

**WILLITS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
WORSHIP GUIDE  
May 19, 2024**

*The Bible is true, and some of it actually happened.*

Marcus Borg

**WELCOME TO WORSHIP**

**Bringing in the Light    Halle, Halle, Hallelujah**

**Frankie J**

**CENTERING WORDS: Leader**

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP:            L is the leader    P is the people**

(L) In rushing wind and tongues of fire...

**(P) the Church is born.**

(L) In courage found and faith renewed...

**(P) the Church gains strength.**

(L) In visions seen and dreams made real...

**(P) the Church blesses the world.**

(L) In hopes rekindled and fears released...

**(P) the Church leads the way.**

(L) In rushing wind and tongues of fire...

**(P) Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

**MONEY FOR MISSIONS:**

**Prayer of thanksgiving**

**HYMN:                            To God Be the Glory**

**#98**

**OPENING PRAYER – Let us pray together.**

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.

**HYMN:**

**We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise**

**#2031**

**SCHRIPTURE:**

**Jane McCabe**

**Genesis 11: 1-9** Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and fire them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth, and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

**Acts 2: 1-13** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and they began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we can hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

**Galatians 3:28** There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

**MESSAGE:**

**God In The Midst of Chaos**

**Rosemary Landry**

Today the church celebrates what is called Pentecost. The word Pentecost means 50. It was a holiday, known as the Festival of the Weeks or in Hebrew,

Shavuot. It was originally a harvest festival, but later became a day to commemorate the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. It is important to Christians as a day we remember that the hundreds of people who were gathered together were filled with the Holy Spirit. From a historical point, Pentecost is the day the church was begun. So, we call it the church's birthday. During this event, Peter preached his first sermon. In response to his message, Acts 2: 41 tells us; **“So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.”**

Once again, we come to the fork in our spiritual journey; is this an actual, true historical, biblical event? Some question that, because it only appears in Acts and not in any of the other books of scripture. Some scholars view this account as a **metaphor** of the work of the Holy Spirit in the early church and in the lives of those who followed Jesus. If we look at this as a metaphor for the work of the Holy Spirit, what does it mean for our lives today? We live each and every day with the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. How do we know the Holy Spirit is working in our lives? What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives? In Galatians 5 we read; **“Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”** The Holy Spirit gives us a choice. We have an opportunity to consider how we're living our lives. Do we want to be guided by the Holy Spirit? We look at our lives and ask ourselves, are we more patient? Is there more love and joy in my life? Am I kinder, more generous? Am I growing in self-control and faithfulness? As these fruits are more evident in our lives, we can know that the Holy Spirit is alive and well and working in our lives.

According to scripture, this gathering of people became the first church. They focused on teaching, sharing meals together, fellowship and prayer. (Sounds much like our Sunday mornings here at church) They shared whatever they had so that no one ever went hungry or was in need of the necessities of life. Pentecost is a picture of God's community. It is a time that we consider and renew our commitment to intentionally be a member of the body of Christ; each of us using whatever energy and time we have to share Christ's love with the world; to be a part of Jesus justice in the world.

Pentecost symbolizes that the mission of the church is to be a multi-faceted community that draws together all people. Paul tells us in **Galatians 3:28**  
**“There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”**

On this Pentecost Sunday, we are challenged to examine our way of thinking; to be open and inclusive; to lay aside grudges and bitterness; to overcome and reject

any prejudices we struggle with. The Holy Spirit helps us grow in acceptance and inclusion. Jesus' church is to be a place where everyone matters and where everyone contributes in some way. Just being here on Sunday morning is a huge contribution.

What does it mean to us if the story of Pentecost is a metaphor and not historically true? Like other metaphors, whether it happened historically or not, there is truth in this story. What is beautiful about a metaphor is that there are truths beyond the apparent details. What really matters is what we learn about ourselves, each other and God. One of the articles I was reading this week was from Pastor Dawn Hutchings on the website [ProgressiveChristianity.org](http://ProgressiveChristianity.org).

She takes us back to the story from the Hebrew Scriptures, the book of Genesis. It's the story of the Tower of Babel. The story goes that after the flood, God gave the people the command to **"increase in number and fill the earth."** But the people decided that they wanted to build a city with a tower that would reach the heavens as a symbol of their power...thus named the Tower of Babel. They wanted to do things their way and not be scattered all over the earth. The result was that people gathered with other people who were the same as them, who spoke the same language. That wasn't what God wanted – God wanted them to intermingle, to be inclusive. We read in Genesis ***"So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth, and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."***

The story of the Tower of Babel may or may not be true, but it does reveal a truth about humanity; the world is full of chaos, that humans are often prideful, and that humans' attitudes and behaviors stem from loyalty to one's own social group or tribe or what is called tribalism. We like our comfort zones because it doesn't take much effort. We don't like to stretch our thinking outside the box. The problem with tribalism is that it pits people against each other. The Pentecost story was about Jesus' embodiment of love. Luke's story of Pentecost shows the Spirit of God working to bring people together despite the chaos, in the midst of the chaos. Being faithful was not about being exclusive or tribal. Jesus' teachings were about how we coexist with others. Jesus had radical ideas about love. It wasn't about power that oppressed the powerless. It was about Jesus' life of compassion, healing, and justice. It was about inclusion. In the story of Pentecost, God made it so that everyone understood each other, despite the cultural and language differences. In the story of the Tower of Babel, God separated people and confused their ability to understand each other. Pentecost is the story of God doing just the opposite – it's the story of God bringing people together in the midst of and despite, their differences.

So here we are, celebrating Pentecost Sunday – the birth of the church. Yet



us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen

## **OFFERTORY: DOXOLOGY**

### **Offering Prayer:**

Faithful and loving God, bless these gifts that we return to you now, that they may be blessings of hope and signs of your faithfulness for all the world to know. Amen

## **HOLY COMMUNION:**

### **INVITATION:**

(L) When Jesus sat at tables and broke bread with tax collectors, lawyers, rich elites, and poor peasants, he proclaimed that God's gracious love and abiding presence know no bounds. Through these occasions of sharing food, women and men experienced God, and shared in God's Kin-dom. A Kin-dom, where: all are welcome, worthy, and invited; lives are transformed and empowered; and the fruits of God's gentle justice bloom throughout all Creation.

**(P) All people, including each of us, are invited to share in this sacred meal of celebration, and be strengthened by the presence of God in this place.**

### **PRAYER OF REMEMBRANCE:**

(L) We remember that Jesus fed 5,000 hungry people with five loaves of bread and two fish. At this miraculous meal, there was such an abundance of food that everyone ate until they were full – and there were even twelve baskets of food left over.

**(P) Holy God, we celebrate your abundant care and solidarity, revealed in this meal.**

(L) We remember that Jesus joined a great banquet with Levi, the despised tax collector. And despite the complaints of some, Jesus welcomed Levi, and invited him to repent and enjoy a fresh beginning at life.

**(P) Holy God, we celebrate Your transforming presence, revealed in this meal.**

(L) We remember that while sharing a meal with Pharisees, Jesus welcomed a woman viewed as an outsider. As the woman anointed his feet with oil, Jesus declared her dignity before everyone at the meal.

**(P) Holy God, we celebrate Your gracious inclusiveness, revealed in this meal.**

(L) At these meals, Jesus, and the women and men disciples resisted the divisions, injustice, and violence of society. They lived out an alternative reality – the Kin-dom of God – a place of love, justice, and mutuality. Today we celebrate these meals and ministries.

But we also recognize that not all people liked Jesus' ministry. In fact, for some people, it was scandalous. They said, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" As we know, Jesus' life became endangered.

When his arrest seemed near, Jesus ate a meal in an upper room with the disciples. As he had done so many times before, he took bread and after having given thanks to You, Holy God, he broke it and gave it to the disciples, this time saying, "Do this to remember me." After the meal he shared wine, gave thanks, and said, "I will not drink from this cup again until I drink it with you in the Kin-dom of God."

Jesus was then unjustly killed by the systems of domination of his day. To some of his frightened disciples it seemed that the bread symbolized his broken body, and the wine his blood. It also seemed like injustice and violence killed Jesus and his ministry. But the resurrection provided a new hope. There were more meals – and more ministries! We thank you, Holy God, that the last supper wasn't the last meal – or the last word!

At an evening meal in Emmaus, Jesus once again ate with the disciples. His execution wasn't the end. His presence and ministry continued in a new way. Jesus once more took bread, and having given thanks to You, Holy God, he broke it and gave it to the disciples, revealing that Your steadfast love is stronger than death – and your ministry, with us, for the sake of your Kin-dom, continues.

The Kin-dom persisted – and persists today – through the many women and men who seek to be your resurrection community. Despite the divisions, violence, and injustice in the world, God continually brings forth renewed hope for love, justice, and mutuality to and through each of us.

Therefore, Holy God, in the sharing of this bread and cup, we joyfully celebrate the hope-inspiring ministry and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Gracious God may this meal, for us, be an "Emmaus meal," where we encounter your presence in the sharing of this food, as the disciples did at their meal in Emmaus.

May the sharing of this food also be a taste of your Kin-dom, Holy God, so we may be strengthened to be your joyful and hopeful disciples.

And may we share in your Kin-dom of love, justice, and mutuality with those around us. Amen!

**BLESSING OF THE ELEMENTS**

(L) Holy God, bless each of us, and the meal we will share, so we may be: opened to your abiding presence; nourished by your gracious love; and strengthened by your resurrection power.

**SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS:**

(L1) Know that God is present here today with you.

(L2) Peace be with you.

**Thanksgiving Prayer – Let us pray together:**

**(ALL) Amazing God, thank you for your presence in this place. We also thank you for giving us a taste of your Kin-dom in this meal. Please use this food to strengthen us to be your joyful and hopeful Resurrection Community, sharing and experiencing your Kin-dom of love, justice, and mutuality. Flow through us, healing God. Amen!**

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The liturgy emphasizes God’s vision of love, justice, and mutuality, even in the face of the divisions, injustice, and violence of the Roman Empire. It also shows the differences between the nonviolent tactics of Jesus’ “Kin-dom of God” and the brutal tactics of Caesar’s “Empire of Rome.” The hope is that this liturgy invites Christians to feel the love and presence of God in their lives, so they can be strengthened to share the peace and justice of God in the world. The same God that loved the disciples, also loves us. And the same God that worked for peace and justice in the Roman Empire, continues to work for peace and justice today. This liturgy seeks to invite modern Christians to join in on God’s healing work in the world.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Monday	Prayer Team	10 am	Zoom
Wednesday	Book Study	Noon	In Person

**HYMN:                                    I Love You, Lord                                    #2068**

**BENEDICTION:**

May the love of God, the peace of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit fill your hearts as you go to love and serve our community this week.



**SHALOM:** Shalom to you now, Shalom my friends. May God's full mercies, bless you my friends. In all your living and through your loving, Christ be your Shalom...Christ be your Shalom.