

# Pentecost 1, 2020

The church refers to the Season after Pentecost as “Ordinary Time.” It is the longest season of the church year, beginning with the Sunday after Pentecost and ending with the Reign of Christ Sunday in late November. *Seasons of the Spirit* divides this long Season after Pentecost into two parts; this first half takes us from June 7 through to August 30.

The Day of Pentecost is marked with the dramatic colour of red, representing the tongues of flame dancing over the heads of those gathered in one place after Jesus’ resurrection. With people speaking in many languages, with energy that was like fireworks overhead, and excited preaching, this was an extraordinary way to see the Holy Spirit at work.

But the liturgical colour changes to green with Ordinary Time after Pentecost. Green is a gentler and quieter colour and seems to fit how the Holy Spirit is at work in the ordinary things of life – words of encouragement, daily prayers, nutritious food, meaningful jobs, caring friendships, and the gifts of Creation.

The readings during the Season after Pentecost remind us that the SPIRIT is at work in ordinary, everyday ways. This Living the Season is arranged thus: **S** –Scripture readings from the lectionary, with the focus text in **bold P** –Prayer suggestions **I** –Interactions to help people connect **R** –Reflecting on background information on the text **I** –Idea for enjoying life together **T** –Thought for family reflection to take with you through the week.

**Audio stories** Audio recordings of the weekly focus passages retold in ways that are accessible and engaging for people of all ages are available in MP3 format for purchase and download at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca). The MP3 versions of the stories are also available in the Audio stories folder of SeasonsFUSION and available from your church office.

## Stories for this Pentecost

### June 7 – *The Mountains Are Calling*

#### **Scripture readings**

**Genesis 1:1—2:4a**

Psalm 8

2 Corinthians 13:11–13

Matthew 28:16–20 **Prayer** Pray for the different parts of Creation this week, at the table or during a walk: Thank you God, for the light you give us, for the water of life, for the bounty of Earth, for the larger mysteries of the Universe, for creatures above and below us, for a kaleidoscope of characters. Amen.

**Interaction** Visit an artist such as a painter, sculptor, potter, carpenter, or knitter this week. Ask to watch them at work quietly. Or visit an art gallery together. How does this artistic work reflect God’s creative work? **Reflecting on the scripture** Read Genesis 1:1—2:4a in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “In the Beginning” on p. 22 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). The first chapter of Genesis provides a creation story. Notice how many times the phrase “it is good” appears in the scripture reading or the word “delight” in the story “In the Beginning.” What does this say about

how God views creation? How does your household care for God's creation to keep it good and healthy?

**Idea for enjoying life** This week simply invites us to make something. Consider pulling out arts and crafts supplies such as scraps of paper, ribbon, wood, cardboard, buttons, wire, and string. Then create an imaginary animal or insect – a bug, giraffe, human face, bird, or wherever your imagination takes you.

**Thought to take with you** Make a small sign that reminds everyone in the household that they have been made in the image of God, such as "I'm creative, like my Creator, who must be creative, 'cause look at me!" Put it in a place where all will see it each day this week.

## *June 14 – Sacrifice*

### **Scripture readings**

Genesis 18:1–15, (21:1–7)

Psalms 116:1–2, 12–19

Romans 5:1–8

**Matthew 9:35—10:8, (9–23) Prayer** Look through a church directory or a school directory. Take turns saying aloud the name of someone from the directory and how they show the love of God to others. Say, "I thank God for (name) who shows the love of God to others by (the way they give to others)."

Remember to include the people in your household. **Interaction** Find a labyrinth in your area or print a paper finger labyrinth from the Internet. As you walk or move around the finger labyrinth, you might sing a simple chorus, read verses from a psalm, say a breath prayer, or simply travel quietly. Then, go out for a cup of cocoa to talk about the twists and turns of your life. What did you notice while you were walking?

**Reflecting on the word** Read Matthew 9:35—10:9–23 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story "Jesus Sends Disciples" on p. 34 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). Jesus calls others to follow him and shape a community of good news. This calling includes a big job description: Tell or show others the good news of God's love, bring healing to those who struggle, and do not be afraid. Wow! So, what does Jesus think about the disciples in order to give them this job

description? How might we live this call today? **Idea for enjoying life** Play a Christ-like version of follow the leader in a park or other community area. Have a leader choose a path and destination that would be appreciated by the person at the end of the line, such as a baby swing if the last person is a toddler or a coffee shop if the last person is a caffeine-loving adult. Once you reach the destination, the end person slides to the front to become the new leader. How might this be like following Jesus?

**Thought to take with you** Consider sending one another off for the day with this blessing: "(Name), you've been named for a purpose; go and live for God".

## June 21 – Solidarity

### Scripture readings

Genesis 21:8–21

Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17

Romans 6:1b–11

**Matthew 10:24–39 Prayer** Our understanding of who Jesus is can shape who we want to be. The following prayer starters say something about who Jesus is as our leader. You can finish the prayer by thinking about who you want to be as a follower: “Jesus, you teach us God’s way, and I want to...”

“Jesus, you trusted in God, and I want to...” “Jesus, you served God no matter what and I...” **Interaction**

Jesus, as a teacher and leader, was caring, healing, sharing, insightful, honest, challenging, direct, courageous, and much more. Consider a leader in your life that reflects one or two qualities of Jesus. Write that leader a note of appreciation and tell him or her what you see (for example, Dear Coach, thank you for being both caring and challenging). **Reflecting on the word** Read Matthew 10:24–39 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Conversations with Myself” on p. 46 of SeasonsFUSION

(copies available from your church office). Following Jesus does not promise to be easy. Jesus was true to God’s way, yet many people disagreed with him, including many of his family, friends, and religious leaders. This is the Jesus who invites us to follow and be true to God’s way, even if others might not understand or might disagree with how we live. When have you been a daring disciple and lived in

God’s way? **Idea for enjoying life** Watch a movie about someone making tough choices – someone who follows God’s love even when it is difficult. Here are some suggestions: *Millions* – two brothers in England want to spend money in different ways *Emmanuel’s Hope* – A disabled athlete of Ghana works for dignity *Charlotte’s Web* – A spider selflessly befriends a pig **Thought to take with you** Display this thought in a place where you need courage: I am daring to be a disciple of Jesus.

## June 28 – Choosing a Braver Faith

### Scripture readings

Genesis 22:1–14

Psalm 13

Romans 6:12–23

**Matthew 10:40–42 Prayer** Welcome Jesus to your table, work place, or family vacation. Set a chair for Jesus or give him a space on your desk. Learn the simple prayer, “Welcome Jesus, be our guest, may this food to us be blest.” Then change it to fit the situation. “Welcome Jesus, be our guest, may this walk to us be blest.” Have fun and be playful. **Interaction** Tea with a ginger zing is the beverage of hospitality in Somalia, Dominican Republic, and other countries. Have a tea party and try this recipe: Put a litre/quart of water in a pan. Slice a piece of ginger root (3–5 cm/1–2 in) depending on zing preference. Add four whole all-spice. Bring to boil. Add 60 ml/¼ cup brown sugar. Cool with milk. **Reflecting on the word**

Read Matthew 10:40–42 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Welcome” on p. 58 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus asks us to give hospitality to three different groups of people: prophets, righteous people, and little children. We understand prophets to be people who speak out for God’s way, even when it is not popular. Righteous people are those who care for others and nurture good relationships. In Jesus’ day, children were not respected as valuable people, so Jesus invites us to care for those who might not be seen as valuable. How might you give hospitality to the prophets, righteous people, and children in your community? **Idea for enjoying life** Try a hospitality guessing game. Have one person write down the names of three or four well-known people (leaders, church members, friends) on separate pieces of paper. Tape them to the players’ backs. Don’t show the players the names they have on their backs, though. Then one of the “labelled” players asks questions to other players what it would be like to be a guest at their home, such as, “What kind of beverage would you offer me?” “What game would I like to play?” “Who would be especially happy to see me?” Continue until the player guesses the identity. **Thought to take with you** Everyone I meet is thirsty for some acceptance and grace. How can I share a small cup of kindness?

## *July 5 – A Love that Makes Neighbours*

### **Scripture readings**

**Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–67**

Psalm 45:10–17 *or* Song of Solomon 2:8–13

Romans 7:15–25a

Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30 **Prayer** Turn to the left? Or turn to the right? Do this today? Or do that tonight? Choices can be hard sometimes. God be with us in the choosing. Amen. **Interaction** Choose something to do together this week. For example, choose to go to the park one evening or to make a healthy meal together. What part can each person play in supporting this good choice? When you finish the activity, talk about what was good about it. If it didn’t turn out to be a good choice, for one reason or another, make a different choice. **Reflecting on the word** Read Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–67 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Rebekah’s Story” on p. 70 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). **Idea for enjoying life** In this week’s reading from the gospel of Matthew, Jesus says, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Since yokes are unfamiliar to most of us, you may want to make a yoke and use it to complete some chores. For example, use a pole and two small buckets to make a yoke to carry water to the bird bath. Or you could make a harness with a rope and pull a child in a wagon. What makes the work hard or light? What makes the work a burden or a joy? How does using a yoke help you work with others? **Thought to take with you** Send a special handwritten message or e-mail to at least three people you love, telling them that you love them.

## July 12 – Love that Disrupts

### Scripture readings

Genesis 25:19–34

Psalm 119:105–112

Romans 8:1–11

Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23 **Prayer** Sometimes we wrestle, and sometimes we hug. May love for each other and all our differences be at the heart of our togetherness. **Interaction** Together, look for news-stories about countries that may be struggling against each other, especially countries that are closely linked by history and geography. See how far you can delve together into some of the causes of these conflicts.

Offer words of hope for these situations. **Reflecting on the word** Read Genesis 25:19–34 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Jacob and Esau” on p. 81 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). Two brothers could not have been more different to one another than Jacob and Esau. Esau, the elder, hairier one was an outdoors person, and Jacob was his mother’s favourite. They struggled against each other right from the start and used each other to get what they wanted. Once, Jacob tricked Esau into giving him the rewards and responsibilities of the oldest son. Their story is the story of a family, but it is also the story of a nation, Israel. The dynamics of families and nations mirror each other, even today. **Idea for enjoying life** Talk about a gift you each bring to the household and plan how you will each offer that gift this week. **Thought to take with you** Reflect on how differences or disagreements with siblings or extended family affects your family dynamics and interactions. What can they teach you about the relationships you have with members of your congregation, friends, co-workers?

## July 19 – Presence

### Scripture readings

Genesis 28:10–19a

Psalm 139:1–12, 23–24 Romans 8:12–25 Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43 **Prayer** *This prayer can be shared or said individually at bedtime.* God of the day and night, be with me as I sleep, visit me with good, sweet dreams, and wake me up to a bright new day. Amen. **Interaction** Where are your family’s sacred places – places of blessing, the presence of God, and the closeness of family? Celebrate with a memory night.

Cook something that reminds you of the time spent there. **Reflecting on the word** Read Genesis 28:10–19a in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Jacob’s Awesome Experience” on p. 94 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). After Jacob tricked his brother Esau with a bowl of soup, Rebekah encourages Jacob to get away from Esau’s anger by leaving home for a while. Jacob is tired from a day’s hard travel and decides to stop and make camp for the night. Alone and anxious, he rests his head on a rock and settles down to sleep. In the night, Jacob has an awesome dream. It is a dream filled with the promise of blessing, the presence of God, and the closeness of family. **Idea**

**for enjoying life** Jacob used a rock to mark the place where he felt close to God and heard a comforting message. Visit or spend time in one of your family's sacred places this week. **Thought to take with you** God is ever-present, all-knowing, and all revealing. What other images do you have for your relationship with God?

## *July 26 – Subversive Silence*

### **Scripture readings**

**Genesis 29:15–28**

Psalm 105:1–11, 45b or Psalm 128

Romans 8:26–39

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52 **Prayer** **One:** For the blessings of the past, **All: thank you, God. One:** For the blessings of today, **All: thank you, God. One:** For the promise of tomorrow, **All: thank you, God.**

**Interaction** Talk together about places that have been “home” to you. Think about the places you have journeyed and the new family and friends you have found there. What made these places home for you?

How have you made a home for others? **Reflecting on the word** Read Genesis 29:15–28 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Jacob Loves Rachel” on p. 106 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). Jacob dreams of angels at night and meets a vision of beauty by day, Rachel. Jacob strikes a deal with Rachel's father, Laban, and offers to work seven years for Laban so he can marry Rachel. But when the wedding celebration is over, Jacob realizes that Laban has tricked him. Instead of marrying Rachel, Jacob married her older sister, Leah. Jacob agrees to work seven more years so he can marry the woman of his dreams. **Idea for enjoying life** Spread out a piece of fabric (tablecloth, sheet, pillowcase, or towel) where everyone can reach it. Begin by naming family members, starting with the youngest. How many generations back can you name? With each person named, place something on the fabric. Dried beans or small stones are a simple way to do this. Then name the friends, pets, community members, and others who are part of the fabric of your life. What stories can you share about the people named? **Thought to take with you** What keeps you from giving up in situations that seem overwhelming?

## *August 2 – Face to Face*

### **Scripture readings**

**Genesis 32:22–31**

Psalm 17:1–7, 15

Romans 9:1–5

Matthew 14:13–21 **Prayer** *Gather in a circle, face to face. Repeat each line after it is read. In this way, everyone is offering the prayer to each other.* May God be with you in the struggle, with the love you need, with the

strength you need, with the hope you need. And we will be here, too. We are here for you. Amen.

**Interaction** Choose a place together, outside if possible. Bring along a full watering can. Everyone who wants to do so takes a turn (or two or more) pouring out troubles. Begin by thinking of something you are struggling with right now, such as getting along with someone, learning a new skill, or dealing with a challenging situation at work or school. Pour water onto the ground and say aloud or think silently of a specific struggle. **Reflecting on the word** Read Genesis 32:22–31 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Jacob Struggles” on p. 118 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). **Idea for enjoying life** “Magic Chef Night” is when people come home and there are no plans for dinner. Work together and see what solutions you can invent with what is in the cupboard or the refrigerator. After dinner, express gratitude for the food and each other as you clean up the dishes together. **Thought to take with you** What troubling relationship or decision is worrying you right now? Spend a few minutes each day talking with God about this struggle.

## *August 9 – Dreaming Big*

### **Scripture readings**

**Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28**

Psalm 105:1–6, 16–22, 45b

Romans 10:5–15

Matthew 14:22–33 **Prayer** Joseph goes through some extreme highs and lows in life; from affirming dreams to discouraging pits. Try holding up your hands, lifting up your eyes, or even standing around the table as you share positive prayers as a family – talk to God about your hopes, dreams, and affirmations. Then on another day, sink down low by sitting down, hold your head in your hands, or even lay your head on the table – talk to God about your hurts, fears, conflicts, and losses. **Interaction** If you like to sing, try learning the song, “I want Jesus to go with me.” (Some hymnals have “I want Jesus to walk with me.”) Sing the blues. Sing it with your own expression or tempo. Then go for a walk as you sing your favourite rendition of this song together. **Reflecting on the word** Read Genesis 37:1–4, 12–28 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Looking Back” on p. 130 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). **Idea for enjoying life** Make your own game of life. Take small squares of paper and have each family member write down six good things that have happened in their lives and six bad things. Make more or less, depending on how many people are playing. Mix and glue these happenings on a large piece of paper to create a journey of life. Then roll one die and take turns moving. After each turn, consider how you are feeling and reacting given the situation you find yourself in. **Thought to take with you** Write this message on a small note and place it for others to find – such as lunch boxes, backpacks, wallets, coat pockets: “Do not be afraid, God is always with you in the ups and downs.”

## *August 16 – Subversive Forgiveness*

### **Scripture readings**

**Genesis 45:1–15**

Psalm 133

Romans 11:1–2a, 29–32

Matthew 15: (10–20), 21–28 **Prayer** Talk together about what you may want to say sorry to God for as individuals, as a family, as a community, and as a nation. Offer simple prayers, such as, “For the time we don’t consider the other, sorry, God.” Then talk about the good things within individuals, your family, community, and the nation. Offer simple prayers such as, “For the ways we care for one another, we are blessed, God.” **Interaction** Partner with a family member and talk about someone with whom you are angry or haven’t seen for a while because of a disagreement or hurt. Take turns describing your situations and listen to each other: What is one thing you could do to extend forgiveness to him or her? **Reflecting on the word** Read Genesis 45:1–15 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Joseph and His Brothers” on p. 142 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). Psalm 133 sings about brothers living in unity, but we utter so many harsh words that unity seems to be a rare moment. Consider the story in Genesis 45:1–15. After years of bitter separation, Joseph and his brothers find that moment of unity, and it is sweet. What feelings do you see in the story? How do their feelings toward each other change? How would you describe their feelings when they embrace? **Idea for enjoying life** Psalm 133 compares unity to precious oil running down the head. This anointing oil would have smelled nice and also conditioned hair. If people in your home do not have skin allergies, try making your own fragrance of sunscreen or hair conditioner. Each family member can suggest his or her addition to the mix. Start with a non-scented base and add a little fragrance using a spritz of cologne, a dab of vanilla, a sprinkle of cinnamon, or a rose petal, and “voila!” **Thought to take with you** If unity smells like perfume, what do grudges smell like?

## *August 23 – Cunning, Compassion, and Courage*

### **Scripture readings**

**Exodus 1:8—2:10**

Psalm 124

Romans 12:1–8

Matthew 16:13–20 **Prayer** Look through a recent newspaper and note stories of children, or stories where children might be affected by a particular story. Share a prayer for these babies and children.

**Interaction** Visit someone who has helped or rescued someone, such as an agency worker or emergency responder, school nurse. Ask questions about their training, difficult situations, how they stay calm, and so on. Let this be a way of discovering a local “hero” and opening your eyes to some courageous possibilities. **Reflecting on the word** Read Exodus 1:8—2:10 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible,



or the story “Some Brave Women and a Baby” on p. 154 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). The courageous midwives are named, but the pharaoh is not. Moses is given a name, “drawn out of the water,” but the princess who drew him out is not. Many people must have talked about the midwives Shiphrah and Puah – women who went against the Pharaoh’s orders. Do you know any similar stories of courageous people who resisted the influence of the powerful in order to follow God’s way? **Idea for enjoying life** Play a variation of A. A. Milne’s “Pooh Sticks.” Scrape a section of the bark off a small stick. With a permanent marker, write a courageous message such as, “Live the challenge” or “Take Courage.” Find a bridge over a body of water and send your message on its way. Shout, “Here’s to Puah!” as you drop your sticks. **Thought to take with you** Write the phrase, “Speak and act with courage” on pieces of paper. Hide the messages in lunch boxes, coat pockets, backpacks, briefcases, and other places.

## *August 30 – Holy and Humble Curiosity*

### **Scripture readings**

**Exodus 3:1–15**

Psalm 105:1–6, 23–26, 45c

Romans 12:9–21

Matthew 16:21–28 **Prayer** Take off your shoes as you pray, “God, we have taken off our shoes because we want to slow down and listen for your guiding Spirit.” Then welcome some silent listening. When you put shoes back on say, “God, I’m putting my shoes on. Now may your Spirit guide my steps.”

**Interaction** Draw an outline of a bush – a trunk and two or three boughs. Separate the boughs into several individual branches. With a red marker, write what individuals are concerned about on the branches. Write issues that are shared by two or more people on the boughs, such as “caring for the environment.” Finally, write an issue that is shared by all on the trunk. Place the bush where all can see.

How are you responding to these issues? How might you respond more deeply? **Reflecting on the word**

Read Exodus 3:1–15 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or the story “Moses Hears God’s Call” on p. 166 of SeasonsFUSION (copies available from your church office). God says to Moses, “I am who I am” or I will be who I will be. Now come, and I will help you be an instrument of care and freedom.” Moses’ reluctance suggests that he was thinking that he was nothing special. But God persists until Moses puts on his sandals and follows the guidance of the Voice. Do you think Moses started to think of himself differently as he walked in a different direction? What would it mean for Moses to say, “I will be who I will be, and see where this calling takes me”? **Idea for enjoying life** Make a crayon-resist picture of a burning bush. If you did the burning bush described above you might start with that. Press crayons hard. With very wet watercolours and a broad, soft brush, fill the page with a “night sky.” Watch the colours of the bush come alive. Wonder together what helps your sense of calling come alive. **Thought to take with you** At the end of each day, think back through the day and the signs of God’s presence that you saw around.