**A Pentecost Arts Festival**

*On the Day of Pentecost we celebrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit — who swept across the face of the deep at the genesis of the world, who gave birth to the church one morning in Jerusalem, and who is even now ushering in a new heaven and a new earth. We give thanks for the Spirit’s enlivening presence, transforming power, and creative purpose in the events of Scripture and in the stories of our own lives. We pray that God will continue to work such signs and wonders among us, awakening us to the coming of a new creation.*

*What better occasion than the Day of Pentecost to celebrate the gifts of artists in the community of faith? What better time to give thanks and praise to God, the author of creation and the source of all beauty, goodness, and truth? These ideas are provided for congregations wishing to celebrate the creative work of the Holy Spirit in the church through a Pentecost Arts Festival.*

• **Get to know the artists** in your congregation — painters, poets, photographers, performers, dancers, dramatists, designers, sculptors, songwriters, storytellers, wood-carvers, quilters, and so on. Talk to them about their experiences as artists in the church, both good and bad. Listen to their stories and learn about the gifts they have to share.

• **Hold an initial planning meeting** for the Pentecost Arts Festival. Begin with prayer and Bible study, using one or more of the lectionary texts for the Day of Pentecost (especially Acts 2:1-21). Discuss your hopes and dreams for this event, and for the larger place of the arts in the life of the church. Close with the singing of hymns or songs related to Pentecost or the Holy Spirit.

• **Assemble a steering committee** for the festival. Members might include ruling elders, teaching elders (pastors), church musicians, and Christian educators, as well as others who are equipped with the spiritual gifts to organize such an event. The steering committee will be responsible for planning and promoting the festival, communicating with artists and with the congregation as a whole, and reviewing entries.

• **Establish clear guidelines and expectations.** The Pentecost Arts Festival *should* be an occasion to glorify God and enjoy God’s gifts together; it should *not* be a talent competition or art sale. Be sure that all participants understand and appreciate the nature of this event: a celebration of the good gifts that God so freely bestows on all. In keeping with this spirit, don’t give awards or put price tags on things; if people are interested in purchasing artwork, they can pick up a business card from the artist. (See the Directory for Worship, W-1.3034, on artistic expression in the Reformed tradition.)

• **Set a time, date, and location** for the Pentecost Arts Festival. The afternoon of the Day of Pentecost (a Sunday between mid-May and mid-June) is recommended, but local circumstances may necessitate another date. Be sure that the space or spaces for the festival are able to accommodate the range of entries, works or performances.

• **Extend an invitation for entries** in the festival, and set a deadline for entries. The idea is *not* that artists will have to audition or qualify to be included (if possible, no one should be turned away). Rather, organizers will need to have a clear sense of what works will be featured in order to prepare accordingly. Also, the steering committee should reserve the right to decline content that may be inappropriate for this event.

* **Consider including hands-on workshops**as part of the event — opportunities for participants to roll up their sleeves and engage in some creative craft of their own, under the guidance of an experienced artist or teacher. Collaborative art projects (such as murals, mosaics, tapestries, or large mobiles) are especially appropriate.

• **Promote the event** with notices in the church bulletin, website, and/or newsletter (see item one below), especially during the season of Easter (the Sundays between Easter Sunday and the Day of Pentecost). Be sure that all participants and attendees have a clear understanding of the nature of the event (i.e., not a contest or a sale; see above).

• **Equip the congregation** to engage the artists in thoughtful and sensitive ways. A note in the worship bulletin or church newsletter (see item two below) can help those who attend the festival to appreciate the artwork, ask good questions, and get the most out of the event. Artists need not be present for their work to be included in the festival, although this is preferable so that members of the congregation can get to know them and their work.

• **Plan a festive meal** to set the tone for the event — a joyful celebration of the Spirit’s gifts. If the arts festival occurs on the Day of Pentecost, the meal might take place just after the worship service and before the beginning of the event. It can be as simple as pizza or a potluck supper, or as elaborate as a sumptuous feast, perhaps presented by members of the congregation with gifts of culinary creativity.

• **Enjoy the festival!** Begin the event with lively song and prayer. Encourage attendees to explore, ask questions, get messy, and be inspired. Deacons or elders at the event can answer questions and guide people through the festival. Even if attendance is low (as is often the case with a new endeavor), this will be an invaluable opportunity for artists in the congregation to get to know *each other*, sharing common hopes and concerns.

• **Re-convene the steering committee** soon after the festival to debrief and, if desired, discuss plans for next year. Celebrate what worked well and think constructively about what might be done differently. Don’t forget to send thank you notes to artists and others who assisted with the event.

• **Follow up with other events.** Build on the Pentecost Arts Festival by organizing other events, groups, or gatherings — occasional exhibits at the church, a liturgical arts team, creative explorations of the lectionary or selected books of the Bible, a Sunday school class on the place of arts or music in church history, and field trips to local galleries, museums, concerts, or other performances.

 *Item One: Sample Text for Bulletin Announcement (expand and adapt as needed)*

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| **Celebrate the Spirit’s Gifts at a Pentecost Arts Festival!** On Sunday, May 27, Third Presbyterian Church will hold a Pentecost Arts Festival. This will be a time to glorify God and enjoy the creative gifts of the Spirit in our community. After worship, stay for a meal in the fellowship hall. Then from 1 to 4 pm, explore the art exhibits and performances in the education building. If you have artwork or another gift you would like to share, contact name@emailaddress.com by April 27. All are welcome – whatever your age, experience, or artistic medium. Hope to see you there! |

 *Item Two: Appreciating Art and Engaging Artists (expand and adapt as needed)*

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| As you encounter the artwork and/or performances at this event, here are some questions that may help you reflect on the experience and learn from the artists.What do you enjoy or appreciate about this work of art or performance?What questions or ideas does it inspire? How does it challenge you? How do you experience the truth, beauty, or goodness of God through this work?  |