

New Hope Lutheran Church

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May 31, 2020

Pentecost Sunday

**ALL EVENTS FOR THE COMING
WEEK HAVE BEEN CANCELLED**

Please remember to send in your offering.

*We now have a **donate button** on our web site nhlc.ca*

*The office is closed, but phone messages, email and mail
are being checked regularly.*

IN OUR PRAYERS

Aline, Fred, Pentti, Esme, Martha, Derek, Maria and Kai.

Prayer of the Day

O God, on this day you open the hearts of your faithful people by sending into us your Holy Spirit. Direct us by the light of that Spirit, that we may have a right judgment in all things, and rejoice at all times in your peace. We pray this through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with your and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading Acts 2:1 – 21

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. **5** Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? **9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" **13** Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." **14** 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. **15** These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by 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 men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. **18** Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. **19** I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. **20** The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. **21** And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Psalm 104:24 – 34

24 How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. **25** There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small. **26** There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. **27** All

creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. **28** When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. **29** When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. **30** When you send 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** he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke. **33** I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. **34** May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.

Second Reading 1 Corinthians 12:3 – 13

3 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. **4** There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. **5** There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. **6** There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. **7** Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. **8** To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, **10** to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. **11** All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. **12** Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For we were all baptized by 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.

Gospel John 20:19 – 23

1 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when

they saw the Lord. **21** Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” **22** And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

May 31, 2020 – Pentecost Sunday “Playing With Fire”

Today, being Pentecost, we mark one of the great celebrations of the church, the church’s *birthday* it’s often called. But today we don’t just celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the original followers of Jesus, we also celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit in our own lives, and we may want to ask ourselves, “*What does that mean to us?*”

Just so you know, Pentecost is not just a Christian festival, even though we do celebrate our own aspect of it. The original celebration, is a Jewish custom, one held 50 days after Passover, and the Jewish Pentecost celebrates another great event for all of God’s people: the celebration of the giving of the 10 commandments. So today we celebrate things that God has given to us, things that bring us closer to God, things that actually enrich our lives as well as the lives of others.

And – perhaps quite surprisingly - the result of that is not always what we think it should be. Did you notice the comments in our 1st lesson regarding drunkenness? To the casual observer, this was the result of the Holy Spirit. In more religious language, we might consider those folks in some sort of ecstasy, an overwhelming heavenly experience.

If that’s the case, why is it that quite often we Christians today think of the Holy Spirit as a lot less exciting, perhaps giving us only gentle nudges to guide us? Don’t we usually see the Holy Spirit as gently guiding our thoughts and minds, perhaps inspiring us with something that should be done, or ways to get ourselves out of bad situations? Let’s face it, how often do we think of the Holy Spirit in our lives as timid and tentative – and so we may react that way ourselves?

And yet, according to our lesson from Acts, the day of Pentecost was quite different; one of the things that happened on that original day of Pentecost was that flames were seen on the heads of all who were filled with the Holy Spirit! While it was considered a good thing at the time (according to the writer

of Acts anyway), were that to happen in the presence of each other, one is tempted to feel that some would come at us with a bucket of water if not a fire extinguisher. Probably not the image God had in mind when he sent the Holy Spirit on that day.

Fire is a funny thing though. If you light up a lighter all we get is a tiny flame. It doesn’t seem to be all that threatening to our lives. And a child might think that “*it’s so tiny, so cute, what harm can it possibly do?*” I think we are all quite aware of how a little flame can become something that is right out of control. In the early church that’s what appears to have happened with the flame of the Holy Spirit – a fire was lit and it burned like crazy, affecting all kinds of people; huge numbers of people. That fire raged so hard and for so long that one could say we still warm our souls by the heat of those coals.

Something we might ask ourselves today though is; “*whatever happened to that hot fire of the Holy Spirit burning within people?*” It just doesn’t seem to be the same anymore. For most, all we appear to be left with are the glow of coals with the occasional flare up here and there. How come the fire doesn’t seem to burn hotter? What’s the hold up?

In considering why we might not have such a zealous fire burning in us as Christians, one thing that came to mind is our own fear of playing with fire. Hearing about what happened to some of those people in the scriptures, do we really want the Holy Spirit present in our lives with such intensity? It has after all, gotten some people to totally change their lives and lifestyles, giving up things that most others treasure. Some people were affected in ways that caused others to look down upon them; sometimes to the point that believers even went to prison. It affected more than a few in that they gave up their lives because of the dedication this Holy Spirit inspired in them. Is that what we’re after? Don’t kid yourself, from the point of many people, desiring such a strong presence of the Holy Spirit in your life can be like playing with fire.

Something else I’ve noticed is that it seems that the Holy Spirit comes in various strengths. For the most part, the Holy Spirit is seen as the power by which people first come to believe in God – because when we believe in God, we start to look at the world differently than those who don’t believe in God. The world isn’t just about us anymore when we begin to allow the Holy Spirit to really go to work in our lives. Our lives change to more of a focus on the well being of others. As the

Spirit strengthens, we become more on fire for the sake of others.

I should note that playing with the Holy Spirit can be seen as a dangerous thing for those who see only the ways of the world. It can mean doing things that might have people thinking we have been drinking - things like: forgiving others. Things like helping others who didn’t even ask us for help. Things like putting ourselves out there speaking on behalf of others; perhaps even getting somewhat burned in the process. It doesn’t really matter as long as others are being helped in their worldly distress. That’s the kind of fire we Christians are playing with.

Today then, is a good day to remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit isn’t just about nudging us in the right directions in life, or comforting us when times are tough. It’s about playing with fire – but a good fire. A flame that “fires us up” to be passionate about the well being of others, and to do something about it. It’s a fire that burns within, taking us away from the ordinariness of the world, and setting us apart to the point where it could get so out of control that others will notice. It’s about becoming zealous for God - and loving it.

The Holy Spirit longs to guide each of us in certain ways to use the kinds of gifts we heard about in our 2nd lesson. And the one thing that usually holds us back is our fear of playing with such fire. It’s not such a bad thing though because through the use of our gifts, we gain a real passion for life and for the lives of others. In the days to come then, think about where the Spirit might be guiding you, where the Spirit is nudging you to grow in your faith – and in your life. Amen.

Prayers

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

We call on your spirit of unity, giving thanks for our different vocations. Activate and utilize the diverse gifts present in your church, that they reveal your love for all.

We call on your spirit of life, present in air, wind, humidity, storms and oxygen, breathing energy into all things. Heal with your breath the whole creation, especially those who struggle to breathe in any way.

We call on your spirit of righteousness. Whenever we as a people are divided, unite us. Give each one of us a heart for justice and empathy, and help us to see opportunities presented to us.

We call on your spirit of healing. Bless nurses, doctors, mid-wives, chaplains, paramedics, counselors, personal support workers, and hospice workers as they care for those in need. We pray for all who long for comfort and healing.

We call on your spirit of friendship. Give us a spirit of welcome to those we meet in so many different ways. Surprise us daily with unexpected grace, that we may rejoice in every blessing you send.

We call on your spirit of hope. As you have led your saints in all times and places, stir in us the desire to follow their example, leading us from death to new life in you.

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**