

Sermon Followed by Service

May 28, 2023

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ever have the breath knocked out of you? The first time I remember having the breath knocked out of me, I was in third grade and a hundred pound mountain by the name of Chad Tweit fell on my back. I could feel my eyes being pushed out of their sockets and my tongue being pulled down my throat. I thought I was going to die. Do you know the feeling? It isn't until we can't take a breath that we realize how important breathing is for our life.

In the same way we often take the breath of the Holy Spirit for granted. We might not realize and appreciate what the Spirit gives us until our souls are empty and gasping without him.

In our lesson, Ezekiel's congregation seems to be past gasping. It's about 600 years before Christmas. Ezekiel's congregation has been torn from their homes in Jerusalem and sent into exile in Babylon. They're hopeless, despairing, crying, **“Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.”** Have you ever felt so depressed that your bones ached? In his psalms, David sang that way about his guilt. Here Ezekiel talks that way about his peoples' hopelessness. The exiles are tired and depressed. They feel shriveled with no strength to make it through the day. Their homeland has been pillaged, their beautiful temple destroyed. Now they're in exile hundreds of miles from home with nothing to live for, no hope of returning home. Ezekiel's promises, and God's promises that they would return home meant nothing to them. The people had no hope; they were just putting in their time, waiting for their life to get over with and die.

For those people God gave Ezekiel a vision, a picture of his people: **“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.”** God's people had become a picture of death. Everywhere Ezekiel looked he saw meatless, dry bones bleaching in the sun, bones so dead and dry a dog wouldn't even want them. God's people were a picture of death, a death valley.

It looked hopeless, but the Lord tells Ezekiel: **“Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.’”** Talk to the dead bones and promise them life. It doesn't make sense, but Ezekiel did it. And this is what he sees: **“as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.”** Almost sounds like a late-night horror movie. Bones rattle around and come together as skeletons; muscle and flesh appear on the bones and cover them. But they're still lifeless, so God tells Ezekiel: **“Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say ... ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’”** So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.”

Sounds like a great Easter lesson - God raising the dead to life. But what God says makes this an even better Pentecost lesson. God tells his people: **“I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.”** Israel had become a people dead to God, lifeless, hopeless. But God promises, by the power of his Spirit, to wake his people up, to bring

them back to life, to give them hope, and make them to be his people, a vast army for God.

What does that mean for us? At times we might look around in the church and instead of seeing a vast army for God we might see dry bones, tired bones, aching bones. We might wonder about the tired bones: “What can those tired bones do?” We might ask about the lifeless, dry bones: “What will they ever do?” Or seeing the dead, dry bones around us we might just gasp: “Why bother?” showing we can be a bit tired and dead ourselves. Perhaps we feel stuck in the valley of dead, dry bones and feel too tired, too hopeless, too Spiritless to be any different. Or maybe we feel so dead to God - his law doesn't jolt us, his love doesn't warm us - perhaps we feel so dead to God we figure “dead to God isn't all that bad ... because I'm alive in the world.”

We might wonder - why does the church sometimes look and act like a valley of dead, dry bones? Ezekiel's congregation felt lifeless with God, breathless without the Spirit, because they had been too busy chasing the life of their neighbors. They wanted to be like the rest of the world; they wanted the stuff of the world; they wanted to fit in and be friends with the world. And that chase left them breathless. So - little by little - they stopped chasing after God; they even stopped walking with God because they didn't have the time or energy for both life with God and life in the world. And besides, God's way didn't fit their way, so they went their own way instead of God's way. They gave up the Spirit of Truth (a little bit here, and little bit there) to fit in better with their friends. It doesn't sound right, but God's people gave up life with God. And then they had the breath knocked out of them. They wanted the life of the world, so God stepped back and let the world have at them. And the world treated

them the way a turkey vulture goes after dead meat, leaving nothing but dead, dry bones.

When we look at our congregation directory, we see some of that same deadness, for the same reasons. Chasing after the life and the stuff of the world. Stepping back from God as too tired, too busy. Giving up the Spirit of Truth to fit in. Arguing with God over who is the boss. Blaming God when they get their breath knocked out of them. On so many pages, what looks to be dry bones. Sad, and sadder still because they knew better; they were warned. Like we know better and we've been warned. Yet what? - we have some of that same dead, dry bone thinking in us, thinking that would leave us gasping for the Spirit.

When you're gasping, gasping for breath in your rat race, gasping for hope, gasping for purpose, gasping for the Spirit of God ... when you see others gasping for the Spirit ... when you see the valleys of dead dry bones ... remember what the Spirit did in Ezekiel's vision. By his breath and preaching the Spirit gave life to those dead bones. God restored his people and by his Spirit they again knew God as Lord.

By that same Spirit, God restores us. Instead of leaving us on the bone pile of the cursed, dead to God and insisting on living life our way ... instead of leaving us with the breath knocked out of us, crashed and burned-out by the rat race ... instead of leaving us Godless, hopeless, and lifeless ...

By the Spirit, God has restored you. He's given you the cross of Christ, his suffering and death to pay for our dead-to-God sin. He's given you the life of Jesus to be your life - right and holy before God. By the Spirit of God - in water and the Word - he restores you to life

in the family of God. By the Spirit, he sets you free from the rat race of this world to walk, to run, to soar with God. By the Spirit of God, we don't need to feel burned out, crashed out, run out. By the Spirit of God, you have the love of God, the victory of Christ, the hope of heaven. By the Spirit of God, you are restored with the power and promise of God to be the army of God - bringing God's love to this world and putting evil in its place.

Yes, by the Spirit, you have God to make you alive. Don't wait until you're gasping. Don't wait til you have the breath knocked out of you. Let the Spirit fill you with life, God's life! Amen.

May 27 & 28, 2023

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... Christ's church can look and feel lifeless - some parts of the church looking and acting just as dead as the world around, some parts feeling down and out with all the deadness around.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we celebrate Pentecost Sunday and the life that the Spirit gives us!

OPENING HYMN

"Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord"

Hymn 585

Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord! May all your graces be outpoured
on each believer's mind and heart; your fervent love to them impart.
Lord, by the brightness of your light you gather and in faith unite
your Church from ev'ry land and tongue:
this to your praise, O Lord our God, be sung. Alleluia, alleluia!

Come, holy Light, guide divine, and cause the Word of life to shine.
Teach us to know our God aright and call him Father with delight.
From ev'ry error keep us free; let none but Christ our master be
that we in living faith abide, in him, our Lord, with all our might confide.
Alleluia, alleluia!

Come, holy Fire, comfort true, grant us the will your work to do
and in your service to abide; let trials turn us not aside.
Lord, by your pow'r prepare each heart,
and to our weakness strength impart that bravely here we may contend,
through life and death to you, our Lord, ascend. Alleluia, alleluia!

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves
and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY

CW 174

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

CW 176

Refrain: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. *Refrain*

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer. *Refrain*

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen. Amen. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy Spirit, God and Lord, come to us this joyful day with your sevenfold gift of grace. Rekindle in our hearts the holy fire of your love that in a true and living faith we may tell abroad the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Father, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 2:1–21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

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. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

" '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.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

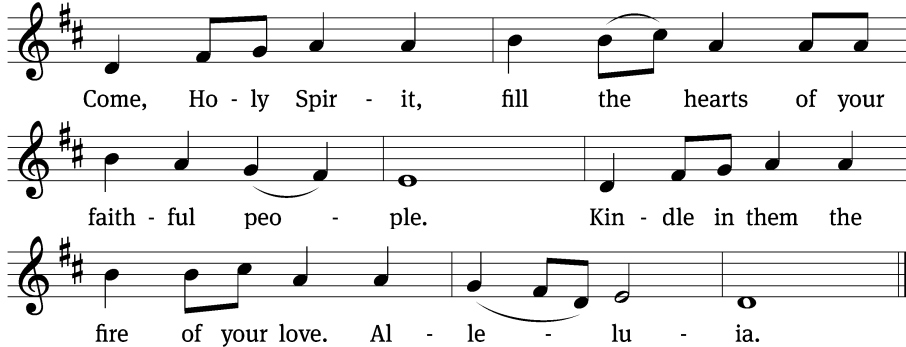
And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

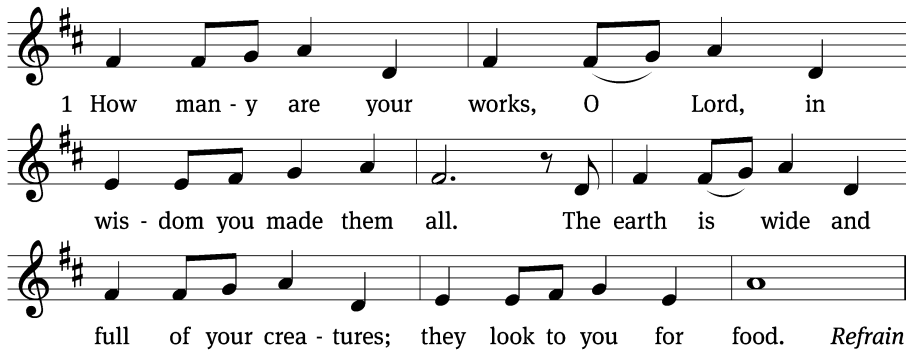
Psalm 104D

Refrain



Come, Ho - ly Spir - it, fill the hearts of your
faith - ful peo - ple. Kin - dle in them the
fire of your love. Al - le - lu - ia.

Verse



1 How man - y are your works, O Lord, in
wis - dom you made them all. The earth is wide and
full of your crea - tures; they look to you for food. *Refrain*

Verse



2 When you give them their food in due sea - son,
they gath - er it up. When you send forth your
Spir - it, you make them and you re - new the earth. *Refrain*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

John 14:15–21, 25–27

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me.

Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

“O Day Full of Grace”

Hymn 477

O day full of grace that now we see appearing on earth’s horizon,
bring light from our God that we may be replete in his joy this season.
God, shine for us now in this dark place;
your name on our hearts emblazon.

O day full of grace, O blessed time, our Lord on the earth arriving;
then came to the world that light sublime, great joy for us all retrieving,
for Jesus all mortals did embrace, all darkness and shame removing.

For Christ bore our sins, and not his own,
when he on the cross was hanging,
and then he arose to claim his throne that we, unto him belonging,
might join with angelic hosts to raise our voices in endless singing.

God came to us then at Pentecost, his Spirit new life revealing,
that we might no more from him be lost, all darkness for us dispelling.
His flame will the mark of sin efface and bring to us all his healing.

When we on that final journey go that Christ is for us preparing,
we'll gather in song, our hearts aglow, all joy of the heavens sharing,
and walk in the light of God's own place, with angels his name adoring.

SERMON

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.' "

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' " So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'"

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, we thank you that you kept your promise and sent the Holy Spirit to your Church. Move us to celebrate the Day of Pentecost with special joy because you continue to send your Spirit to equip and empower us to be your witnesses in the world.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

The signs of fire and wind accompanied the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost. We seek no signs but rely on your promise that the energy of the Spirit will encourage us as we believe and proclaim the good news.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

You, Lord Jesus, received the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit to equip you for your mission. Send those blessings to us, we pray. Cause your Spirit to rest on us and enrich us with wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, and the knowledge and fear of the Lord. Guide us to seek these gifts and use them as we share the message of your love.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Through the power of the Spirit grant us a determined zeal to reach out to the lost. Give us courage to confess the truth clearly and compassion to confess the truth in love.

Guide us as we encourage brothers and sisters to join us in your mission and enable us to work together to make disciples of all nations.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

We pray that your Spirit may raise up many more men and women who are willing to be our voices in our nation and around the world. Prepare these witnesses in their education and life experiences to be able to reach out to every nation, tribe, language, and people. Keep them in your care as they serve in our place and for your cause.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Restrain the evil of Satan as we proclaim your truth. Protect all your people from social and physical persecution. When we endure the cross for following you, provide courage and patience. Safeguard our economy and guide our political leaders so that we may proclaim the gospel freely to all. **Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.**

We pray each day that you keep in your care all who are enduring the troubles and tragedies of life: those whose bodies are racked with pain, those who struggle with depression and fear, those who endure the frustration of poverty, those who grieve because of a sudden loss, and those who are facing the reality of death. [We pray especially for...*here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Let your Spirit bring their prayers and ours to your Father's throne of grace.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Lord Jesus, continue to pour out your Holy Spirit that he may renew us with his pentecostal power. May his love ignite our hearts and his breath impel our steps to preach the gospel to every creature.

Come, Holy Spirit, renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love. Amen.

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; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who on this day kept his promise and poured out the Holy Spirit to empower his Church to proclaim the gospel in all the world. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might.

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my T body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my T blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

JESUS, LAMB OF GOD

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your
peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

“Come, O Come, Life-Giving Spirit”

Hymn 588

Come, O come, life-giving Spirit, God from all eternity!
May your power never fail us; dwell within us constantly.
Then shall truth and life and light banish all the gloom of night.

Show us, Lord, the path of blessing; when we trespass on our way,
cast, O Lord, our sins behind you and be with us day by day.
Should we stray, O Lord, recall; work repentance when we fall.

Spirit, guard our faith forever; let not Satan, death, or shame
ever part us from our Savior. Lord, our refuge is your name!
When our hearts oppose your will, let your Word prove stronger still.

And when life’s frail thread is breaking, then assure us more and more,
as the heirs of life unending, of the glory there in store,
glory never yet expressed, glory of the saints at rest.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you
have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith,
nourished our hope, and strengthened our love.

By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Holy Spirit, Light Divine”

Hymn 593 vs. 1, 3, 5

Holy Spirit, light divine, shine upon this heart of mine;
chase the gloom of night away, turn the darkness into day.

Holy Spirit, joy divine, cheer this saddened heart of mine;
fill me with your heav’nly peace, let it grow and still increase.

Holy Spirit, fill my heart, cleanse my life in ev’ry part;
your own temple I would be now and for eternity.

OFFERING

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June 10 / Summer Project List

Please feel free to recruit some help and take on a project - on your schedule or on ours!
If you have questions, we have some contact names below, or ask Pastor.

Outside Yard Projects - Contact Todd Haefke

Painting - Contact Pastor

- Heating/Cooling unit conduits - paint wall color.
Paint and some supplies are on the stage.
- Classroom Wall Repairs - walls should be ready later in June
- Grout Lines - school restrooms

Inside Cleaning - Contact _____

- Goo Gone Patrol - hunt down and wipe out gooey tape residue
- Downstairs Cubbies
- Church/School Entry - church wall "sill"
- Fellowship Hall Restroom Floors (grout cleaning and sealing)
- Fellowship Hall Microwaves

Ladder Work - Contact Pastor

- Gutter (far-east) over lift sidewalk leaks onto sidewalk
- Church/School Entry lights (scaffolding needed)
- Light bulbs

Destruction - Contact Pastor

- Rip Out water-damaged wall in lift shaft

Repairs - Contact Pastor / Amy

- Office folding machine

Muscle Moving

- Old carpet runner (north landing outside) to garbage
- Laptop charger cabinet (ESS Storage Room) to Kindergarten-Room
- Classroom dividers (3) (outside of Fellowship Hall) to Grade 5-6 Room
- Classroom divider (3-4 Grade Room) to Grade 5-6 Room
- Classroom Move (before and after floor cleaning)

Technology (It's not all techy.)

- Assist Justin with Tech Set-Up