

Learning Together Pentecost Sunday Covid-19 - Amazed and Astonished!

Have an empty paper towel roll, a piece of party streamer in a flame colour like red, orange or yellow, scissors and some tape ready.

Ahead of time, get the proper pronunciation of "I love you" in one or two languages you know to be significant to any families in your congregation.

Jesus promised his disciples that after he was gone, he would send the Holy Spirit to help guide them in their work of sharing God's love in the world. Today's story tells how that happened. It is called the story of Pentecost, because it starts on the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, which is a celebration that starts fifty days after Passover. The disciples were gathered together for the feast in a room of a house in Jerusalem.

"And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting." And then all around them, little tongues of fire appeared in the air and rested on each of them. They weren't hurt by these little tongues of fire. Instead, each of them found their own tongues began speaking in all kinds of different languages - languages that they didn't even know how to speak before! Remember, the disciples were mostly fishermen and other local folks from Galilee. They weren't exactly world travelers.

But there were lots of world travelers outside in the streets of Jerusalem. I wonder if you have ever been in a city like Vancouver or Toronto and heard different people speaking different languages to each other as they walk down the street? So, other people outside the house heard the disciples talking in all these different languages, and some of those people understood what they were saying. They were amazed and astonished at what they heard they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?"

It is amazing and astonishing what the Holy Spirit can do! Sometimes I wish I could just learn to speak a new language like that – all of the sudden. It would be nice to be able to talk to anyone in the world. Mostly people need to take time and care learning a language. I wonder if you speak any language besides English? I wonder if there are any you hope to learn some day? This time of staying at home might be a good time to start trying, maybe online using a website or an app, or maybe you might learn from a book.

Here's a challenge for you this week, though – how many different languages can you learn how to say "I love you" in? Can you say it in French? "Je t'aime." How about German? "Ich liebe dich." (Add one or two more languages you know are spoken in your congregation here.) You can look them up online using something like Google Translate, or better yet, ask someone you know who speaks another language to tell you how to say "I love you" in that language.

And for those of you who would like another challenge with a little more physical activity to it, I have a craft for you to make your own Pentecost flame. All you need is an empty paper towel roll, a piece of party streamer – a flame colour like red, orange or yellow would be nice, but you can use whatever you have – scissors and some tape. Cut a piece of streamer a little less than a metre long and tape it to the inside of the paper towel roll. (*demonstrate cutting and taping*) Then you can use the roll as a handle to make your tongue of fire dance through the air. (*demonstrate by waving the streamer through the air*) These are also fun to take outside and throw it tube side first through the air like you would a dart, and watch the streamer flutter behind like a rocket flame, but I am not going to do that inside. I might knock over the camera!

Join me in an echo prayer:

Dear God...thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit...to guide us...and help us to love each other...We ask that you help people everywhere...to better understand each other...and to listen carefully...to what others say...We pray in Jesus' name...Amen.

