



Westminster Presbyterian Church
Eugene, Oregon
“At Home” Worship
May 31, 2020

Please Remember in Your Prayers:

Eileen Sanders and her family upon Bob's death.

Jennifer and Mark Beudert upon the death of their daughter,
Sarah (Mark Beudert was a former music director at WPC)

*(if you have a prayer request you would like added to
the At- Home Worship service,
please email Brooke office@wpceugene.org.)*

Gathering Around God's Word

*If you are worshipping with another family member or with
children, you are invited to have different voices share and
read the various parts of the service.*

Call to Worship

Come to Jesus, you who are thirsty!

Alleluia!

Drink deeply of the Holy Spirit.

Alleluia!

**Let your heart overflow with the living water that
renews the face of the earth.**

Alleluia! Thanks be to God!

Opening Hymn

Spirit of the Living God

288

Call to Confession

Let us approach God with our prayers of confession. Know that God hears us and reaches out in love to us as we repent.

Prayer of Confession

God of new creation, we confess that we have failed to trust your bountiful goodness. By the power of the Holy Spirit you brought forth the earth and its creatures in abundance. Yet, we hoard earth's resources and refuse to share your gifts. We dishonor your generosity by withholding our charity to those in need. We betray your kindness by dealing harshly with our enemies. We disregard your compassion by severely judging the sins of others. Forgive us. By the power of your Holy Spirit renew our hearts and free us from sins that we may enjoy the fullness of your blessing upon all creation. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God offers forgiveness of our sins and the grace of repentance. Accept God's grace, repent of your sin, and be restored to abundant life.

The Word

Prayer for Illumination

Come Holy Spirit, our helper and advocate: open our hearts and minds this day, entice us with your presence. Speak to us with a word of life—

a message that we may share with others as we seek to live Christ's love in the world. All this we ask in the name of God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Reading: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

24 O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. 25

Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. 26 There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. 27 These all look to you to give them their food in due season; 28 when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. 29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. 30 When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

31 May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works— 32 who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.

33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.

35b Bless the Lord, O my soul. Praise the Lord!

New Testament Reading: Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue

rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

I am going to sound like a broken record because I know through the course of this time of worshipping apart, I have said again and again how this is not the sermon I wanted to write. Well, this week, this is especially true and if I do not confess my feelings today, well, then I would be dishonest to myself, to you, and most importantly to God. In fact, if I am completely honest, I don't feel much like writing anything. I am wrestling with many feelings and thoughts.

You see today I am not only a little sad, but I am also a little angry. My anger and sadness are not really directed at anyone in particular, but just rather the situation in which we are currently living. And there is guilt intertwined with that because I realize that so many are struggling and living in the shadows of illness, fear, violence, scarcity, etc. I don't want to sound like a complainer, but I also think it is important to be honest and share where I am today.

Today is Pentecost, the day we celebrate and remember the gift of God's Spirit to the church and the Spirit's continual work in our world today. I am most upset today because it was supposed to be a special Pentecost—one where I think all of us who would have gathered together in the sanctuary would have left saying: truly the Spirit of God is in this place. It was set to be a day of rejoicing in baptism and in confirmation. Here at WPC, we haven't had a confirmation class for a while so to be traveling through a year of confirmation with 16 amazing young people was a blessing in and of itself—one that had *me* continually saying: surely the Spirit of God is in this place! And I was so excited to share that with the whole worshipping community. It was to be the ultimate celebration of the Spirit at work in the lives of absolutely fantastic youth, their families, and all of you— their church family.

Now the good news is that these baptisms and confirmations WILL happen, but it just will not be in the timing that we planned. Once the way be clear and we can gather all in one place again together, we will have a joyous celebration of faith, promise, and love that has been shown to us in Christ. It WILL happen, but I am still grieving the fact that it is NOT happening today.

Pentecost has always been one of those special Sundays in the church. For one, we ministers get to wear our red stoles and red is one of my favorite colors. Pentecost is really the only day we wear our red stoles unless we are participating in an ordination/installation service. We encourage every worshipper to wear red on this Sunday and it is truly a neat experience to see a sea of red in the sanctuary. The red that adorns our sanctuary and our pastoral robes is a vibrant, bold color that serves as a visual reminder to us of the boldness of the Spirit. Pentecost always seems joyful and exuberant—a time that we often refer to as the birthday of the church. This festive atmosphere often helps jar our worship back into a living, active experience rather than a passive one. Because we all know that sometimes we become rote in our worship—saying the words or singing the hymns but not really living them. But, I always feel that the worship on Sundays like Pentecost, Palm Sunday, Easter and Christmas call us out of the doldrums and into more active and alive worship. So it is hard not to be together on this particular day for a myriad of reasons.

Our worship in the traditional sense of gathering together has been disrupted for the past 12 weeks and we do not have a clear end to this disruption. I have been thinking about disruptions as of late which isn't too hard considering all of us can point to at least one disruption or another these past 3 months. Disruptions interrupt and often in ways we do not plan for. A disruption—that is exactly what the Spirit was on that first Pentecost.

They—the disciples— were all gathered together in one place. Perhaps they, like us were waiting and hoping, praying and listening, trusting in God's presence. When **BAM**, the Spirit entered, not in a still, small voice, but with the sound of a violent wind. This wasn't a quiet tropical breeze—the sound was of a *violent* wind. I have read this passage so many times, but for some reason this time the word violent really stood out to me this week. I lived much of my life in tornado country in both Texas and Tennessee and unfortunately have had one too many close calls with tornadoes touching down within blocks of me. One tornado that actually hit my elementary school while I was in it. I was 9 and I will **NEVER** forget the sound or feeling of that wind. It is a roar that can be best described as standing right next to a train—a train on steroids. It is a sound that reverberates deep within your body and one you will not forget.

That is a violent wind to me. It had me start to think that if I were at that first Pentecost I may have ducked into my tornado drill position—curled up in a tight ball with my hands folded over my neck and head, with my eyes tightly shut, willing and praying for it all to be over. The Spirit entered with a roar, causing a disruption and probably much confusion. In fact, poor Peter had to raise his voice just to be heard.

Of course the other thing we think about on Pentecost is the fact that all the people started to speak in their native languages, but everyone was able to understand. It was a communal experience—the Spirit was there—uniting them in many ways—giving them a glimpse into the awesome power of God. In the Biblical text, we are reminded that God's Spirit is poured out for all people not just a select few. God's Spirit is poured out for you!

So what about us? If we cannot be together in the sanctuary this morning, where is God's Spirit in 2020? Is God's Spirit really with us even when we are all apart? Or are we too busy tucked into our tornado drill position

praying and willing the Spirit to just please leave us alone, thank you very much?

Look around you. My guess is that your “church” has been looking quite different these past few months—my hope is that you have been able to create some sacred space and time in which you can encounter God. It may not be what your heart desires, but I can assure you that the Spirit of God is there with you whether you are worshipping alone, with your family, with your pets, in your PJs, outside, gathered around your breakfast table or on your couch. Surely the Spirit is in this place!

Thankfully, the Spirit is probably not showing up in a *violent* wind today. But that does not mean that the Spirit is not here. Pentecost Sunday gives us the time and space to celebrate the Spirit everywhere and in everyone! Take a moment and think on these things.

Over these past few weeks, where have you encountered God’s Spirit?

Has God’s Spirit disrupted your life—calling you out of your comfort zone, pushing you in new directions, giving you visions and dreams?

Our closing hymn today is one of my favorites—*Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness*. The refrain has always spoken to me:

Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness calling and free. Spirit, spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.

Allow the Spirit to call you and pull you out of your comfort zone—sustaining you and pushing you as you seek to follow Christ in your life. Keep meditating on what the Spirit is doing in your life—pray about it—

reflect on it—act on it. Then, when we are all together in one place again, we will continue to celebrate the workings of the Spirit everywhere and in everyone. There is so much need and hurt in our world, but with the Spirit in charge, who knows where the church will go and what the church will do if we will only listen. Surely the Spirit is in this place—wherever we may be. Amen.

Responding to God's Word

Affirmation of Faith— From A Brief Statement of Faith

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and
neighbor, and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the Church. The same
Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the
bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls
women and men to all ministries of the church.
In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us
courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among
all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask
idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices
of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for
justice, freedom, and peace.
In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives, even as we watch
for God's new heaven and new earth, praying,
"Come, Lord Jesus!"

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Let us unite our hearts and minds in prayer for our world, saying, Almighty God, hear our prayer.

For the church throughout the world, Almighty God, **hear our prayer.** Inspire the sons and daughters of your church for prophetic witness to your truth, and upon old and young give clarity of vision to acknowledge your saving power in our world.

For nations of the world and its leaders, especially as they make decisions about the COVID-19 Pandemic, Almighty God, **hear our prayer.** Overcome the babble of misunderstanding among each other and the nations, and let all people hear in their own language and recognize in their own culture your unifying message of love and concern for each other.

For people everywhere who live in fear because of hate, especially racist violence, Almighty God, **hear our prayer.** For all those who have unjustly been accused, beaten and killed, O God, hear our cries. For cities and communities facing looting and violence... may we seek your peace. Help us to be agents of love, change and action confronting injustices, working for good, and welcoming everyone in your name.

For planet Earth, our home, Almighty God, **hear our prayer.** By your Spirit, renew the earth, make us good stewards of its resources, and teach us to enjoy its abundance rightly.

For all those in need of healing, Almighty God, **hear our prayer.** Send your healing Spirit upon those who are sick in body or mind, and restore them to the joy of your salvation.

For our children, Almighty God, hear our prayer. Bless our children, protect them from danger, and help parents and caregivers nurture them so that they may mature in wisdom and grow in grace.

For our enemies, Almighty God, hear our prayer. Bless our enemies and show us how we may do good to them for the sake of Jesus Christ.

In your mercy, Almighty God, hear our prayers. According to your wisdom, provide all that we need; by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray:

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sending of God's Word

Closing Hymn: *Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness* #291

Charge and Benediction

May the grace of God, bless you with peace. May the love of Christ, sustain you in joy. May the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with courage, this day and forevermore. Go in peace. Amen.