

Worksheet #3: Learning about God through Spirit

In the Old Testament Spirit is understood as an attribute and agent of God...indicating God's presence...

invisible

inexplicable

irresistible (source: Walter Brueggemann)

The Hebrew word for spirit, *ruah*, is also the word for “breath” or “wind”

***Ruah* is God's breath, an indication of God's presence. *Ruah* can be forceful or gentle – a gale force wind or a gentle breeze.**

The Spirit is also often depicted as water, fire, or dove.

Spirit Reflection Process

Find a relatively quiet comfortable spot. You will need:

- access to a computer/tablet/cell phone
- paper/notebook (optional)
- something to write or draw with (optional)
- space to move around if you choose to do so
- some time. This is a process that asks you to focus deeply and it is a process that can be started and stopped easily.
- Before you start each time, take a few deep breaths, Listen to your breathing and give thanks for God's breathing – and your own.

Reflect: After each time you listen or look, you might want to take a few minutes and think about what you heard or saw. Note words you heard or words that came to mind, e.g. in response to blowing wind “be aware, pay attention”. Think about images or concepts of the Spirit that you find surprising, beckoning, comforting, thought-provoking...Write or draw some of what you heard/felt. What can you learn about God from reflecting on the nature of the Spirit? If you are noting words, you may want to use the spiral on page 8 by writing your words on the strokes of the spiral. Or make your own spiral. Or use any other form of reflection.

Listen to the wind (The wind sounds on this link continue for more than an hour. Listen for as long as it takes for you to have a sense of how you are responding to the sound of the wind.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHC1FnUTE4I>

Reflect

Listen to Spirit of Life VU 381 by Carolyn McDade at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdnr4fNuR74>

Reflect

Look at the photographs. What do they tell you about the Spirit and, therefore, what God is like?

Reflect



Spirit



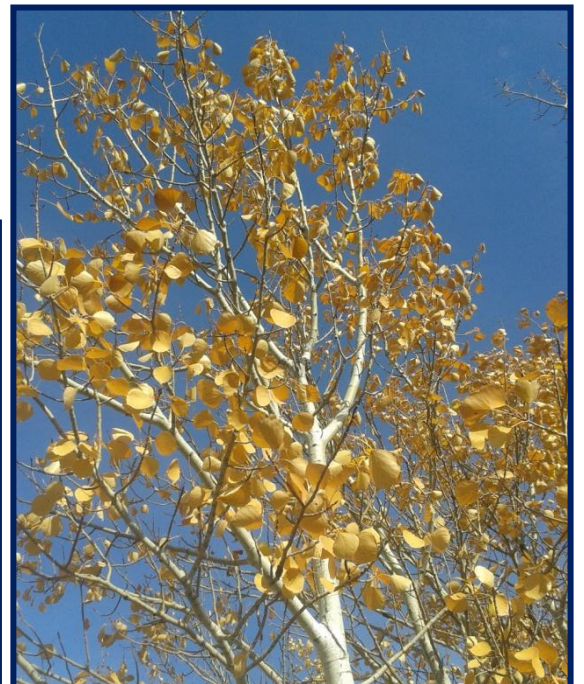
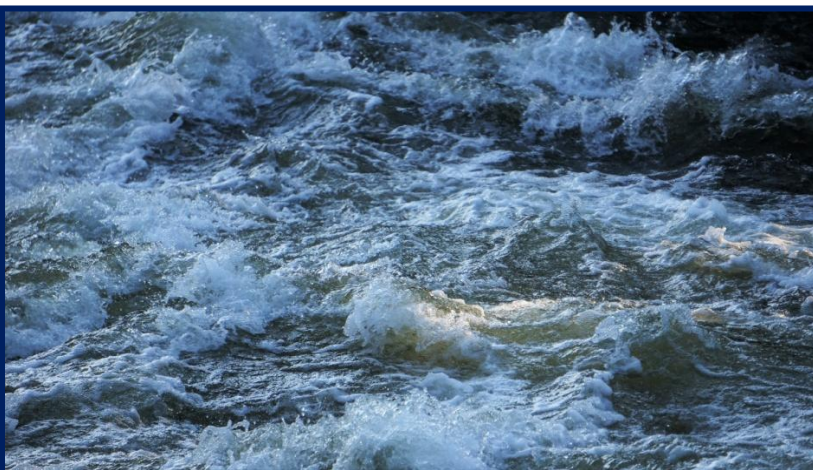
Four common names connected to Spirit:

fire

wind

water

dove



From: Song of Faith (2006)

excerpt:

The church has not always lived up to its vision.
It requires the Spirit to reorient it,
 helping it to live an emerging faith while honouring tradition,
 challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement,
for we are called to be a blessing to the earth.

We sing of God's good news lived out,
a church with purpose:
 faith nurtured and hearts comforted,
 gifts shared for the good of all,
 resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize,
 fierce love in the face of violence,
 human dignity defended,
 members of a community held and inspired by God,
 corrected and comforted,
instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ,
creation's mending.

We sing of God's mission.

We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit.
For the sake of the world,
 God calls all followers of Jesus to Christian ministry.

In the church,
 some are called to specific ministries of leadership,
 both lay and ordered;
 some witness to the good news;
 some uphold the art of worship;
 some comfort the grieving and guide the wandering;
 some build up the community of wisdom;
 some stand with the oppressed and work for justice.

Read the excerpt from Song of Faith. Try reading it aloud.

Reflect Include in your reflection: How do the phrases below connect with teachings about God from considering Creation and Jesus? What is important to you? What do you disagree with?

- "we are called to be a blessing to the earth";
- "gifts shared for the good of all,"
- "We are each given particular gifts of the Spirit."

Listen **Candle Burning** words and music by Pat Mayberry;

arrangement by David Kai

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcT534xKYMM>

Reflect

Read a Story:

In June 1982, I participated in an international peace rally in New York City.



From the New York Times June 13, 1982

Hundreds of thousands of peaceful demonstrators opposed to nuclear arms overwhelmed Central Park and midtown Manhattan yesterday, filling the streets and groves with echoing songs and hopeful slogans.

The vast parade and rally, organized by a coalition of peace groups, brought together pacifists and anarchists, children and Buddhist monks, Roman Catholic bishops and Communist Party leaders, university students and union members. There were delegations from Vermont and Montana, Bangladesh and Zambia, and from many other places. The smiling, hand-clapping line of marchers was more than three miles long, and the participants carried placards in dozens of languages.

The crowd was alive with an irrepressible energy created by more than 750,000 people from all over the globe, varying views of the world, peace, and change, coming together in that time and place to witness to our collective belief that peace is intended and possible. Music wove through the streets – organized and spontaneous. I turned to see the crowd behind me as the pavement took us downhill, the streets completely filled with people. People as far as I could see – walking together respectfully, demonstrating hope and determination, cherishing life. That *ruah* was moving us forward, that God was present, was undeniable and I was filled with gratitude.

Ann Naylor

When have you felt *ruah*? How did you recognize it? **Reflect.**

Listen to Spirit of Gentleness

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bs6f9vA6s2o&list=RDBs6f9vA6s2o&start_radio=1&rv=Bs6f9vA6s2o&t=10

Reflect

Look at the picture.



In what ways do you see *Ruah* in this picture? How is God breathing? How is God's presence evident?

Reflect

Listen to the sound of water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55ZTzpqqNyo>

Reflect

What emotions are evoked by the sound of water flowing over rocks?

Think about the passage in Amos 5:24 "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream". What does this passage tell us about the nature of the Spirit?

Listen to “The Lone Wild Bird” Note: The first two verses of this song were written in 1925 by Henry Richard McFadyen, the last three in 1991 by Marty Haugen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rH-xfPx9qUk>

Reflect

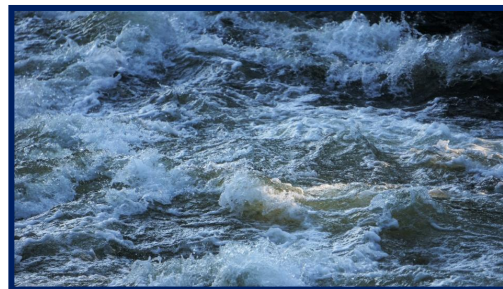
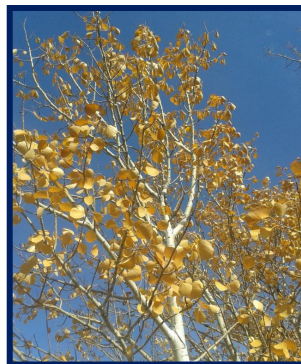
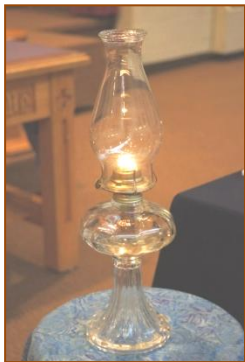
For children of all ages and anyone who prefers fewer words and more activities...

The Spirit is often said to be like fire or water or wind. What do fire, water, and wind have in common?/what is the same about them?

What does this tell you about what the Spirit does?

There are many kinds of wind, water, and fire. What do these differences tell you about the Spirit?

Act out what wind, water, and fire might look like. Put some water in a large bowl and use your hands to play in it – gently!



Listen to “The Spirit in me...” by Jim and Jean Strathdee <https://vimeo.com/461257491>

Make up actions to this song.

Review your Reflections

When you are finished with this project for the week, take a few minutes to look back over the words, phrases, images, metaphors, etc. you have explored. Are there ways of understanding the Spirit that are new to you? That are expanding how you think about the Spirit? Are there ways of understanding the Spirit that may not fit for you any more? What questions are you pondering?

Our plan is that this project will lead to conversation within and beyond the congregation during the coming months. We hope that you will be open to sharing some of your reflections with others in the congregation. We are particularly interested in the words/phrases/images, drawings, sculpting, movement, photographs, etc., that you named as important for you in understanding the character of God as made known through the Spirit. We are also interested in your questions about the Spirit. Please keep your reflections and questions in a place where you can add to them throughout. At the end of the project, you will be invited to share some of your work, with or without including your name. For now, please keep the work you have done in each of the R. times – or any other time that you want to include.

Thank you for your participation.

