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Booklet



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This booklet can be used as a stand-alone daily devotional. Or, if you would like to follow the sermons, they can be downloaded from our website at www.northfield.co.za or a cd-set of the sermon series is available for sale in our bookshop, and can be used as an accompaniment for this booklet. If you are using the devotions together with the sermon series at Northfield Methodist Church, then the readings start the day AFTER the sermon is preached, and the start date for each reading is:

HOLY SPIRIT SERIES

Week 1:

The Pentecost Of Dry Bones	Page 1
The Breath That Gives Life	Page 2
Breath That Moves To Action	Page 3
Breath That Gives Hope Fearlessness	Page 4
Spirit Of God Hovering	Page 5
The Spirit Of God	Page 6
The Pentecost Of Dry Bones	Page 7

Week 2:

Holy Spirit Series – Pentecost	Page 9
Church And Fire	Page 10
Foreign Languages	Page 11
Tongues Of Fire	Page 12
Mighty Wind	Page 13
Strangely Warmed	Page 14

These devotions are written by a team of writers and ministers from Northfield Methodist Church. An electronic version of this booklet that is formatted for easy reading on your tablet or phone, can be downloaded from our website, or you can request to be added to the email list. These daily devotions booklets are free of charge. They go to our congregation, and they are used for personal devotions and by Bible study and cell groups. Our visitations teams also take them to people who are in hospitals and who are home-bound, and to aged-care facilities and prisons. To keep these booklets free, and to be able to print as many as possible to spread them far and wide, we really need your help! To make any contribution towards our costs, please use the banking details:

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WEEK 1 - DAY 1 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES– THE PENTECOST OF DRY BONES

Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-6

“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.’” Ezekiel was known as the Exilic prophet. The reason for this is because when Jerusalem was conquered, the Temple was destroyed and some people were taken to Babylon in Exile, Ezekiel was one of these sent into Exile. It was in Exile that his wife died and he lived right through Exile. When he was in Exile the people started losing hope, they believed that God had forsaken them. They also believed that the Spirit of God lived in the Temple and on their land in Jerusalem. So there was a thought that in Exile God’s presence wasn’t with them. Ezekiel challenges this idea through a variety of prophecies, visions and exhortations.

One of these visions is this one about the valley of the dry bones. There are a few words within these first few verses that speak loudly. The bones are described as very dry. Sometimes in life our souls feel very dry, it feels like we have no life within us, we are thirsty for something in life. When God asks Ezekiel if these bones can live, Ezekiel answers that You alone know. After this God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones and tell them to hear the word of the Lord. After hearing the word of the Lord the breath will enter these bones and they will come to life. This shows something of the power of the breath of God, that even the driest of bones, even the emptiest of souls can find life when the breath of God has been breathed on us.

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit of God! I need restoration and life renewed.
Amen

WEEK 1 - DAY 2 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – THE BREATH THAT GIVES LIFE.

Reading: Ezekiel 37:5

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life”

God gives a promise within this prophesy that God will make breath enter the dry bones and they will come to life. The breath of God that is spoken about here is the same word for the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit.

There are two profound truths within this one verse:

1. God gives the Holy Spirit.

The verse speaks about God making the breath enter the bones. This is such a beautiful description of the unconditional gift of the Spirit of God. The bones didn't deserve the breath of God, they didn't earn it, they simply received it. Likewise we don't earn the Holy Spirit, we don't deserve the Holy Spirit, it is a gift from God given by God.

2. The Holy Spirit brings life.

Many people are alive and few people live. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, when God breathes his breath on us, there is a profound reawakening. We are born into a new way of life, a way of life that is different to what we have ever experienced. This way of life is a life that is truly alive. We become alive to our relationship with God and God becomes very real to us.

May we be open to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, that brings us life.

Prayer: God our Father, as I spend time with you in prayer today, will you help me see the barriers that I build that prevent me from responding to others. Amen

WEEK 1 - DAY 3 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – BREATH THAT MOVES TO ACTION.

Reading: Ezekiel 37:7-10

“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.”

The next thing that happens to the dry bones is that they are moved to action. They start to rise up and move and eventually become a vast army.

When God breathes on us and we are touched by the Holy Spirit, we become part of something bigger than ourselves. We are called to become people of action that bring life to those around us. We are called to be the Salt of the earth, the light of the world. In other words an encounter with God’s Spirit means that we are part of a “vast army”, an army of life. I love this image, often armies bring about death and destruction, whereas here is an army where the opposite happens. There isn’t death and destruction, but a reversal of death and destruction, life.

We are called to be part of this movement of life, where as the pieces of our dry souls are put back together and filled with life we join with others who have been through the same process, and then we become part of this army of life and light.

May our encounter with God’s Spirit always lead us to action of great life.

Prayer: O God of the prophets, you remind us to Love Mercy, to Act Justly and to Walk humbly with you God in this world as we care for the Vulnerable. Amen.

WEEK 1 - DAY 4 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – BREATH THAT GIVES HOPE.

Reading: Ezekiel 37:11-14

“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.’¹² 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.’¹³ Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.¹⁴ 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.”

This prophecy moves from being about a ‘distant, nameless army’ to the people in Israel going through Exile. They are in the middle of Exile, they are still trapped in hopelessness, they still feel as though they are separated from God, they are still dry. And in this prophecy Ezekiel shows them that God makes them a few promises, that with his Spirit they will find life, they will find hope, they will be at home and they will be with God.

In many ways we have been through our own exile during Covid. Many of the ways where we previously connected with God have been taken away from many of us. This could mean that we feel dry, disconnected and even hopeless.

This passage is a reminder that God promises a revival, a new life, a life of connectedness, hope, life and belonging. All these things come, not with the rebuilding of a Temple, not with the ending of Exile, not with the end of Covid. These things come with the breath of God, the Holy Spirit being poured out and into all of us. Life is found, not in the absence of hardship, but in the presence of God’s Spirit.

Prayer: Father God, *help me* be the church to the vulnerable in this world, loving, caring, embracing and faithful. Amen

WEEK 1 - DAY 5 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES - SPIRIT OF GOD HOVERING.

Reading: Genesis 1:1-2

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

The first two verses of Genesis gives us a profound image of the Spirit of God.

They show that from the beginning of creation the Spirit of God was there. The Holy Spirit is therefore not new. The Holy Spirit has always been and will always be, the Holy Spirit is part of God and is God.

These two verse show that God’s Spirit hovers. The Holy Spirit is present. Even in the midst of darkness, emptiness, even in difficult spaces and chaotic situations the Holy Spirit hovers over these situations, longing, waiting, preparing to bring about goodness, life and restoration.

This is helpful, hopeful and encouraging to know that even when my life feels chaotic, destructive, painful and empty the Holy Spirit is hovering over the chaos of my life and waiting for an opportunity to bring about life and recreation.

May we allow the Holy Spirit of God to not only hover over us, but to minister to us so that we can receive the life, the restoration and the creation that is promised to us.

Prayer: Holy Spirit of God. Help us never to limit God’s ability to bless us! May we recognize that the Holy Spirit is hovering over my life, even when my life is not in a good place. In Jesus name, Amen.

WEEK 1 - DAY 6 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-10

“GOD grabbed me. GOD’s Spirit took me up and set me down in the middle of an open plain strewn with bones. He led me around and among them—a lot of bones! There were bones all over the plain—dry bones, bleached by the sun. He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “Master GOD, only you know that.” He said to me, “Prophesy over these bones: ‘Dry bones, listen to the Message of GOD!’”

GOD, the Master, told the dry bones, “Watch this: I’m bringing the breath of life to you and you’ll come to life. I’ll attach sinews to you, put meat on your bones, cover you with skin, and breathe life into you. You’ll come alive and you’ll realize that I am GOD!” I prophesied just as I’d been commanded. As I prophesied, there was a sound and, oh, rustling! The bones moved and came together, bone to bone. I kept watching. Sinews formed, then muscles on the bones, then skin stretched over them. But they had no breath in them.

He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath. Prophesy, son of man. Tell the breath, ‘GOD, the Master, says, Come from the four winds. Come, breath. Breathe on these slain bodies. Breathe life!’” So I prophesied, just as he commanded me. The breath entered them and they came alive! They stood up on their feet, a huge army.”

I wonder what areas of our life feel like dry bones?

I wonder where we need or long for the Breath of life to enter into our lives?

Hear the words of Jesus as he says that when we ask for the Holy Spirit we will receive what we ask for – Luke 11:9-13.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for outstretched hand to all people. You are a God who leaves the ninety-nine to care for the one. Amen.

WEEK 1 - HOLY SPIRIT SERIES– THE PENTECOST OF DRY BONES

Group Notes

Welcome:

Share a Holy Spirit moment in your life.

Worship:

Lauren Daigle - "Come Alive (Dry Bones) (Live at the CentricWorship Retreat) - YouTube

Prayer:

"We have come, broken, battered, and lifeless. Our bones are dry and we have lost sight of who we are. God breathe new life into us that we might live. We are dead and unaware of when our death occurred. Breathe new life into us that we might live. We need your resurrection power to fall in our lives today. Breathe new life into our lives, Breathe new life into our homes, Breathe new life into our neighbourhoods, Breathe new life into our relationships, Breathe new life into our church. We, like Ezekiel, Mary, and Martha, trust in your power to breathe new life into our dry bones and dead situations. We are waiting for your life-giving spirit to fall upon us so that we might be revived, restored, and renewed; so that we might live resurrected lives with newness and vitality in new and transformative ways. Amen"

Word: Ezekiel 37:1-10

Questions:

1. Why would God give Ezekiel a vision of a valley of dry human bones? What do these bones represent?
2. God asks Ezekiel if these bones can live. What is God trying to teach Ezekiel through this vision?
3. How can we be more open to the Spirit in our lives, especially when sharing our faith?

Work: Spend this week asking the Spirit of God to restore the areas of your life that have become like dry bones.

WEEK 2 - DAY 1 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – PENTECOST

Reading: Acts 2:1-4

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

During this week’s devotions we acknowledge two important days for us as Methodist People. Pentecost and Aldersgate Day. Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Easter, the day when God poured out the Holy Spirit on the early church, the birthday of the church. Aldersgate Day could be considered the birthday of Methodism and the common theme between both of those events is FIRE.

On the day of Pentecost, the first Christians were huddled together in a room praying. And all of a sudden they heard the sound of a rushing wind. And they saw tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. And the next thing they knew they were out in the streets proclaiming the good news in languages they had never learned. Pentecost is the day the Holy Spirit came in fire. And throughout the Scriptures, FIRE is a sign of the presence of God.

- God spoke to Moses through a bush that was on FIRE.
- God led his people through the desert in a pillar of FIRE.
- When God gave the Ten Commandments, Mt. Sinai was on FIRE.
- When Solomon’s temple was dedicated, the presence of God was manifested in FIRE.
- When Elijah faced the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel, the Lord consumed his offering in FIRE.
- When John the Baptist came preaching in the desert, he said, “The One who comes after me will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with FIRE.”

Prayer: Come Holy Spirit of God! I too want to be on fire for Jesus.

WEEK 2 - DAY 2 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – CHURCH AND FIRE

Reading: Acts 2:5-8

“Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?”

The church is a movement born in FIRE. And you know what else? Methodism is a movement born in fire. It started with a little boy 6 years old asleep in a bed that had curtains around it. He woke up to what he thought was sunlight. The light on the other side of his curtains was as bright as day. He puts his head out – and sees streaks of fire shooting across the ceiling. The boy runs to the door and opens it, but the whole rest of the house is on fire. He runs over to the window, but his room is on the second floor, and he’s too little to jump that far. But somebody on the ground below looks up and sees the boy’s frightened face in the window, and he says, “Look! Somebody’s still in there! I’ll go get a ladder!” And then somebody else on the ground says, “No, there won’t be time – let’s make a human ladder” – and that man stands against the wall and braces himself, and another man climbs up on his shoulders, and they get the boy out. And at that very second, the roof of the burning house comes crashing down. The little boy is saved in the nick of time. Later his mother said to him, “John, you are ‘a brand plucked from the burning.’ God has saved you for a special purpose.” And John Wesley never forgot those words.

Do we live life with a purpose? Do we live each day fully surrendered to God? May we live each day with a burning desire to serve the Kingdom of God and go where the Spirit of God leads us

Prayer: God our Father, you have a special purpose for each one of us. Holy Spirit will you show us the way as we live life fully surrendered to Jesus. Amen

WEEK 2 - DAY 3 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Reading: Acts 2:12-13

“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.”

The Holy Spirit gave the disciples the ability to speak in other languages in order that they could communicate the gospel. Jews from all over the known world made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost.

By the power of the Holy Spirit the disciples were able to share the good news of Jesus with the gathered people. People heard the gospel in their own language and many of them responded to the words of the disciples and became members of the growing Christian community.

We may not speak foreign languages. The Spirit still is able to use us to communicate God’s love and grace with others, though. Through our words and deeds the Holy Spirit touches the lives of the people around us and transforms their lives by giving them the gift of faith.

Have you considered who you can communicate the love and grace of God with today? Ask the Holy Spirit to touch the life of someone you reach out to as you share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Gracious God, anoint our words and deeds so that your Holy Spirit can touch the people around us and they can respond in faith. Amen.

WEEK 2 - DAY 4 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – TONGUES OF FIRE

Reading: Acts 2:3

³“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them”

When we read the story of the first Pentecost we are fascinated by the imagery—the mighty wind and the flames of fire. The picture of the disciples looking like human Bic lighters with flames on their head seems odd, at the very least. What was Luke trying to communicate by including this detail? Evidently the flames did not last long. The crowds make no mention of flames of fire when they comment that the disciples appear drunk at 9:00 in the morning.

The Scripture often describes the Lord, who has no image, as appearing to humans in the form of fire. God revealed himself to Moses on the side of Mount Sinai as a burning bush. Fire is a fitting symbol for God. An open fire cannot be contained or controlled. A fire is present, but it isn't a solid, liquid or gas. A fire has no shape or substance.

God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and God appeared to the disciples on that first Pentecost as a flame of fire. God was present with the disciples.

The disciples had both the power of the Holy Spirit and the attendance of God. The disciples were not alone as they began to continue the ministry of Jesus and accomplish their mission.

We are not alone either as we take steps of faith to boldly, lovingly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and share God's love and grace.

Prayer: Jesus Christ, today we once again proclaim you as Lord and Saviour!

WEEK 2 - DAY 5 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – MIGHTY WIND

Reading: Acts 2:2

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.”

We cannot see it and when it is still we cannot feel it, but the wind still has great power.

Wind farms that contain hundreds of wind turbines create enough power to light cities. Through the millennia the wind has shaped solid stone. It pushes ships from port to port and lifts kites high into the air. The wind can turn destructive and when it does it can flatten buildings, uproot trees and toss cars around like dice.

The word for the “breath” of God in both Hebrew and Greek is the same word as that for “wind.”

This wind was part of creation and God breathed God’s wind into the nostrils of Adam. This wind inspired the prophets, descended upon Jesus at the time of his baptism, flowed through him during Jesus’ ministry and raised him from the dead.

God breathed on the disciples—and on us—God’s breathe.

It was not a cooling, comforting breeze, but a powerful, creative force. The wind of God is not for our pleasure. Rather, the wind empowers us to accomplish our missions and to accomplish great things in God’s name.

Prayer: God, you have given us life by blowing your Spirit. Empower us again today to do your will in this world. Amen.

WEEK 2 - DAY 6 – HOLY SPIRIT SERIES – STRANGELY WARMED

Reading: Acts 2: 14-40

“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.”

Back in England, Wesley was moping along – discouraged, depressed, not sure what to preach, not even sure he was saved.

And then on Aldersgate Day - God lit a FIRE in the heart of John Wesley:

“In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed...”

Now, understand, for an eighteenth century Oxford-educated Englishman – that’s pretty emotional stuff! That would be like me jumping up and down and saying, “WOW! My heart is on FIRE!” Wesley went on to say, “...an assurance was given me that Christ had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” May 24, 1738 -- John Wesley had a personal encounter with God. And the world has never been the same. Now Wesley’s heart was on fire – and the fire began to spread. Wesley went out and preached in the streets, in open fields, in front of factories, at the mouths of coal mines. Sometimes 20,000 people would gather around to hear Wesley’s message of New Birth – “you can be born again!”

Maybe you have a growing relationship with God and you experience God’s presence every day. Maybe you felt your heart strangely warmed but it was years ago and now your fire has grown cold. Maybe the fire does not burn in you at all, because you’ve never entered into a relationship with God. You can do that today. Today can be the day when your heart is strangely warmed.

Prayer: Lord come into my life, and give me ‘an assurance that Christ has taken away my sins, even mine. Amen

WEEK 2 HOLY SPIRIT SERIES– PENTECOST AND ALDERSGATE

Group Notes

Welcome:

Share a moment in your life when you were on fire for Jesus

Worship:

Kim Walker Smith - Holy Spirit You Are Welcome Here - YouTube

Prayer:

Jesus Christ, You promised, “The Counselor, 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” (John 14:26). Help me to remember that I don’t know everything, and that this is okay, because the Holy Spirit understands it all. Fill me with the Holy Spirit and His understanding of everything that is happening in my life.

Word: Acts 2:1-13

Questions:

4. The Spirit’s power doesn’t always manifest itself in wild and sensational ways. Sometimes it’s subtle and simple.
 - a. When (and where) have you seen evidence of the Spirit’s power in your life?
 - b. In what area(s) of your life do you wish you had more of the Spirit’s power?
5. The Holy Spirit used language to draw people together. However, they weren’t ultimately united through language. That was simply a means to bring them together in the Spirit to unite them around the person and message of Jesus Christ. Gives some specific examples (and maybe personal experience) of what unity in Jesus through the Spirit looks like.

Work: Spend this week sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with one person who is still to receive the Holy Spirit and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

HOW TO KEEP IN TOUCH

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-  Service Times

Chapel: 7am & 5:30pm

Sanctuary: 8am, 10am & 6pm

Wesley Hall: 6pm (Youth)

Children's Church: 8am, 10am & 6pm



A group of people gathers regularly to take turns answering a single question. In 18th century English, Wesley asked, "How does your soul prosper?" or "How is it with your soul?" Today we might say, "How's your spiritual life?"

Take the message from the Sunday sermon into deeper learning by joining or forming a small group. If you do not belong to a group yet, you are welcome to sign up by contacting Nick (082 808 1452) or Ria (063 020 4639).