

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...

*a worship packet for
the season of Pentecost*

*worship tools with a peace and justice emphasis from Seeds of Hope Publishers, people you've come to trust;
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Seeds is a ministry of Seeds of Hope, Inc., a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Editorial Address

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a word about this packet

These materials are offered to you on clean, unattached pages so that you can more easily photocopy anything you wish to duplicate. Feel free to copy any of this, including art, and adapt these tools to your needs.

The art in this packet is your congregation's to use freely. It features the work of two extraordinarily gifted people. Peter Yuichi Clark, a chaplain at Emory University Hospital, is one of our favorite veteran *Seeds* artists. Much of the art you will find here was done by Erin Kennedy, an art major at Baylor University. Erin created the art on this page.

We have tried to provide these tools to you in a user-friendly, yet attractive presentation. We also endeavored to choose a variety of age groups, worship areas, and angles, so that you would have a potpourri of art and ideas from which to choose.

We have made a conscious effort to maintain a balance between the apostolic and the contemplative—on the one hand, the dynamic challenge to stay true to God's mandate to feed the poor and see to the struggle for justice, and on the other hand, our own compelling need for nurture and healing while we work toward those dreams.

We prayerfully hope that these aids will enhance your congregation's observance of Pentecost and will make your journey into "Ordinary Time" anything but ordinary.



A few thoughts about Pentecost and Ordinary Time

The liturgical calendar for most of Christendom begins with Advent. That beginning awaits and then follows the life of Christ through Epiphany, Lent and Eastertide. Pentecost, roughly fifty days after Easter, ushers in that portion of the year in which we turn to examine the life of the church.

Pentecost, as we shall see and hear in some of the readings to follow, is commemorated as the “birthday” of the church. It is the event in which the followers of Jesus—who until this point had hidden from the world, huddled together and frightened—suddenly became bold, empowered, and energized. The early church was formed, built around sharing and equality. The Pentecost event enabled a group of bewildered believers to become what the church was meant to be.

Pentecost Sunday ushers in the season some of us have sarcastically referred to as the “159 weeks in Ordinary Time.” But Ordinary Time should be anything but tedious, anything but ordinary. As Lent was a time to examine ourselves personally—our relationship to God, our personal journey toward

wholeness—Ordinary Time is the season in which we should examine ourselves as faith communities.

Are we doing the work of the church? What *is* the work of the church? What has God called us to do together? How can we do that in the best way?

The passage from which this packet’s theme comes is found in Isaiah 61:1-4, and also in Luke 4:16-21. It is the passage that Jesus read in the synagogue and claimed as a sort of preamble to his career. The spirit of the Lord was poured out at Pentecost. God has appointed the church to preach the good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives, to comfort those who mourn, to rebuild the ancient ruins.

Hopefully, the following pages will help us all to examine, with wisdom and courage, our mission and our calling. With the power of Pentecost to energize us and impel us, may we truly become during these months, what the church was meant to be in our world. —lkc

The cover art for this packet, printed in its original form on this page, is by Peter Yuichi Clark. We adapted it from art created by Peter for the ordination services of Debbie Bennett Reynolds and Dina Carroll. Peter, both artist and minister, lives in Decatur, Georgia.



Bringing Them to Their Senses: a brainstorming session

Bringing Out the Liturgical Colors

Trish Holland, a minister in Colorado Springs, says she asked her congregation to bring geraniums to church on Pentecost Sunday. You could arrange them around the altar, or put them all over the sanctuary. Ann Pennington, a chaplain in Waco, Texas, says she went to a Pentecost service once where the congregation was asked to wear red.

Don Nixon, a minister in Houston, Texas, suggests gladiolas in the colors of fire on the altar table—or in front of the pulpit. ("Glads come in nice fire colors," he says. "And the shape also suggests flames.")

Dorisanne Cooper, a minister in North Carolina, favors balloons in orange and red, blown up with helium and allowed to float to the ceiling of the sanctuary.

If your sanctuary seems too big for this, Cooper says, you can also arrange the balloons in a different way. First tie several long strings across the width of the sanctuary—one end attached to a pew on the left, and one to a pew on the right, but do not tie them tight, leave plenty of slack in the string. Then cut lots of other string about two or three feet long (one for each balloon).

Tie one of the shorter strings to each balloon and tie the other end of the strings to the long string tied across the sanctu-

ary. Make several arches to fill the sanctuary. (We traced this idea traced back to Beverly CroweTipton, who is a minister in Ardmore, Oklahoma.)

Cooper also suggests an assortment of red candles—as many sizes and shapes as possible—burning on the altar table, or perhaps also burning around the sides and in the back of the sanctuary.

John Ballenger, a minister and our own editor for poetry and drama, likes the idea of widely differing colors and sizes of candles, to emphasize and celebrate diversity. This would go well with the first activity below, also submitted by Ballenger.

Acting Out the Event

John Ballenger lined up several members who speak various non-English languages and asked them to read Acts 2:1-6 in their own languages at that same time. They began, all at once, at the last stroke of eleven, the chiming of the hour that begins morning worship in John's church.

They read the passage, and then, just as they were finishing, another reader began reading the passage in English. You could ask them to read it once in the various languages and then read it together in English, or ask one of them to read in

English (or your church's primary language) when the others are finished.

Using Liturgical Dance

Don Nixon suggests a processional (with the congregation singing a hymn about the coming of the Spirit) led by a liturgical dancer, dressed in black with a bamboo pole connected to long strips of chiffon-like fabric in red, orange, and yellow. The dancer could sweep the strip of fabric above the heads of the worshippers. Another possibility would be to ask the dancer to dress in fire colors and enact an interpretation in that way, perhaps while someone reads from the second chapter of Acts, or during a musical piece that evokes images of the Holy Spirit.

If you have a member or friend of the faith community who is creative with this kind of dance, encourage him/her to adapt this idea to your congregation's situation and needs.

Inviting Other Senses to Worship

Nixon also suggests bringing out fans to blow over the heads of the congregation—perhaps placing the fans in the balcony or the back of the sanctuary and surprising the worshippers with a burst of air.

Brainstorming for Ordinary Time

Here's an idea for Pentecost or Ordinary Time that we got during a recent summer from Kathy Manis Findley, a minister in

Little Rock, Arkansas. Findley brought together a visual feast of banners and stoles for a service emphasizing justice issues. These visual images would also work for a service celebrating diversity.

Findley used a sunny yellow for altar cloth, pulpit banner, banners to be carried in with the processional, and stoles for the ministers. This wash of color served to waken and energize a weary congregation (in this case) of ministers, and was profoundly moving.

Findley had attached borders of figures that resembled paper doll cutouts to the banners and altar cloth. These "people" figures were in several colors and could represent racial groups and/or minority groups. They could be also designed in such a way as to represent the rich and the poor. The same design was repeated in the stoles of three ministers, with one or two figures at the ends of each stole.

In the service that Findley planned, a liturgical dancer added to the visual imagery. He did not carry out the yellow theme; instead, he carried scarves in primary colors. As an African-American man, he carried in his racial identity part of the theme of the service.

All of these ideas could be adapted to your congregation's needs, as well as to your resources. We dare you to be creative. Take these images and run with them. Mark them with your own message. And let us know how it works out.

Note: For more ideas about using the arts in worship, we recommend Symphony of the Senses: A Worship Resource for the Christian Church, by Welton Gaddy and Don Nixon, Smyth & Helwys Publishers, 1996.

The art on these two pages was created especially for you by Erin Kennedy, an art major at Baylor University.

invocation

by Nick Cappas

O God,
May we as a church,
and as individuals,
Open ourselves,
and give you the chance
to touch our lives,
heal our wounds,
poke at our comforts,
bless our goodness,
relieve our guilt,
and inspire our sense of wonder,
that you, O-God,
will come to us
in this place,
and make us whole.
Amen.

—Nick Cappas is a part-time poet and part-time minister in Chalk Bluff, Texas.



A banner workshop

with Sherry Castello

My church worships in a room that functions during the week as The Gospel Cafe, offering lunches for a “minimum donation” which, in truth, is sometimes only a few coins. The banners that on Sunday evenings help us celebrate the liturgical seasons and remind us of Jesus’ teachings continue to speak their message to all who come for meals or for other meetings throughout the week. I like that about banners.

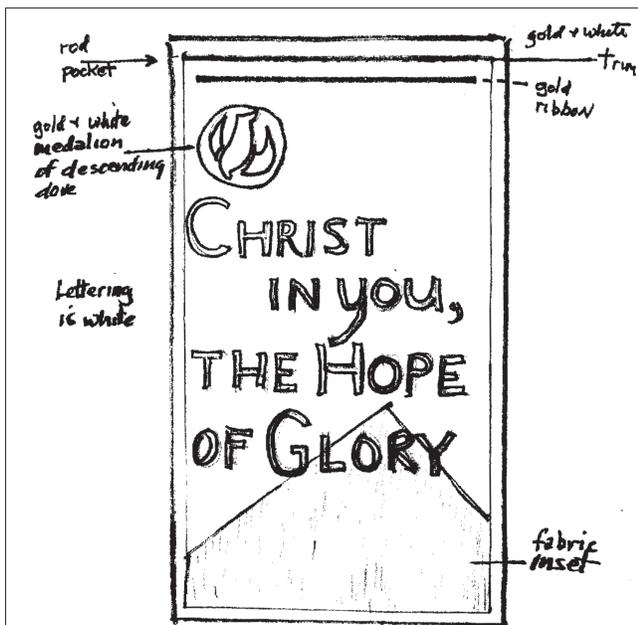
Banners require few words; some need none at all. The words may come from scripture, from a hymn or familiar liturgy, or from a theme chosen by the church. I’ve found some of my best inspiration in a phrase that suddenly leaps from a hymn—“Son of God, Love’s True Light,” “Love’s redeeming work is done,” “I see his hand of mercy, I hear his voice of cheer,” and “Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Lord enters in.”

For Pentecost banners our hymnals abound with titles and phrases about the Holy Spirit that may be used in Pentecost

banners: “Breathe on me, Breath of God,” “Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me,” and “Revive us again.”

Art motifs for banners also abound. A Christmas card with a simple silhouette of a Bethlehem skyline stayed in my banner box for a while before I used it with an overlay of the project apartment buildings in our church neighborhood. Banner books often offer designs which may be copied. Various church publications carry pieces of line art suitable for banners, as do books about liturgical symbols. Some of the line art in the *Seeds* worship packets can be adapted for use on banners.

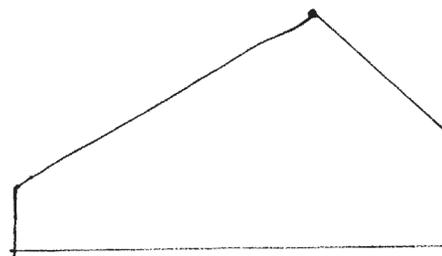
Lettering and design are the big challenges. A fine partnership might be struck between an artist who could suggest design and colors and a craftsperson skilled in creating the banner. The sewing skills required are minimal, but greater skills enable more elaborate work. Basically, the construction requires only a rod pocket and a hem if you have neat edges (selvage) on the fabric; but even these may be accomplished with iron-on fusible



Banner material is a rich, bright red broadcloth. A 1/4" woven trim, white with gold, is glued on about one inch from the edge on all four sides. The descending dove is white on a gold circle of lame. A 5/8" ribbon of gold above the medallion is the width of the type area below. The lettering is white. The banner is enlivened by an inset of material detailed below.



The inset material is the kind of "find" that can inspire or complete a banner. It is a wonderful mix of fire-like tongues in red, gold, blue, green, and purple on a beige/tan background. I chose a shape to balance the medallion at the top and to emphasize the word Glory.



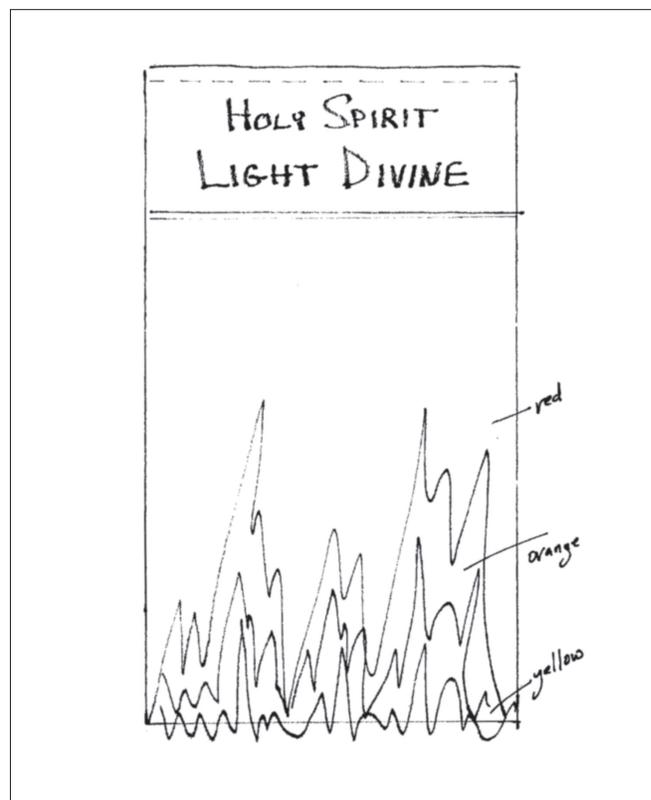
tapes. Lining produces a more stable, lasting banner. If lettering is a problem for you, consider using a computer and printer to enlarge images of type that fits your banner design. (You could also use an overhead projector to enlarge a pattern.)

A commercial product, Heat'n'Bond™, is ideal for use in attaching letters and larger design elements to the background. Ironed onto the back of fabric, it has a removable paper backing on which you may rule and sketch letter forms or other shapes—*backward*, remember! After the design is cut out, the backing is removed and the design is simply ironed into place. A couple of words of advice: use the heavy duty variety of Heat and Bond and follow the directions carefully. Also, check to be sure the material you are planning to use is sufficiently opaque to maintain its color once it is ironed in place—a small test piece can save much grief.

If your church regularly uses banners, placement and size may be predetermined. Otherwise, choose a size that fits your location, using standard fabric widths of 45 or 60 inches if possible. The banner may be a little more than twice as long as it is wide or—with adaptation of design—extremely long in order to fit an area with a very high ceiling.

For this Pentecost guide, we are including three banner ideas for your consideration and adaptation. The first, “Christ in you, the Hope of Glory,” is a phrase taken from Colossians 1:27. The descending dove motif and the fabric inset which carried an abstract design that resembled tongues of fire combine with the bright red background to emphasize the Pentecost theme. Gold braided trim and gold lame background on the medallion enrich the visual effect.

The tongues of fire design for the second banner was originally worked on a dyed silk banner with a black background, but it could be constructed from layers of cloth or painted in acrylics. It is a highly adaptable design that could be used on very long hangings as well as on a banner of standard proportion. The background could be red, white, black, or gold; the



colors used in the design might be altered to harmonize with the background. The wording, again, could be changed to fit any special emphasis in worship.

The third banner idea is simply a hanging of gathered layers of transparent chiffon over the banner background material, which is folded over the top of the layers to provide space for the lettering, as well as the rod pocket. Do not take lightly the artistic challenge of cutting these layers of filmy material into tonguelike shapes! If placement of the banner allows it, a small fan blowing up into the banner (gently!) will give the interest of gentle movement.

If you would like to read more about banners, these are three books I have found and used repeatedly for practical ideas and inspiration:

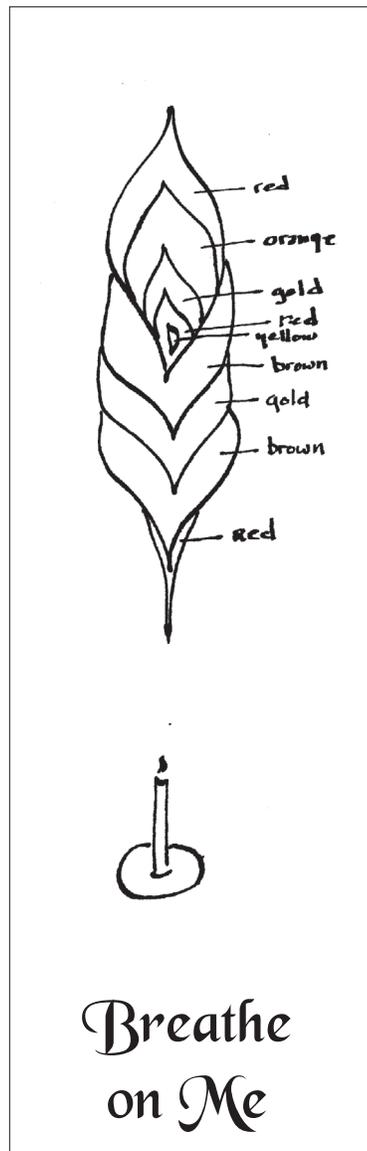
The Banner Book by Betty Wolfe, Morehouse-Barlow Co., Inc.. Library of Congress # 74-80378. Good basic handbook (64 pages) about design, construction, symbols, and letter forms. Two very useful alphabets for banner design.

The Complete Banner Handbook, by Janet Litherland, Meriwether Publishing Ltd. ISBN 916260-48-8. Some good symbols and a chapter on special techniques.

Banners for Worship, by Carol Jean Harms, Concordia Publishing House. ISBN 0-570-04492-8. Good basic text with color-coded banner designs for the church year and six alphabets.

—Sherry Castello, a retired magazine editor, is the chief cook at the Gospel Cafe, a ministry of Crossties Ecumenical Church in Waco, Texas.

Note: the author and the editors welcome word of banner designs you have used and additional good books on banner making. We would also like to hear from you if you have any interest in a regional banner workshop.



A call to worship for Pentecost or Ordinary Time

by David Lane and Katie Cook

Note: This reading calls for five readers. We suggest that you place them on the pulpit platform, with the first reader at the pulpit and the other four at lecterns at either side.

FIRST READER: We live in a Christian community.

SECOND READER: A reading from the book of Acts, chapter 2, verse 44. Listen now for the word of God. "And all the believers were together and had everything in common."

FIRST READER: We are blessed by having material possessions. In a Christian fellowship, we give back to others. In fellowship, we all must share.

THIRD READER: A reading from the book of Acts, chapter 2, verse 45. "And selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."

FIRST READER: We are blessed by having homes. Out of Christian compassion, we must help those with needs. In fellowship, we all must share.

FOURTH READER: A reading from the book of Acts, chapter 4, verse 34. "And there were no needy persons among them."

FIRST READER: We are blessed by having technological wonders and medical miracles. With Christian love, we try to nurture others. In fellowship, we all must share.

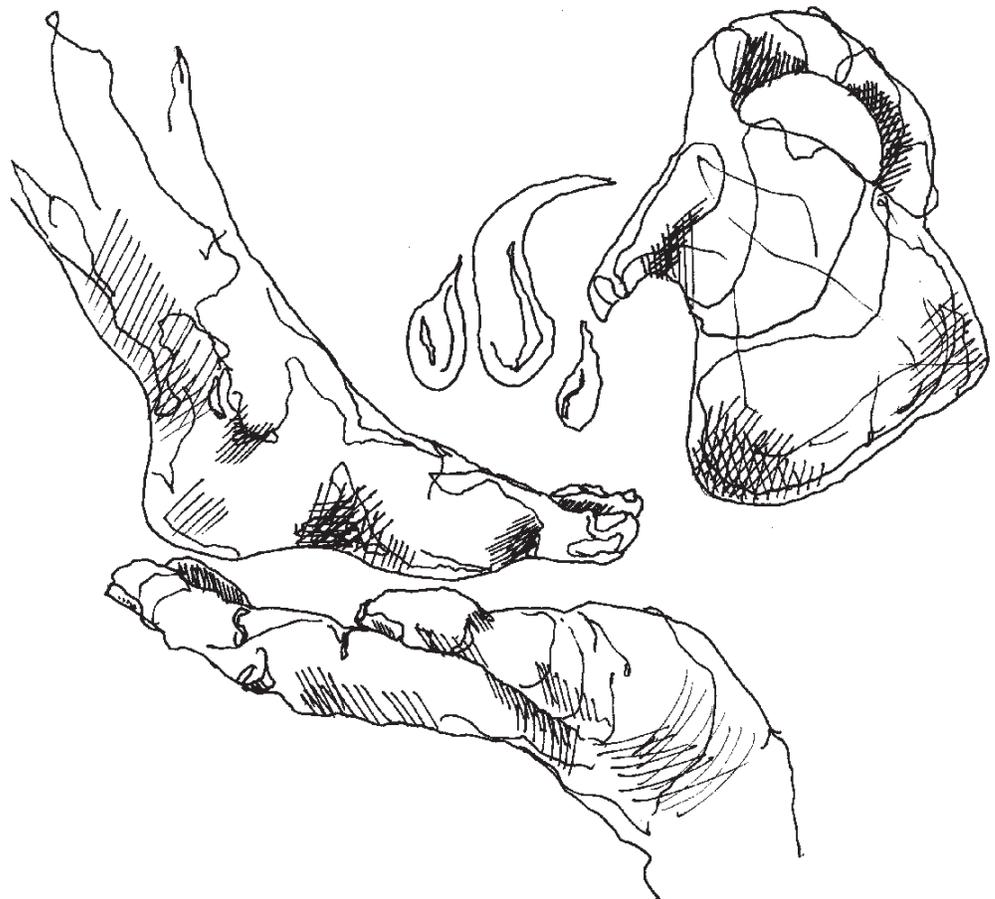
FIFTH READER: A reading from the book of Acts, chapter 5, verse 12. "And the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people."

SECOND-FIFTH READERS: This is the word of God. Thanks be to God.

FIRST READER: Let us strive to make our community a more Christ-like fellowship.

ALL READERS: Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

—David Lane is a junior at Midway High School in Woodway Texas, and an award-winning journalist. Katie Cook is his Sunday school teacher.



The art on this page was created especially for you by Erin Kennedy, an art major at Baylor University.

Confession

by Robert Darden

Almighty God, forgive us,
for we come before you
with the same air of self-righteousness
and moral superiority that we despise
in those who oppose us.

Forgive us, for too often we do not
possess their evangelism, their zeal.
Forgive us, for too often we ignore
your holy word.

Forgive us for being too comfortable
for revival, too self-satisfied
for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Forgive us, for all too often
we allow the ends to justify the means.
But above all else, dear God, forgive us,
for we think we have tamed you;
we think we understand you;
we think that we have reshaped you in our
image.

Forgive us for deluding ourselves
in thinking that you are a tame God.

Forgive our arrogance
and ten thousand more sins beside.

And thank you once more
for having forgiven us.

In your son's name, Amen.

*—Robert Darden is a freelance writer and active deacon
in Waco, Texas.*

Empowering the Church for Servanthood: Quotes and pithy sayings

In order to imitate the love of God, we must search for and respond to the needs of people we come in contact with every day. We cannot simply feel or say love. To be authentic, love must wear work clothes.

—*Caroline McGee, a medical student in San Antonio, Texas*

Did not the Lord's flock actually follow him in tribulation and persecution and hunger, sickness and trial and all the rest, and thereby receive eternal life from the Lord? What a great shame, then, that while the saints actually followed in the footsteps of the Lord, we, today's servants of God, expect glory and honor simply because we can recite what they did.

—*Francis of Assisi, from the Admonitions, The Omnibus of Sources for Saint Francis of Assisi*

The prophetic voice does more than call people fat cows, more than expose injustice. It also presents the visions and the dreams.

—*Tom Peterson, Heifer Project International*

Avarice, greed, concupiscence and so forth are all based on the mathematical truism that the more you get, the more you have. The remark of Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive is based on the human truth that the more you give away in love, the more you are. It is not just for the sake of other people that Jesus tells us to give rather than get, but for our own sakes too.

—*Frederick Buechner, Wishful Thinking*

I am convinced that my life belongs to the whole community; and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can...

—*George Bernard Shaw*



...I believe that it is fortuitous and weird that there is the same number of homeless people as there are churches in America. And I believe that God is going to deal with the Church in the same way that the Church is dealing with the homeless. And all the theology and all the doctrines are meaningless, unless you lay down your life to meet the needs of those around you who are hurting.

—*Ole Anthony, founder of the Trinity Foundation, an innovative ministry for homeless people in Dallas*

Each day we make a choice with the very fabric of our lives. Either we are children of God or we are not.

—*William O'Brien*

Walking into the brokenness of life and trying to make a difference—that's what it means to walk with God.

—*Daniel G. Bagby*

Where there is great love, there are always miracles.

—*Willa Cather, Death Comes for the Archbishop*

Trust in the Lord and *do good*.

—*Harriet Beecher Stowe*

The best definition of the Gospel message I ever heard is that the Gospel is the permission and command to enter difficulty with hope.

—*Donna Schaper, A Book of Common Power*

Give up your good Christian life and follow Christ.

—*Garrison Keillor*

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share.

—*1 Timothy 6:17-18*

Solution #8. Don't make the "sophisticated" error of thinking that a negative voice is automatically smarter than a positive voice.

Solution #22. Do not avoid the eyes of the homeless.

Solution #23. If you think something's wrong—at work, in your family, in your self, in your country—agitate for a change. If you won't do that, it doesn't matter how tan you are.

Solution #31. Pray.

Solution #32. Stop looking for other people to supply the solution. You're the solution. If you're not, there is no solution.

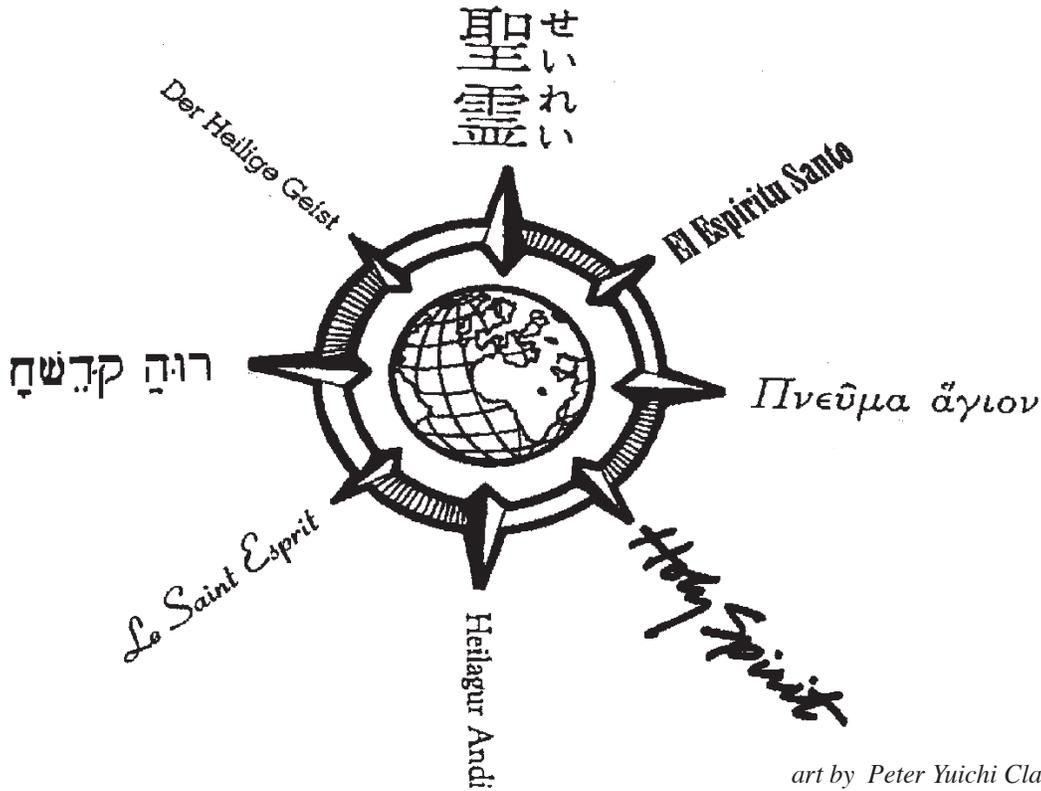
—*from The Solutions to All Our Problems (Guaranteed!) by Michael Ventura*



*"You will receive power
when the Holy Spirit has come
upon you; and you will be my
witnesses in Jerusalem, in all
Judea and Samaria,
and to the ends
of the earth."*

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Pentecostal Power



A sermon for Pentecost Sunday

by Ken Sehested

Acts 2:1-18, Joel 2-3 (selected)

My wife is a pastor. Several times each year I pinch hit for her, filling the pulpit when she's out of town. A couple of months ago she asked if I could preach for her in April. "What Sunday?" I asked. "April 10th," she said, "the week after Easter."

"Following Easter, huh? Gee, thanks," I said with more than a bit of cynicism. "What did I do to deserve this?"

"I know you can do it," she said, trying to cheer me up. "In your peacemaker job you're used to preaching to small and halfhearted crowds. You'll do just fine!"

Easter Sunday is a tough act to follow. The Sunday-after-Easter mood is about like you feel when you pull the car in the driveway at the end of a week or two of vacation at some distant location. Dinner time is definitely a McDonald's or Kentucky Fried takeout occasion. The return to "normal" life is a bit depressing.

Can you imagine what David Letterman's "Top Ten" list would be if the category were something like this:

"How you can tell it's the Sunday after Easter"

- #10. The chain drug stores rotate the Easter candy to the sale tables and bring out the Mother's Day cards.
- #9. You start hoping those boiled and painted Easter eggs that are still in the fridge will crack so you'll have an excuse to toss them.
- #8. The offering takes a nose dive.
- #7. You'll have no trouble finding a place to sit even if you're late for church.
- #6. There's a noticeable relaxing of the dress code in worship.
- #5. The number of visitors drops dramatically.
- #4. The number of visitors who are actually church members who haven't been in a long time also drops dramatically.
- #3. Everyone is glad to wait another 12 months before singing "Up From the Grave He Arose."
- #2. The choir recycles an old anthem.
- #1. The preacher takes a Sunday off.

The Sunday after Easter is tough. Preaching on Easter Sunday is easy. It's like getting a fat pitch to hit, a 3-and-2 count fastball, with no movement, belt high, right down the pike, with runners in scoring position. Can't miss. Anybody can preach a good Easter sermon. It's the Sunday after Easter that takes some work.

Easter can be exhausting. There's all those special Holy Week services, with lots of extra sermons and music. (And if you observe the season of Lent you're just emerging from a month-and-a-half of preaching on penance and listening to minor-keyed music.)

And now all the drama begins to build after Good Friday and finally explodes on Easter morning with elaborate decorations and flowers and adrenaline-pumping music and new clothes. It's all a bit like the "1812 Overture," near the end when the cannon starts pounding the ear drums in thunderous rhythm with a fortissimo finale. It's extraordinary. It's spine-tingling. It makes you want to stand on your toes and shout out loud.

Easter is exhausting. Which is easy to understand. Easter requires a lot of extra rehearsal. And you tap into those stored emotional reserves saved for special occasions.

Yes, Easter is exhausting. It wears us out. And that's unfortunate. For when Easter ecstasy leaves us drained and spent, we tend to fall asleep before the real climax of the story. Just as our faith does not end with Good Friday crucifixion, neither does it end with Easter's rolled stone.

We may be exhausted, but the New Testament narrative isn't. Resurrection is certainly the pivotal moment in the drama; but there's another act to follow. If you leave the story now... well, let's just say you go home and tell your friends this play was about spring fashions and painted eggs and chocolate bunnies.

All very delightful, of course. Great acting; superb staging; crisp dialogue; marvelous dramatic movement. But you missed the point.

It would be kind of like going to the theatre to see "The Fugitive" and then walking out after the bus accident. Harrison Ford escapes, and boy are we glad cause we know he's innocent, didn't kill his wife, didn't deserve to die in the electric chair. And now he's free. Oh, thank-you-Jesus; now we can go home.

That would be crazy, of course, because things are just now getting interesting. If you think the bus crash was a heart-pounder, you ain't seen nothing yet. If you walk out now, you miss the most exciting part of the movie—about an hour and a half of Tommy Lee Jones chasing Harrison Ford, who's chasing the one-armed man.

And if you quit reading when Jesus is rescued from the jaws of death...well, let's just say you go home and tell your friends that this story is about gettin' people to heaven when they die. But getting people to heaven after they die is not what the Gospel is about.

Though you wouldn't know that after visiting most churches. Layaway theology is what most preachers proclaim: Give your heart to Jesus so you can go to heaven later. Easy installments of weekly church attendance.

Or transport theology: Buy your ticket now in case the glory train comes early. Then just hang out 'til the whistle blows. It don't matter much, once your ticket's in hand.

Or life insurance theology: Once you read the policy and make arrangements for the payments, you file it away (and hope you don't have to cash it in any time soon).

But the New Testament story of Easter is different. Resurrection is not life insurance, to be used only in case of emergency. It's more like mobilization orders for someone in the National Guard. The action has just begun. Resurrection, as Clarence Jordan said, is God's refusal to stay on the other side of the grave:

"God raised Jesus, not as an invitation to us to come to heaven when we die, but as a declaration that He himself has established permanent residence on earth. The resurrection places Jesus on this side of the grave, here and now, in the midst of this life. The Good News of the resurrection is not that we shall die and go home with him but that he is risen and

Yes, Easter is exhausting. It wears us out. And that's unfortunate. For when Easter ecstasy leaves us drained and spent, we tend to fall asleep before the real climax of the story.

comes home with us, bringing all his hungry, naked, thirsty, sick, prisoner brothers and sisters with him."

Easter does not exhaust the biblical narrative of God's saving work. There's more. What began with Adam and Eve, what began again with Noah and the ark, and again with Abraham and Sarah, and again with Israel's escape from Egyptian bondage and her repeated returns from exile, and again with Mary's pregnancy—all these beginnings and new beginnings, now uniquely confirmed and summarized and restated in the resurrection—these are the prelude to the final act in the story, one step short of the dramatic conclusion of the history of God's redemption.

But wait, there's another stage between the eruption of Easter and the inauguration of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Wait, the other shoe hasn't dropped yet. Wait, the checkered flag isn't out—that wasn't the finish line, the race is still on.

There's more.

Just as surely as Good Friday crucifixion is followed by and fulfilled in Easter resurrection, Easter in turn is followed by and blossoms into Pentecost.

Wait, Jesus said at the end of the Gospel of Luke. The announcement of the kingdom must be proclaimed to all the earth. But wait—don't do anything just yet, stay right here in Jerusalem. The revolution has begun, but it's far from over yet. God intends to restore the work of creation. The Deceiver has

staged a palace coupe, taken over, and now rules with an iron fist. But the Deceiver's days are numbered.

The triumphant assault against death itself has begun. But don't you go off half-cocked. Wait here. Supplies are coming. Reinforcements are coming. Fire power is coming—fire like you've never seen, power like no one has ever seen. The flames of Pentecost are about to erupt. That will be your sign to break out of your hiding places at full speed. You've experienced the resurrection moment; next comes the resurrection movement.

Well, let's just say you go home and tell your friends that this story is about gettin' people to heaven when they die. But getting people to heaven after they die is not what the Gospel is about.

Brothers and sisters, Easter is God's resurrection moment; Pentecost is God's resurrection movement, the birthday of the church, the shock troops of the Kingdom. On Easter God declares divine intention; on Pentecost God deploys divine insurgents. On Easter God announces the invasion; Pentecost is when God establishes a beachhead.

At Easter God announces, "I Have a Dream." On Pentecost Sunday, the marchers line up, the police close in, the first tear gas canisters fly, the first arrests are made. But the people of God keep on marching, heading for the courthouse, headed for the White House, headed for the jail house, headed for the school house, headed for the big house.

Headed for every house that's not built on the solid rock of God's righteousness, God's justice; headed for every house that's been stolen from the hands that built it; headed for every house in every segregated neighborhood; headed for every house that shelters oppression, every house that welcomes bigotry, every house that schemes violence.

"For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel," said Isaiah, "and the Lord looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry! Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land" (5:7-8).

"Therefore," says Amos, "because you trample upon the poor and take from them exactions of wheat, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them" (5:11)

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Jesus warned, "for you devour widow's houses and for a pretense you make long prayers" (Mt. 23:14).

But at Pentecost, the stolen house, the segregated house, the house of oppression, even the big house is slated for redemption. Recall this description of the houses of the first Pentecostal powered community:

"There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as you had need" (Acts 4:34).

We never paid much attention to Pentecost when I was growing up. In fact, the liturgical calendar in which I was reared was very minimal. There was Christmas and Easter, of course. But then we skipped to the 4th of July followed by Thanksgiving. The lesser seasons were Mother's Day and Halloween.

And, of course, the annual revival. In fact, that's about the only time we sang that old gospel hymn, "Pentecostal Power." Every traveling evangelist—and most "church-growing" pastors as well—are always looking longfully, hopefully at that all-time high record of 3,000 professions of faith that our text for this morning speaks about.

Imagine that: 3,000 saved in one service. Wouldn't you like to go to the Monday ministers' fellowship meeting with a story like that! My, my, my—if even a small percentage of them are tithers, our financial troubles are over!!

We white Baptists, especially, were always a bit nervous talking about Pentecost. I guess because the word was so closely associated with that unusual practice called "speaking in tongues." Always seemed kinda spooky, in poor taste, definitely uncultured. "Pentecostal power" meant talking gibberish—holy rollers, we called them.

Now, we didn't always exactly do things "decently and in good order," like our Presbyterian friends. But wild, ecstatic outbursts in church were most definitely frowned upon. To this day it's hard to tell which scares Baptist fundamentalists more—the liberals or the Pentecostals.

Later I learned what you already know—that the "tongues" miracle on Pentecost Sunday was not the same as what we refer to as "glossolalia," a gift of the Spirit which the Apostle Paul both acknowledged and cautioned about. The "tongues" episode so central to the Pentecost story had to do with the sudden and unexplained ability of the disciples to be understood by people who spoke different languages.

Now that seems interesting, even impressive, but frankly not very gripping.

It would be even later still before I began to comprehend the real miracle at Pentecost. Pentecostal power was not talking emotional gibberish; nor was it simply the incomprehensible ability with foreign languages.

No, Pentecostal power was about the overcoming of walls of hostility. Jerusalem was jammed packed at this time of the year, because of the Jewish Feast of Weeks. People from all the known world were present—you remember that tongue-twisting list of people and language groups recorded in Acts: Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Judeans, Cappadocians, Pontusians, Phrygians, Pamphylans, Egyptians, Libyans, Romans, Cretans, Arabians.

And if you know your first-century geography, you'll recognize that this listing is careful to point to every direction on the compass—a literary device signifying everywhere imaginable. It was kind of like a general assembly meeting of the United Nations.

And Peter draws back into Hebrew Scripture for his sermon text, from the prophet Joel, declaring God's promise that "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh," about both sons and daughters prophesying, about young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams, about even the servants announcing the impending Reign of God.

(Now, there's a whole bundle of sermons in that one text, dealing with gender and class issues, age discrimination—but we'll have to save those for another time.)

The point of this pivotal narrative in Acts is that Pentecostal power was about the fact that people of different races, different cultures, different languages, different nationalities and ethnicities suddenly understanding each other, suddenly able to really "hear" each other, suddenly able to respond to each other with empathy rather than hostility.

Theologically speaking, Pentecost Sunday is about the undoing of the Tower of Babel story in Genesis, the story which recalls when human technological arrogance became so presumptive that God "confused their tongues" so they could not understand each other. Pentecost is the unraveling of this confusion and this division within the human community.

Pentecost is about a new beginning created by God. It's about a re-raveling (if you will), a reweaving of the human family—a family, according to Scripture, which regardless of diversity nonetheless traces a common ancestry back to one set of parents. For goodness sakes, we're all cousins!

Pentecostal power is an assault on segregation; Pentecostal power is antagonistic to apartheid; Pentecostal power extinguishes ethnic cleansing; Pentecostal power negates nationalism; Pentecostal power wreaks havoc on racism; Pentecostal power triumphs over tribalisms of every kind.

You know, I grew up singing about this kind of Pentecostal power and didn't even know it! "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world; red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world."

Pentecostal power is an assault on segregation; Pentecostal power is antagonistic to apartheid; Pentecostal power extinguishes ethnic cleansing; Pentecostal power negates nationalism; Pentecostal power wreaks havoc on racism; Pentecostal power triumphs over tribalisms of every kind.

Now, notice here—and this is very important—the Pentecost story in Acts doesn't say everyone suddenly started speaking the same language. Pentecost does not destroy the various distinctives between and among people.

But the story does affirm that these differences are brought under the binding power of the Holy Spirit. They can no longer claim autonomy. They are no longer barriers to community. They are now in the service of God—the very God who repeatedly, time after time after time, has acted to nudge creation back to its purpose in Genesis.

Resurrection is not life insurance, to be used only in case of emergency. It's more like mobilization orders for someone in the National Guard.

Pentecostal power is the power to overcome ancient hostility, to gather the excluded, to scale the walls of social, racial, even class divisions. Pentecostal power is the power to address the murderous forces unleashed in our world today.

Virtually every one of the 30 or so shooting wars in the world today is rooted to some degree in racial/ethnic divisions and rivalries. As W.E.B. DuBois said so prophetically at the start of this century, the color line is the issue of the 20th century.

I truly believe that racism is the original sin of my own nation. More than that, I believe racism is the original sin of the early Christian community.

Read on in Acts. In just a few chapters Peter has his dramatic dream about "unclean" animals—a dream which God uses to set him up and get him ready to make a pastoral call on a Gentile for the first time. The word "Gentile" on the lips of a first-century pious Jew carried roughly the same weight as the word "nigger" has for a 20th century European American.

Then, just a few chapters later, the early church created its first bureaucratic structure—the deacon board. Why? To deal with an issue of racial discrimination. The "Hellenist" widows—of different ethnic and national background—were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

Brothers and sisters, I'm convinced that Pentecost is now the most important season for us as Christians. The true energy of Easter is more than, and is fundamentally different from, the "sugar high" you get from eating chocolate Easter bunnies.

That kind of energy burns off within hours, leaving us weary, exhausted. That kind of energy is quickly dissipated. Within a week the Body of Christ is dragging its sparse remnants to a halfhearted post-Easter Sunday service. The resurrection moment is producing very little movement.

Acynical journalist once wrote that a conservative is someone who worships a dead radical. Dead radicals can't bother us anymore. We quickly domesticate their memories, kind of

like the way we do with Dr. King. Of course, we don't think of Jesus as dead; but he does seem to be safely tucked away in heaven.

And from a lot of the preaching I hear, you'd think our job

rial societies we call churches. We revere his memory but we renege on his promise.

The proclamation of the Gospel no longer threatens the new world order our leaders envision for us. The erupting, disrupting flow of Pentecostal power has been pacified, rendered harmless, packaged for television broadcast. Pentecostal power is now driven by the logic and values of commodity marketing. It's pseudo-scientific name in church growth circles is "the homogeneous unit principle." (What a bunch of crap!)

Brothers and sisters, there was a time when the redemptive power activated at Pentecost was the power to mend the rips within our social fabric, to restore splintered relationships, to repair broken communities. Pentecostal power once indicated the power to stand in the cracks, to face the hostilities without fear, to confess, repent and repair.

Pentecostal power was once the power to practice resurrection. Now that's old-time religion. I say, gimme that old-time religion again.

—Ken Sehested is executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, headquartered in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina. This sermon was originally presented May 26, 1994, in Louisville, Kentucky.

*At Easter God announces, "I Have a Dream."
On Pentecost Sunday, the marchers line up, the police close in, the first tear gas canisters fly, the first arrests are made. But the people of God keep on marching, heading for the courthouse, headed for the White House, headed for the jail house, headed for the school house, headed for the big house.*

is simply to convince people they need to start making payments on a ticket to join him there when they die. No threatening movement seems to occur when Pentecostal power is preached from our pulpits.

We've become strangers to the power Jesus promised. The subversive character of his life has been entombed in memo-

This idea for a Pentecost Sunday children's sermon comes from Matt Hall, the pastor of two congregations in Central Texas.

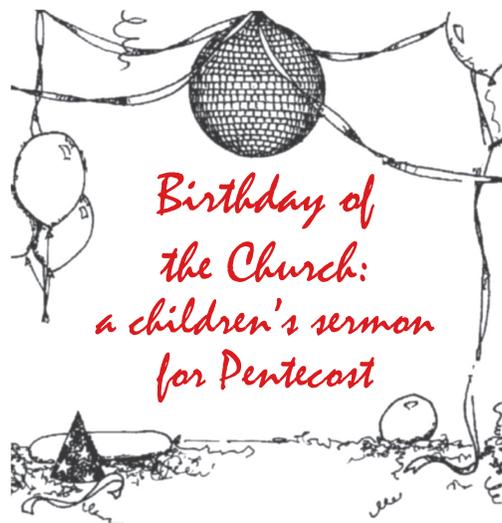
When the children come forward for their sermon, bring out a birthday cake, festive paper plates and napkins, and party hats. You may want to ask another adult to help you cut the cake as you talk to the children.

Explain to the children that this day is the birthday of the church. Tell them something like this:

This story takes place in Jerusalem. Most of the friends of Jesus had been hiding ever since Jesus was arrested. On this day, the day of Pentecost, these friends of Jesus were praying in a room together.

All of a sudden, they felt a strong wind blowing through the room. They looked at each other, and it looked like a flame of fire was above each one's heads.

They felt very happy. Do you know why? Because this wind and this fire that they seemed to see above each other



art by Marcus Best

reminded them of God, and that God was there with them.

They went outside, where people had gathered from all over the world for a Jewish holiday. And they began to talk to all of these people about Jesus' life, and all the things that had happened to them while they were with Jesus.

Now, a lot of these people couldn't understand Aramaic, which was the language that Jesus and most of his friends spoke.

But do you know what? Jesus' friends talked to these people in their own language, and all of the people around understood exactly what they were saying.

And on that day, three thousand people listened to the story of Jesus, and they became followers of Jesus. And that's why this is the birthday of the church.

Note: If you have decorated the church in red or fire colors, or in any other way specifically for Pentecost, point it out to the children and explain to them what the colors or objects refer to in the Pentecost story.



The Enormous Language: a drama for Pentecost Sunday

by John Stewart Ballenger

Genesis 11: 1-9
Acts 2: 1-39

Place tape recorders all around the sanctuary. Have tapes of various news casts and commercials in the recorders. Have them all set to a low volume so that when they are all turned on there is a background murmur. Two people stand at the back of the sanctuary. Try and find two people whose voices work well together. The lines should be delivered with attention to rhythm and pace—usually quickly and staccato. At times it will work for one line to come in over another. In places it will work to have one person repeating one word while the other goes on with their line. You may want to have the two people say some things together. Play with this. Use what's here as a beginning. So, from the back:

once upon a time we were all a part of
an enormous language
the language of the song
that was the song of creation
the song of the Creator
resonating in all that is
all creation linked in harmony
each voice needed
each voice celebrated

connected in caring
and connected in love
*Congregation could at this point sing:
"For the Beauty of the Earth," or "For
the Fruit of All Creation." After the
hymn, if you choose to do that, the two
people at the back slowly move through
the room toward the front, turning on the
tape recorders as they go. When they get
to the front, they face the congregation
and begin again:*

now? listen

listen to the TV
the movies and commercials
immediate gratification
we want it; it shapes us
disconnected facts that we call the news
a picture here—a headline there
sure we know what's going on—
yeah right

listen to the babble
the babble
the babble
the clamor that is rising
louder—louder
higher—higher
rising up to heaven
towering in our lives
the loudness of the babble of the words
of the people that mean nothing
that mean nothing that mean nothing
ing that mean nothing

information overload
information information
information
so much information
but we never get the larger picture
just more information information
we're given so much access

what is it now that the average family
watches? over seven hours of TV a
day?

and your typical child sees how many
thousands of murders before the age of
twelve?

I don't know what that does to a child,
but how can you think it does nothing?

so much access
but never told how access and excess
access and excess
effect who we are
who I am—who you are
who I am—who you are

and listen
listen to the words—the words we're
trained to like
ooh, you don't like that? but can
you disagree?
are you one of those who still thinks we
think for ourselves?
in this world of contingency and
manipulation
the words we're trained to like:
words of independence—words of
self-reliance
don't they sound good? attractive?
admirable? desirable? idolatrous?
words of possession and acquisition
don't you want them?
words of rugged individualism
yes rugged—make that ragged
rigged for the destruction of community
community
raging petulantly
me me me me me
it's all about me
it's all about mine
me me me me me

I thank you God, that I am not like
others

the age-old temptation
the age-old discontent
I need to feel like I'm more than I am
me as I am is not good enough
my internal validation's faulty

need some external strokes
 I would be as God . . .
 or at least how God would be if I
 were God
 I would be God
 look down on the world from
 heaven above
 from my position of power, authority,
 wealth, superiority
 my position of being above
 look down my nose from heaven
 down
 I have arrived—everyone’s looking up
 at me

 listen to the babble
 the babble
 the babble
 the clamor that is rising
 louder—louder
 higher—higher
 rising up to heaven
 towering in our lives
 the loudness of the babble of the words
 of the people that mean nothing
 that mean nothing that mean noth-
 ing that mean nothing

 we’re chasing what will destroy us,
 if we ever even come close
 and we’re getting closer
 day by day
 by day by day
 speaking languages unintelligible —
 languages incomprehensible.
 made up of words with which we’re all
 familiar
 used in ways that make no sense
 for words don’t have meaning anymore
 they’re just a way of giving people
 what they want

 I heard a commercial just the other day,
 the guy said, now for those of you who
 want something for nothing,
 and you know who you are,
 here’s something for you:
 it’s a free cellular phone—that’s free,
 folks
 and with that phone you get 500 min-
 utes of talk time a month—free —
 that’s 500 minutes, folks
 that’s all free
 and it can be yours for just \$50 a month

 words don’t have meaning anymore

 our words are disconnected
 from what they mean

our words but scratch the surface
 scratch the surface
 of an enormous
 an enormous
 language

 we’ve lost the larger picture
 we’ve lost the larger picture
 and we are now disconnected
 disconnected disconnected
 disconnected from the world
 disconnected from each other
 disconnected from God
 disconnected from a larger picture
 our words but scratch the surface
 of an enormous
 an enormous
 language
 we’re beginning to lose
 beginning to lose
 beginning to lose

*You might wish to insert a pastoral
 prayer at this time...*

 now, listen—
 through the babble
 through the noise
 listen to the word
 the word made flesh
 the word connected
 connected to meaning
 connected to the larger picture
 the body of Christ
 fleshed out in people
 fleshed out in the people who are the
 church
 who tell the story
 and sing the song
 the song of creation
 the song of the Creator
 each voice needed
 each voice celebrated
 in harmony

 it’s not that we’re not different
 it’s not that we’re all the same
 words that connect acknowledge the
 difference of people
 the distinctiveness—the otherness
 but forge a connection we recognize
 even words that hurt and anger connect
 words are the instruments of commu-
 nication
 and communication is the heart of
 relationship
 a word made flesh brings relationship
 to life and love

makes of connections a living bond
 the connection is a living
 and the disconnections fade
 we are connected through a word made
 flesh
 linked through the very life and love
 the very heart of God
 pulsing through us all
 when one suffers, all suffer
 when one rejoices, all rejoice

 what an oddly connected way of being
 a part of the larger picture
 what an oddly disconnected way of
 being
 in not of this world

 but we begin to understand again
 the enormous language
 the enormous language of God

 once upon a time we were all a part of
 an enormous language
 the language of the song
 that was the song of creation
 the song of the Creator
 resonating in all that is
 all creation linked in harmony
 each voice needed
 each voice celebrated
 connected in caring
 and connected in love

 and now is once upon a time once more
 for those with eyes that see
 for those with ears that hear
 it’s once upon a time once more
 and when you’re part of an enormous
 language
 you find to your amazement
 that you can understand another
 and that another can understand
 you
 in the larger picture
 the larger picture
 the reality of God

*Congregation could sing another ap-
 propriate hymn: “Joyful, Joyful, We
 Adore Thee,” “How Great Thou Art,” “
 O Worship the King.”*

*Note: I included some digressions: the
 comment on TV, the Luke 18: 11 refer-
 ence, and the cell phone commercial.
 Please feel free to add appropriate com-
 mentary/commercials throughout. This
 will work best if you contextualize it for
 your congregation. —jb*

*The spirit of the Lord Yahweh
is upon me because Yahweh has anointed me.*

*Yahweh has sent me
to tell good news to the oppressed,
to bind the brokenhearted,
to announce liberation to the captives,
to release into the light the prisoners in the dark,
to proclaim the year of Yahweh's good will,
and the time of our God's vindication;
to bestow comfort on all who grieve,
to provide solace for those who grieve over Jerusalem,
to give a joyful head-dress
in the place of ashes on the forehead,
the oil of gladness in place of grief,*



*a mantle of praise in place of despair.
And they shall be acclaimed oaks of righteousness,
Yahweh's planting who will display God's honor. They
shall rebuild the ancient walls, they shall raise up the
former desolations, they shall renew devastated cities, the
desolations of long past generations.*

Isaiah 61:1-4

(translated by James M. Kennedy)

The art on this page was created especially for you by Erin Kennedy, an art major at Baylor University. Jim Kennedy, a professor of Old Testament and Erin's father, translated the text from the Hebrew.

Moving into Ordinary Time: a call to worship

by Katie Cook

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8

Litany

ONE: It is the year that King Uzziah died—

MANY: *It is the year that someone we love died; the year that we had many changes in our lives.*

ONE: We go to our place of worship to mourn, to rest, to seek guidance.

MANY: *While we are there, we see the holy; we feel it all around us.*

ONE: We hear God's word and we want to respond.

MANY: *We want to serve; we want to make a difference.*

ONE: Then we get caught up in dailiness;

MANY: *Our deadlines and assignments become our gods.*

ONE: We no longer see the holy;

MANY: *We only see the immediate.*

ONE: We no longer hear God's word for us;

MANY: *We only hear the clock, and the noise outside our windows.*

ONE: We must learn to see through the clutter of our schedules, to grasp the eternal.

MANY: *We must learn to filter out the noise and hear the essential Voice.*

ONE: Let us return to the temple, to see and hear our God;

MANY: *To relight the flame of commitment and celebration in our hearts.*

Invocation

God, we confess this morning that we are weary, because we have allowed our lives to be taken over by the mundane. We no longer expect surprises from you. We no longer greet each day with joy. We think we've seen it all, and we're bored with most of it. We don't want to face our pain or each other's pain. We want to sit in numbness and let platitudes wash over us like some kind of harmless balm. We ask that you would wake us up to the eternal, the joyful, the delightful.

Give us strength to withstand the afflictions that go with our earthen natures. Give us energy to cope with the changes that keep happening around us. But most of all, we ask that you would not allow us to sleepwalk through our journey with you. We ask that you would come among us and make your presence known in such a way that we cannot remain numb, in such a way that we will say, with new energy and delight, "Here we are. Tell us what to do."

In the name of Christ we pray. Amen.

Meditation

Mystery said, "Go give the deaf Hell till you're blue in the face and go show the blind Heaven till you drop in your tracks because they'd sooner eat ground glass than swallow the bitter pill that puts roses in the cheeks and the gleam in the eye. Go do it."

Isaiah said, "Do it till when?"

Mystery said, "Till Hell freezes over."

Mystery said, "Do it till the cows come home."

And that is what a prophet does for a living, and starting from the year that King Uzziah died when he saw and heard all these things, Isaiah went and did it.

Frederick Buechner, *Listening to Your Life*



art by Peter Yuichi Clark