

and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor. 12:4–7)

With thanksgiving for all God’s many gifts to us, let us manifest the Spirit’s gifts we’ve been given by making an offering of our life and labor for the good of all.

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving for Communion

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is fitting that we praise you, Creator God,

For you are the breath of life that fills all creatures.

Your Spirit moves over the face of the deep, calling
unto deep,

And new life in all its glorious diversity springs forth.

When we choose to live life on our own,

Conforming our created uniqueness to cultural trends,

You call us back to ourselves in communion with you.

Keeping your eternal promises

Even when we break covenant with you.

So our lips praise you,

Joining our voices with the angels, apostles, and all
of creation,

Who forever sing to the glory of your holy name:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna! Hosanna!

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed are you, our Lord Jesus Christ,
for coming to baptize us in Holy Spirit,
mingling the dust of our lives
with your baptismal waters
so that we could be shaped to your purpose
as vessels of divine blessing.

As life and truth, you teach us your Way,

uniting all our differences

in your body on a cross

of your eternal self-giving for a hurting world.

In awe of your love that goes to the depths of

our degradation

to call us into salvation,

we offer ourselves to you in this meal

to live out with thanksgiving the mystery of faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit once more among us,

that this bread may be for us divine nourishment

and this cup, the cup of salvation’s joy,

uniting us in worshipful service to you

as we minister to others through Christ,

with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

All honor and blessing and dominion are yours,

Almighty God,

Now and forevermore.

Amen.

Words of Institution

Communion

Prayer after Communion: You have set your hands upon us in the anointing of Holy Spirit, feeding us as your children upon the goodness of your grace. Thank you, Lord. Thank you! May we rise now in your Spirit to live out your care for all the world with whatever gifts you have given us so that many different people might come to understand your grace through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

Charge and Blessing: Go forth now as people of Holy Spirit to speak God’s good life into the death valleys of this world, trusting in the power of God who is always at work to shape the new creation. And now may Christ’s Spirit anoint you anew with the understanding that the hand of God keeps you now and forevermore. Amen.

*Written by Teresa Stricklen, Associate for Worship,
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were based upon an earlier Pentecost Offering prayer by
David Gambrell.*



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Pentecost Offering
for Children at Risk, Youth, and Young Adults

Pentecost Offering Worship Resources

Sunday, May 31, 2009

Lectionary Texts: Acts 2:1–21 or Ezek. 37:1–14

Psalm 104:24–35, 35b

Romans 8:22–27 or Acts 2:1–21

John 15:26–27, 16:4b–15

A word about alternative readings in the lectionary:

During the Easter season, a reading from Acts often replaces the lesson from the Hebrew Bible as the First Reading. For Pentecost, alternative readings are provided for congregations that prefer to use an Old Testament text for the First Reading. If the Ezekiel passage is used, read Acts 2 instead of Romans. Acts 2 is used to emphasize that it is the Spirit who calls us to worship, so you could read both the Ezekiel and Romans passages.

Call to Worship (Acts 2:1–18, 21)

[Readers One and Two are to be positioned separately in a divided chancel (behind lectern and pulpit, or whatever the equivalent is in your setting). Readers Three and Four and those speaking in other languages are to be positioned at random throughout the congregation, popping up to stand and deliver their part and sit back down once they are finished. Reader Five is to stand from amid the congregation, begin speaking, and walk up to the center of the chancel area (behind the table, if possible), speaking on the way.]

Reader One: When the day of Pentecost had come, the followers of Jesus were all in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind as it filled the house where they were.

[At “suddenly,” have people burst through all sanctuary doors at the same time with trailing cloths of red, yellow, orange, moving/dancing in a rush through the assembly, carefully. Some may have smaller, handkerchief-size pieces of the same fabric and go through the congregation waving them over people’s heads in a whipping or quivering way.]

And there appeared tongues like fire over each of them.

[Once the “fiery anointing” is over, place the long cloths at the front of the church for later use in the children’s sermon.]

Create a fiery bouquet with them to adorn the chancel area by gathering one end of each cloth together and draping the other ends so that they cascade down and out. The smaller cloths (tongues of fire) can be tossed randomly as the dancers move out of the sanctuary and/or return to their seats. Arrange in advance to have several people in the congregation praying/praising God in different languages, all at the same time, at the beginning of the next line. The effect should be that of a growing din that slowly subsides so we can hear the next part of the story. This should last about 30 seconds.]

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Reader Two: Now at Jerusalem there were dwelling Jews, devout people, out of every nation under heaven. The noise drew them all together into a multitude that was confounded because everyone heard the disciples speaking in her or his own language! And they were all amazed.

Reader Three: Aren’t these people Galileans? How is it that we, people from all over the world, hear them speaking about the wonderful works of God in our own languages?

Reader Four: Ah, they’re drunk!

Reader Five: No! These folks aren’t drunk! No, this is what the prophet Joel talked about. The Lord says it shall come to pass that “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old shall dream dreams, and your young shall see visions.” On my servants, both male and female, I will pour out my Spirit and they shall preach.¹ The apostle Paul said, And it shall come to pass that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.²

¹ Based on Joel 2:28–29

² Based on Romans 10:13

Opening Prayer: God of all ages, you keep promises to never leave us nor forsake us. When we experience your absence, you send the Holy Spirit to abide with us. You empower us with new life, forming us into your people. As you did with your disciples long ago, you have blown us together here today in the Holy Spirit. Though we come from many different places, you have united us to live in light of the good news that you are not only alive, but that you have come to abide with us so that we might forever abide in you. Thank you, Lord, for keeping your promises to all generations and peoples. Come, now, to unite us in praise and prayer to the glory of your holy name, through Christ we pray. Amen.

[Follow this with a hymn that calls upon God's Spirit, such as "Come, O Holy Spirit, Come" (Wa Wa Wa Emimimo), Sing the Faith, #2124.]

Confession of Sin: You overpower us in the Holy Spirit, Lord, in order to make us one with you. Instead of rushing to meet your winds of renewal, we stay inside our comfort groups, refusing to mingle with people we don't understand. We don't trust your Spirit to unite us in knowledge of you. Instead, we lead selfish lives, arguing our own viewpoints till we are deaf to the cries of your children in need. Save us, O Lord. Without your grace, we die. With your holy breath, speak new life into our bleached-bones sin. Stir up the embers of our compassion that we might rise to proclaim your love for all people, trusting in an understanding that only you can bring. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

Children's Sermon: *[Take the cloths that were used in the call to worship and hold them all together at one end like a bouquet. Ask the children to each pick up one of the other ends. Continuing to hold onto your bouquet of ends, have the children then move around while holding onto their end of the cloth. They can weave in and out, over and under others' cloths. Encourage them to enjoy this activity by greeting one another as they pass with an exaggerated "Hello!" which you will demonstrate in happy silliness as you, too, move through the group. When you're all sufficiently tangled up, have them drop their cloths and sit where they are with the fabric draped all around as it had been. Then ask:]*

We used these cloths once before this morning. Do you remember how? What did they represent? The Holy Spirit is God moving among us to unite us to one another. We are all connected in God's Holy Spirit. And when we pass the peace of Christ to one another, we are not only saying hello

to people and blessing them with Christ's peace, but we're also recognizing God's Spirit within them. We're moving in the Holy Spirit that unites us with one another. Even if we don't know them well, we're all tangled up with them in God's Holy Spirit. That's why we take up offerings like today's Pentecost Offering. We care for others even if we haven't met them because we are connected to one another in God's Holy Spirit. So if someone is hurting, we all hurt: like when I tugged on one end of my cloth and the person holding the other end felt it. But I also feel better when I make someone else feel better, because . . . repeat after me: "We are all connected in God's Holy Spirit!"

Sermon Starter: Ezekiel 37 places the pastor in a valley of dry bones, in the aftermath of a great war in which several of the people of God were lost. All that is left is a tangle of dry bones. Perhaps the people in the early church felt like they were in the same place after Jesus' execution. Yes, they were experiencing the resurrection reality of Christ, meeting together and hoping in the future in obedience to his word, but surely some were discouraged, trembling in fear, thinking the Jesus movement was lost in the great war machine of the Roman empire. Even though they had hope in Christ's promise, they were vague on the details. Indeed, like the rest of creation, they were groaning in the birth pangs of God's new creation being delivered through Christ crucified. They were in the valley of discouragement, a valley of dry bones.

[After opening with this idea, the preacher can move into our own contemporary experiences of being in the valley of dry bones by describing in detail what it's like to lose a loved one and to be unemployed with no job prospects. Then, the preacher could present the story of a child who lives in death's valley every day, a child who will be helped by the Pentecost Offering: one of the many stories of children who are victims of poverty, abuse, neglect, environmental disaster, and the sin of child slavery and sexual trafficking. Tell the life story of such a child, whom you will name, painting the child's life with desolate details so that we can concede that life indeed does look like so much death sometimes, whether from childhood trauma, unemployment, or the desolations of grief. The preacher can ask:]

But you know what? As we continue to gather for prayer and preaching and the breaking of bread, God's Word breathes new life onto us, so that like the rush of a mighty wind that moved over the face of the waters at the beginning of the world, a new reality emerges.

Where there had been confused fear, now there are boldness and understanding. Where there were only broken, dry fragments, a living presence emerges as the people of God arise to preach the good news that our God lives and abides with us in Holy Spirit! And so it is. Our God lives on through the people of God made alive in the Spirit of Christ.

[While many preachers describe this from a past Pentecost point of view, why not try to describe how this happens to us through the church yet today using specific examples?]

We now live in the abiding gift of God's Spirit. That which is promised is now ours. We are comforted when we are desolate with a peace that passes understanding. When we can't even pray, the Spirit prays for us and then helps us to remember the promise that God will never leave us or forsake us. God's abiding Spirit helps us abide and even thrive in the most difficult of circumstances, ministering to us through the resurrection people of God.

[Tell a story now of a child thriving through the help of the church—perhaps a story of a grief-stricken widow(er) or parent who has lost a child—who reached out to help a child through their church. That friendship and/or monetary aid of the adult not only helped the child endure a horrible situation; it helped the child live a more abundant life. Such is the power of the Spirit of the living God, Jesus Christ.]

Prayers of the People

[The following may also be used as a bidding prayer where people speak their individual prayers in the silence of each section.]

Let us pray for the needs of the church, the world, and all peoples, saying, Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

For this congregation of God's people with all its diversities in its common mission in Christ's name. {Silence} Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

For the whole church of Jesus Christ, born at Pentecost, and for all those who offer their lives in Christ's service. {Silence} Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

For the healing of this fragile planet in all its many beauties, that our children may know of your good gift of creation for generations to come. {Silence} Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

For the leaders and people of this and every nation, that your wisdom, justice, and peace might prevail for the good of all. {Silence} Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

For all who suffer through poverty, injustice, and imprisonment to forces beyond their control. {Silence} Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

For those who are the most vulnerable of your creatures, especially for children caught up in war, abuse, and neglect, that your Spirit might overshadow them with your comfort and peace. {Silence} Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

For the sick, the sorrowful, the lonely, the dying; especially for those who have no hands to guide or comfort them. {Silence} Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

For the concerns that lay heavy on our heart, we give them now into your keeping. {Silence} Lord, send forth your Spirit

and renew the face of the earth.

O Lord, our Teacher, further these our prayers in accord with your purpose for the salvation of the world. Open our eyes to those in need as we live out these prayers, that our hands might be your hands reaching out to reshape the world in ways that can better hold your redemptive healing and justice for all peoples. This we pray through Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to your great glory.

Amen.

Offering

"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;