

Home Service for May 24, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

*We wait for your Spirit, O God. Stretch our imaginations that we may see your presence in every person.*

Pentecost Sunday

Call to Worship:

Listen! Do you hear a sound like the howling of a fierce wind? Come, Holy Spirit!  
Look! Can you see flames of fire? Come, Holy Spirit!  
Wait! Can you feel the power? The Holy Spirit is here!

Opening Prayer:

Send forth your Spirit, O God, and renew the face of the earth. Dwell among us, even though your presence will startle and unsettle us. Grant us your peace, we pray, as justice and love pour down upon the yearning earth. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy One, Divine Spirit, be with us now. It's easy to feel like our gifts and our talents aren't good enough for you. Help us see ourselves as part of a larger creation. While our gifts differ, each one is important, adding something wonderful to your world. Our gifts come from you, and they are what you want for us. Help us accept our own gifts. Enlarge our hearts, so that we may recognize and welcome others, each with differing gifts. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

*We are all baptized into one body. The Spirit blesses us all.*

Read Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

How many are your works, Lord!

In wisdom you made them all;  
the earth is full of your creatures.

<sup>25</sup> There is the sea, vast and spacious,  
teeming with creatures beyond number—  
living things both large and small.

<sup>26</sup> There the ships go to and fro,  
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.  
<sup>27</sup> All creatures look to you  
to give them their food at the proper time.  
<sup>28</sup> When you give it to them,  
they gather it up;  
when you open your hand,  
they are satisfied with good things.  
<sup>29</sup> When you hide your face,  
they are terrified;  
when you take away their breath,  
they die and return to the dust.  
<sup>30</sup> When you send your Spirit,  
they are created,  
and you renew the face of the ground.  
<sup>31</sup> May the glory of the Lord endure forever;  
may the Lord rejoice in his works—  
<sup>32</sup> he who looks at the earth, and it trembles,  
who touches the mountains, and they smoke.  
<sup>33</sup> I will sing to the Lord all my life;  
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.  
<sup>34</sup> May my meditation be pleasing to him,  
as I rejoice in the Lord.  
But may sinners vanish from the earth  
and the wicked be no more.  
Praise the Lord, my soul.  
Praise the Lord.<sup>†</sup>

Prayers of the People:

*Almighty God, Creator, Father of our Lord Jesus: We glorify you today for the gift and power of your Spirit. We recall with awe how your Spirit brooded over the primeval chaos, how carefully you fashioned the world with all its wonders out of that chaos, how lovingly you imprinted us with your own image. We praise you for the spectacular outpouring of your Spirit at the first Pentecost and for the launching of your Son's church in power and miraculous unity. We magnify your holy name for numberless, unspectacular Pentecosts in the life of the church through the centuries, and in the lives of Christian men and women who felt a surge of power when they needed it most for witness: in prison or in the arena, before a scoffing crowd or a lynch mob. We thank you, righteous God, for your*

*Spirit's might in convicting us of sin again and again, when we become smug, self-righteous, lazy, callous, holier-than-thou. We praise you for your Spirit's skill in reminding us that self-interest often underlies our seemingly finest deeds. We give you thanks for the mirror of your Spirit, in which we see ourselves not as others see us but, far more disturbingly, as you see us. We glorify you, merciful God, for your Spirit's ministry of comfort. We pray that friends and loved ones of whose present illness or other need we know, as well as others of whose needs we may be unaware, may experience the reassuring, healing presence of your Spirit; and that those whose life is nearing its end may find strength and renewal of faith in your Spirit's unshaken witness to that life which, for Christians, begins at death. Gracious God, let this day and this service become a personal Pentecost for many of us, Renew the church beginning with us; with each of us and with all of us. And teach us through your Spirit how to proclaim the Good News of your faithfulness and love in new and effective ways. We pray in the name of him to whom your Spirit bears witness, the Lord of Pentecost, the Lord of the church, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues<sup>[a]</sup> as the Spirit enabled them. <sup>5</sup> Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. <sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup> (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the

wonders of God in our own tongues!”<sup>12</sup> Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

<sup>13</sup> Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. <sup>15</sup> These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> “In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.

<sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the heavens above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

<sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood  
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls  
on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

<sup>7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. <sup>8</sup> To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,<sup>[a]</sup> and to still another the interpretation of

tongues.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>11</sup> All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by<sup>[c]</sup> one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 7:37-39

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>39</sup> By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Message

There has been a debate among Biblical scholars as to just when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit actually occurred. According to the Gospel of John, it happened on Easter evening, when our risen Lord first appeared to his disciples as they were gathered in the upper room behind locked doors, fearing for their lives. When Jesus said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” But our lesson from Acts, written by Luke, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred forty-nine days later, on the Jewish festival of Pentecost. Again, the disciples were huddled together in one place, perhaps still fearing for their lives, certainly still trying to understand their experience of Christ’s death and resurrection, when the Spirit of God came upon them.

Some might question Luke’s dramatic description of the rush of a mighty wind and the divided tongues of fire resting on each disciple, or the actual date that the gift of God’s Holy Spirit was given, something profound took place that enabled that frightened group of people to begin to comprehend God’s gift of redemption in Christ’s death and resurrection, something which empowered them to unbolt the doors behind which they hid, and go out into the street to proclaim the Gospel. Just think of the irony, the reversal of expectation that the Holy Spirit brought into the life of Peter. Here was a man, who, on the night our Lord was betrayed and arrested, was so afraid for his own life, that he denied three times that he even knew Jesus. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, this same man who had cowered in fear for his own life, became the first person to publicly proclaim that

through Christ's death and resurrection, God had acted to redeem the world from sin and death. He preached the first Christian sermon, and as a result of the inspiration he received, the Christian church was born.

Today we celebrate God's gift of his Spirit and the birth of the Christian church. Our lesson for today is focused on the gift of God's Spirit; from our Lord's promise that the Spirit would comfort, lead and empower his disciples following his return to the Father and how our Lord's promise came to be fulfilled in the lives of his disciples.

Too often, as we read lessons from Scripture, we read them as something that took place thousands of years ago. And in fact, Christ's life, death and resurrection was a life lived in history, which can be historically dated, an event upon which we look back in time and remember as unique. But the gift of the Holy Spirit is not an event that can be relegated to the annuals of history. According to one of the commentaries that I read: "Pentecost is a festival of the Gospel, for the giving of the Holy Spirit is not confined to one time, one place, or one group of people. God continues to pour out his Spirit upon believers in and through the word and the sacraments, and sometimes in ways that are stranger than the story that Luke relates in our lesson from Acts." How true this is! The fact that the church has been empowered to proclaim the message of God's redemption and saving grace in Christ's death and resurrection ever since Peter's first sermon, is witness to the ongoing presence of God's Spirit still at work among us.

I think that people are always looking to improve, to change their lives for the better. I also feel that God is interested in change, too. He is interested in changing us. Today is Pentecost Sunday, and as we take a look at what happened on Pentecost many years ago, we see that God changed many people's lives. And as we learn about these things, we will see that God is also interested in changing each of us, there are certain things about us that God wants to change. And how does God plan to do that? To find the answers we are to study God's Word.

Two major changes took place on Pentecost. Change number one was what happened to the disciples. As you can remember that the disciples believed in Jesus as their Savior, but they were still very confused about all kinds of different things. They were confused, and as a result, they were timid. They were not confident about sharing the Gospel with others. But then Pentecost came. No longer were the disciples confused. Now they understood the plan of salvation completely. No longer were they timid. Now, they were confident, speaking publicly. Look at Peter, two months earlier he was so afraid that he denied Jesus three times. Now he

was speaking to the crowd with confidence and understanding that he had never had before.

The second change that I feel was more spectacular than what happened to the disciples. After Peter preached his sermon on that first Pentecost, 3000 people came to faith and were baptized. We do know that Jerusalem was packed with people, because of the Festival of Pentecost. Back then, Pentecost was an agricultural festival, for God had told the Jews to gather in Jerusalem 50 days after Passover to celebrate the harvest. Jews from all over the Roman empire came. 3000 of them who were not Christians, who did not believe in Jesus Christ, were changed that day. Their whole way of looking at God, at themselves, at the world, at eternal life, everything had changed. The Holy Spirit was the one who converted those 3000 people that day. Now those people knew how to get to heaven. Now they knew that they were at peace with God. Now they knew that Jesus was their Savior.

If Pentecost can be summed up in one word, and I would say that word is change. We see the change that took place in the disciples, and the change that took place in those 3000 people. Our world today needs change. But how? On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came directly to those disciples. Today, he could do that if he wanted to, but in the Bible, he tells us that he works in a different way. He no longer comes with the loud sound of a wind, or with what looks like tongues of fire, or with the ability to speak in foreign languages. That was a one-time event.

Today, the Holy Spirit comes to us through the quiet, humble preaching or reading of the Word. On the surface, it does not look like anything spectacular. But on the inside of us, all kinds of changes are taking place. And when we combine the Word with the sacraments, on the surface, it does not look like anything spectacular. But we know from what God tells us in his Word that in the sacraments, the Holy Spirit changes a person, causes a person, to believe in Christ. He strengthens our faith, he increases our love for Christ and our love for one another.

In fact, I can stand before you today in testimony to the power of God's Spirit. After serving you as your pastor, each Sunday I am still amazed that I am standing here, in a pulpit. As my mother would say, my childhood would certainly not have led her to believe that I would be standing before you today, proclaiming God's word. Let it suffice to say that I gave her my share of worries through my journey of life. Even when I think back upon the years I have served as your pastor, I can only credit the power of God's Spirit for seeing me through some difficult times, and for helping me to grow, not only as a pastor, but also through the grace of God, to accept his forgiveness and to grow in faith. As I have continued to experience

God's Spirit at work in my life, I can say that the day I first step up to the pulpit was the beginning of a journey in which God's Spirit would lead me and mold me into become a pastor. And that process, I pray, is still ongoing. I have also witnessed how the power of God's Spirit has touched the lives of many persons through the sacraments. I do not believe that it is something magical about a piece of bread and a sip of grape juice that conveys this calming peace of God, but the power of God's Spirit that brings to reality the promise of our crucified and risen Lord to be present to us through his meal. It is the Spirit that opens our hearts to embrace God's grace in the sacraments. I honestly believe that God's Spirit will be poured out upon the person, as they receive the sacrament of baptism, in which God embraces each as his own, redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Again, I do not believe that there is anything magical about the water that will be poured over their head that accomplishes this gift of God's Spirit, but with the water, accompanied by the word and promise of our risen Lord, God's Spirit will embrace them, and unite them to the family of Christ's church.

This is what the Holy Spirit does. He did that in a miraculous, unusual way on that first Pentecost. Today, he does it as you spend time in the Word, as you see a baptism, as you partake in the Lord's Supper; that is how the Holy Spirit changes people, changes you, turning you more and more into the Christian that God has made you to be.

I have been asked to answer the question: Why is red the color of the festival of Pentecost? There are all kinds of reasons. Red reminds us, of course, of Jesus' blood, which he shed as a payment for our sins. Red also reminds us of what looked like tongues of fire on the disciples' heads. Red reminds us of the invisible fire of faith that is burning inside of us, the gift that the Holy Spirit has given to us. If you were to give the Holy Spirit a color, maybe the best color to describe him would be red, the color of fire. Every time you come into contact with the Word and Sacrament, fire enters your heart, and burns away that selfishness and confusion. That fire becomes the fire of faith, a fire which trusts and loves Jesus Christ as Savior. If you could sum up Pentecost in one word, that one word would be change. May the Holy Spirit continue to work in you, to change you, to fan into flame the fire that is in each one of you. Amen.

Benediction:

*Family of God, go now in the blessing of the Spirit who inspires you to seek God's truth, empowers you to share God's love with empathy and compassion, and emboldens you to live in the freedom of the Spirit who binds us to God and one another that we may be truly free. Amen.*