

Sunday, June 5, 2022 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Pentecost Sunday
Bible Study –Acts 2:1-21 and Genesis 11:1-9**

“Overcoming Babel”

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes)

In pairs, tell a story of when you experienced exuberant joy (such that others might have questioned your sobriety).

Acts 2:1-21. Context. In the Jewish calendar, the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot in Hebrew) came fifty days after the Feast of Passover. This was the second of the three annual pilgrimage feasts that all Jews coming from wherever they lived were expected to celebrate at the Temple in Jerusalem. As the Feast of Passover celebrated God’s liberation of the people from bondage in Egypt, so the Feast of Weeks celebrated God’s giving the Law to Moses and the people at Mt. Sinai. Today Jews observe the Feast of Weeks with several traditions: reading the Torah and other sacred texts throughout the night of the eve of Pentecost (to make up for the Israelites who reportedly got up late on the day when God gave the Torah); eating only dairy products – blintzes, cheesecake, etc. (when God gave the Torah, they realized that they had no kosher meat or utensils); decorating homes and synagogues with tree branches and flowers (the Israelites had found Mt. Sinai lush with flowers and vegetation). “Pentecost” is the Greek term for 50. For Christians, the Feast of Pentecost is the celebration of the giving of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Christian Church.

Read Acts 2:1-21 and Genesis 11:1-9

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Acts 2:1-21 and Genesis 11:1-9 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- How was the building of the tower of Babel an act of disobedience? [Notice the repetition of the word “scatter” in verse 4 and verse 8. The people were called to scatter but instead followed their own desire.]

- As a group, list the ways the church and your congregation make a positive witness to God's love in the world.
- What might it mean to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (v. 4)? What would it look like in your life?
- Where in the passage are there images of violence or power? Where in the passage are there images of order and justice?
- Optional exercise: If your group consists of participants who speak different languages, for as many different languages as are spoken, have them read the first two verses of this passage at the same time. How is this experience? We often focus on speaking in different tongues. How might the miracle of this story also include the ability to hear among the chaos and confusion (v. 8)?
- How did the disciples change following Pentecost? As a group, highlight the ways in which the disciples changed pre- and post-Pentecost. [Prior to Pentecost, they often misunderstood Jesus; for example, asking to be the greatest instead of seeking the way of servanthood; and they were hiding in fear following Jesus' crucifixion. Following Pentecost, they preach boldly, heal in Jesus' name, witness in distant lands (Acts 1:8), and are willing to risk their lives for the gospel message.]
- How does worship contain both order and dynamism or power? [Order: There is usually some preplanned flow or order to a worship service. There might be bulletins or even a printed order of worship. There are prewritten prayers and liturgies. Sermons are usually organized and planned ahead of time. Dynamism or Power: We hope to encounter God through and beyond our planning. While music is often rehearsed, there is a dynamism when it is performed within a worship service and the congregation is present. Though the sermon is prewritten, we freshly encounter the Word of God.]
- Why might our worship services be considered too tame? [We might overemphasize the orderly at the expense of the dynamism of the Holy Spirit.]
- Why might worship properly be considered a dangerous event? [We are encountering the living God!] What difference would it make if we approached the next worship service we attend with an attitude that reflected this level of apprehension about what God might do in us and through us?
- **(R)** How is Pentecost the reversal of Babel? What do both say about God's desire for the church community?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Spirit of God, we give you thanks even as we acknowledge that we cannot control you (though we may try) and don't always see where you are guiding us (though we may try). Fill us with your Spirit that we might be the diverse and fruitful people of God that you call us to be. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.