive the universe." The stars will grow cold while hallelujah choruses go on in many languages and accents. It is PENTECOST! Are you ready to celebrate Pentecost beyond the walls of the Church?*

Be transformed: [Call to action]

1. Where is your fire for God? Is it still burning within in you? Is it a brand new flame needing to be fanned? Does it need to be reignited? Are there just embers?
 - What would it take for your passions and fire for God to burn brightly for others to see? (What feeds your flame? Bible Study? Service? Prayer...?)
2. What are ways that Faith United Methodist Church could be BETTER at shining our light OUTSIDE of the doors of our church?
 - Are we willing to be like the first Disciples and venture into the world and share the Good News?
 - What might be holding us back?

Prayers & Concerns

Celebrations...

Rev. Eric Iki, passed his Ordination interviews to be Ordained at AC in June (June 15 @1pm in Burbank; please let Church know if you would like to attend/carpool.)

Prayers for healing and wholeness...

Mutsuko Nishi (Henry's mom)

Claretta Foster

Jack Hamada

The Sasaki Family; Jordan Sasaki, Sally, Ken, & Jason

Jerry Osaka

Victoria Dela Torre

Diane & Destiny Ueda-Banda

Audrey Goto

Tak and Irene Ryono

Ralph Ichikawa's brother, Jim (Tio)

Alice Kajiya

Faye Toma

Jason's friend, Kaitlyn Sabedra

Glenn & Millie Shimizu

Faith Tanaka

Sam Kobayashi

Chic Miyake

Winnie Osaki

Postal Worker, Dexter

Alveena Fukuhara

Harry Lum

Kyle Ichikawa (Ralph's son)

Masako Akiyama

Maxine Butcher

Florence Uchida

Deron Tokishi (brother of Sheri Tong)

Fred Endo (father of Sharon Ann Endo)

Paul Mito

Pam Fink

Prayers for Grieving Families...

Sumi Maruya (memorial service: 5/17, 11am)

***Virginia Flood (memorial service, 5/25, 10am)**

***Preston Akiyama (husband of Masako, passed on 4/15/24)**

Dr. Ernesto Fontecha, (Gilbert Vinluan's cousin)

Shizue Nomiya, (Mother of Tash Nomiya, 4/10/24)

Kyoko Nakahara, (Kelly DeGracia's mom)

James Kawamoto

Nelson Mark (husband of Alice, father of Darrell, passed on 3/10/24)

*Frances Yonemori (Florence Uchida's sister, passed on 3/12/24)

Kurt Kuniyoshi (passed 3/xx/24)

Bing Duck Pang (father of Stanley, passed 3/11/24)

Bernice Kashiwai (mother of Kent/Nicole Morita-Kashiwai)

Lori Takayesu (Georgine Morita sister)

Pat Hiroshima (Harriet Tateyama's sister-in-law)

Takako Takao (mother of Jerry, passed 2/22/24)

Charles Kvitky (husband of Lily; passed week of 2/11/24)

Greg Kubo (passed away on 2/3/24)

Henry Uepi Isama'u (passed on 1/24/24)

Elaine Suzuki (Ralph's sister)

Gene LeFebvre (Andy's mentor and friend)

Rev. Margaret Finney

For our hurting world...

Japan Earthquake / Volcanic Eruption in Sakurajima (near Kagoshima)

People of the Holy Land

Families rebuilding after natural disasters

Election year

Covid (and for those who are sick, ailing, in need of God's love and healing)

The United Methodist Church)

And Know that He is God: Commission & Benediction

Come out! Jesus commands,

And calls us from the tombs of our existence into the brightness of a new day.

Come out! Jesus cries,

And unbinds us from the chains of our past.

Come out! Jesus calls,

And entices us into a world filled with grace and possibility.

So:

Go out!

Into a world that needs our life, our breath, our spirit!

Go out!

Into a world that needs the Spirit of God, carried on our lips and in our loving arms.

Go out!

Into the world to live as God's resurrected people!

Go out: and go on the breath of God's holy wind!

~ from *Come Out! On the Breath of God, Service Prayers for the fifth Sunday of Lent*, written by the Rev. Elizabeth Dilley. Posted on the United Church of Christ's Worship Ways website.

<http://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways/>