

MAY

Praying with the Wind

Wendy Janzen

OVERVIEW

The Christian festival of Pentecost often falls in the month of May, celebrating the gift of the Spirit to the early followers of Christ. The Spirit is often described as wind. In her book *Water, Wind, Earth & Fire: The Christian Practice of Praying with the Elements*, Christine Valters Paintner offers some insights into praying with the wind. “The metaphor of air or wind offers us a variety of ways to understand our experience of God: as life-breath, as inspiration, as enlivener, as directional guide, as powerful force, or as the current that supports flight... The element of wind invites us to ‘open our souls to Being’ which means opening ourselves to a God who flows in directions we cannot predict. This element invites us to a radical posture of surrender...”

Air connects us with our breath, and with all living organisms who breathe or transpire. When we breathe in oxygen, it is a gift from the trees and plants, and when we breathe out carbon dioxide we return the gift in an act of unconscious reciprocity.

See the [Introduction](#) to this series of worship services for further background and insights into planning this kind of outdoor worship service.

GATHERING & GROUNDING

Welcome. Introductions. Territorial Acknowledgement.

As we enter into worship together, I invite you to repeat after me:

I am open.

I am listening.

God is with us.

Before we close our eyes to tune into our other senses, take a good look around. Though we can't see the wind or the Spirit, we can see evidence of its presence, animating and

enlivening. Look at the sky, the clouds, the trees, birds, people... Our God, the Sacred Source of Life, blows the breath of life into *all* creation. (pause)

I invite you to close your eyes now, and take some deep breaths... let go of whatever tensions you bring with you. As you breathe, notice the fact that your breath happens on its own. Even when you aren't mindful of it, the Spirit of Life breathes through you every moment of your life. (pause) Breathe in the very sky that encircles our entire planet... breathe in the oxygen that has been produced by the trees around us... breathe in the breath of God. (pause)

Listen to the sounds around us. Can you tune into sounds beyond human activity? (ie, wind, birds, rain, insects, animals...). (pause)

Now notice how the air feels on your skin, and feel the earth beneath your feet - is it hard, or soft, squishy, sandy, rocky, grassy? This ground holds us and sustains all that is alive. (pause)

Let's now allow ourselves to come into awareness of God's presence within and around us as we enter into prayer.

Wild Wind of the Spirit,
enliven us with your life-breath.
Free us to dance like the wildflowers
swaying in the breeze.
Help our spirits soar like hawks
on thermal winds.
Make us truly awake, fully alive,
and abundantly aware of your presence
as we move into this time of worship.
Amen.

READINGS & REFLECTIONS

Choose from these, or other scripture passages about the Spirit. Also feel free to use either of the quotes listed, or others, for inspiration.

Genesis 1:1-2, Isaiah 42:5, John 3:8, Acts 2:1-2, or 17

“Let me seek, then, the gift of silence, and poverty, and solitude, where everything I touch is turned into prayer: where the sky is my prayer, the birds are my prayer, the wind in the trees is my prayer, for God is in all.” – Thomas Merton

*“Wisdom—omnipotent moving—
embracing this world,
informing everything that is
and everything that has life
in one unending circle.
You have three wings.
The first unfolds and flies through the highest sky.
The second dips down, touching the earth.
The third whirls its way over, under, and
through all things.
We praise You, Wisdom,
for You are worthy of praise.”*
– Hildegard of Bingen

“The element of wind invites us to ‘open our souls to Being,’ which means opening ourselves to a God who flows in directions we cannot predict. This element invites us to a radical posture of surrender in releasing our hold on our own plans and making room for God to blow us in the most life-giving direction. As a metaphor for God, wind reminds us that God’s ways are not our ways.” – Christine Valters Paintner

“Creation emerges out of the energies of God’s own Spirit, bridging the gulf between Creator and creature, actor and act, and master and work. Human creativity is intimately bound up in God’s own creativity. Ruach can give life to the lifeless and bring renewed life to those who have no hope. The Spirit of God is at work in creation.” – Grace Ji-Sun Kim

Offer a few focused thoughts about wind and Spirit to invite participants to think about the theme.

WANDERING & WONDERING

Use these next 30 minutes to walk and wander, or to sit and ponder the wind of the Spirit. Pay attention to your breath, and to all other beings that use or produce oxygen. Allow your imagination to connect your breathing with the breathing of all living creatures, including plant life. Consider your connection with the vast matrix of life within which we live, and the Spirit of Life that blows within and around everything that is.

We will ring a bell after 30 minutes, but if you wander a distance you may need to keep track of your own time. Let us plan to reconvene here at _____.

You are encouraged to spend this time in contemplative silence. See what happens, what draws your attention, what you observe without overthinking!

Children's activities during this time could include blowing soap bubbles, cloud-watching, flying a kite, or making pinwheels.

SHARING

This is an open time for anyone who wishes to share observations, reflections, questions, gifts, inspiration or insights that came to you during your time of wandering and wondering. This can be done around the circle or in smaller groups.

SENDING

Creator of all, Eternal Christ, Spirit of Life:

You have met us here, and
together with the voices of the
heavens and all creation,
we rejoice and give thanks for
Your enlivening presence -
inspiring us, challenging us, unsettling us.

As we go from here, may we remember
there is no place we can go where you are not.
Amen.

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