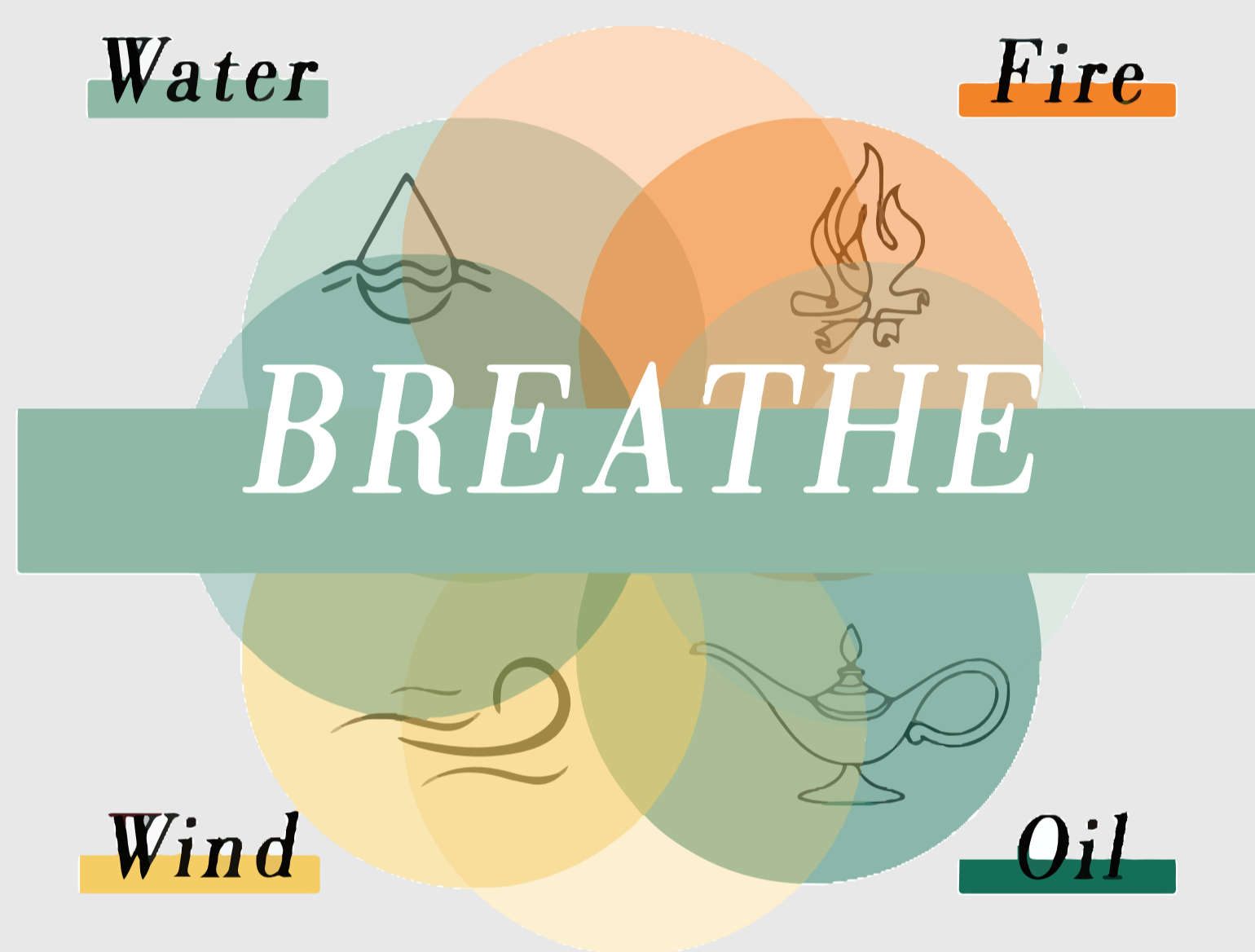
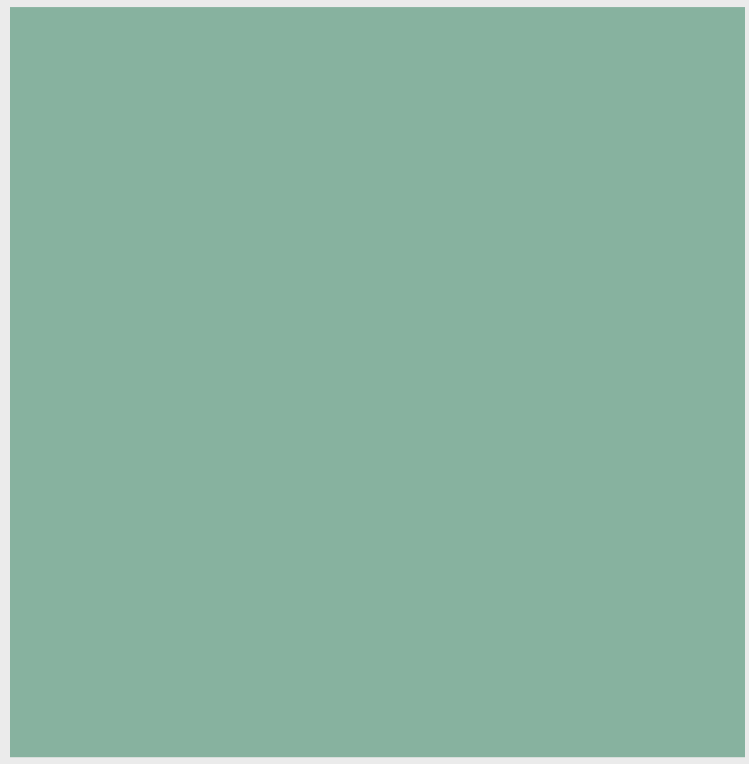


Weekly Journal



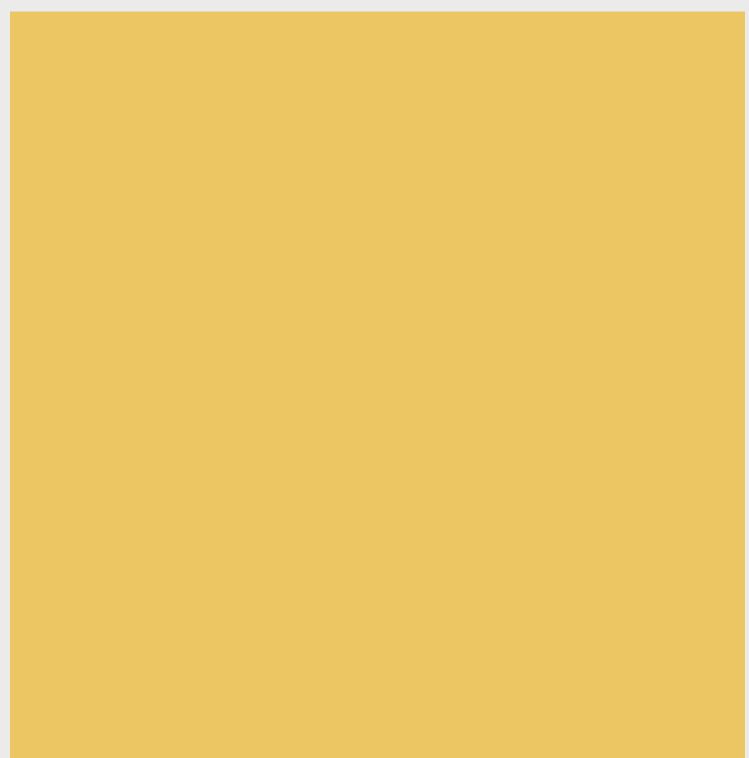
Breathe: Coming Alive Again



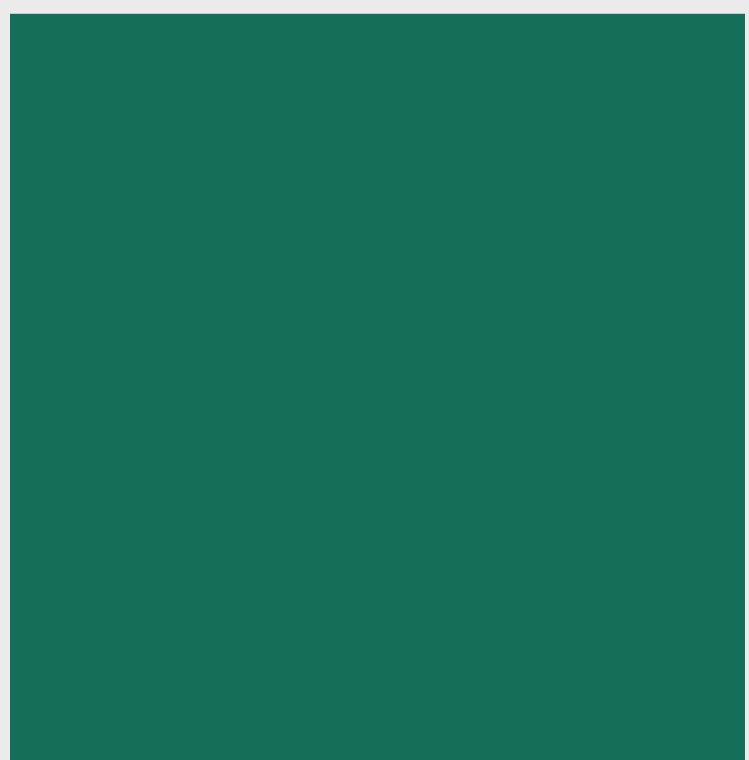
Water



Fire



Wind



Oil



Breathe: Intro

BREATHE: experience the life-giving practice of breathing in deep to encounter the Holy Spirit: water, fire, wind & oil.

During this season of waiting, we are asking that each of you create the necessary time & space to complete these devotions. As we journey through this series together, it is our hope that each of you will not only encounter a personal God, but be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. These journals are not only words on a page, they are written & inspired by church members who have experienced the first-hand, tangible help of God. It is our sincere prayer that you carve out time to journal along with us as we learn about & experience the Holy Spirit together.

Take a deep breath, and turn shallow breaths into soul-filling rest.

Fire

noun – combustion or burning, in which substances combine chemically with oxygen from the air and typically give out bright light, heat, and smoke.

Journal Entry - 3/15:

As my college small group sat around the campfire on our retreat, our leader, Bud, said “Write down on this scrap paper something that’s holding you back from following the Lord.” When Bud said this, tons of things came to mind. As a college student, I was in a time of rediscovering my faith, but some mistakes I had made early on in college were still haunting me. “Now I want you to pray over whatever you wrote down, asking God to forgive you and free you of it, then throw it in the fire. Let God’s Holy Spirit fill you with forgiveness. Whatever has bound you is now burned away.” When Bud had finished speaking, I threw the paper into the fire feeling the weight of it lifted from my mind and the Holy Spirit burning it away. I felt free and empowered; freed from my past and empowered to live in a new way.

In Daniel chapter 3, we see the story of three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who were so devoted to God that they were thrown into a blazing furnace for refusing to worship the king. In verse 25, the king says “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.” The ropes that had bound the brothers had been burned away but they were unharmed. God had protected them from certain death, removed the restrictions placed on them by the world and freed them to stroll around unharmed. I believe the fourth man in the fire was the Holy Spirit, freeing and protecting them. How amazing the Holy Spirit is to be God’s presence with us when all seems lost, taking away the things that bind us and inviting us to freedom.

Respond:

Take a moment now to settle into silence. Be aware of the sound of your breath as it goes in and out. Ask the Lord to send the fire of the Holy Spirit to burn away whatever is still holding you back. Speak it out. Write it down. Ask for forgiveness and feel it being removed.

Write your response here:



Family Response:

Talk with your family about the different things that you wish you had not done. Try writing it down and then praying to ask God to take it away and then throwing the paper away to show it leaving you.



Journal Entry - 3/17:

We took a water taxi over to the island Murano. This famous island of Venice, Italy, is known for its glass work. We stumbled upon a beautiful shop where, to our surprise, we could pay to see a glass artist at work. As we sat there watching the show, he explained how he was using fire and heat to shape the glass. We saw him take a mass that was unrecognizable and through his artistry and the fire was “blowing” this glass into an amazing and valuable vase.

In Acts chapter 2, starting in verse 3 we read “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Here the work of the Holy Spirit through wind and tongues of fire transformed these ordinary men into interpreters of God’s message to the people around them who needed to hear it. The believers were transformed from something ordinary to something extraordinary by the power of the Holy Spirit. I have seen in my own life how the enabling of the Holy Spirit has taken hold of me and given me words I knew were not my own, allowing me to speak and share my testimony with people in foreign languages like French or Thai. This became a miracle in my mouth and mind. The work of the Holy Spirit combines God’s artistry, breath and fire, to take us from something unknown to something known, unseen to seen and worthless to invaluable.

Respond:

Take a moment and breathe in deeply. Then exhale all the negative images and words you can imagine. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you. Ask the Lord to shape you, even if it means some things have to be burned away, so that you can be more beautiful afterwards. Feel the things that hold you back being burned away and giving way to new abilities and talents, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Write your response here:



Family Response:

Identify an object that is valuable to your family. Discuss how it was made and who created it. Imagine the creativity it took to create that object and how God helps us to be creative in our own ways when we give God all of our body, thought and mind. Consider creating something together as a family to use your family's gifts and share how you felt as the creator/artist. List ways God is asking you to use your creativity to share God's love with others.



Journal Entry - 3/19:

Purifies us...

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

I don't think that anyone is ever ready to be a parent. I remember coming home with my first born son, laying him in the bassinet by my bedside that first night alone & praying to God that he would sleep for more than one hour! Sometimes parenting can feel like, "trial by fire," can't it? However, it is often through the fire that the most beautiful of diamonds are created. This is much like the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit purifies us, transforms us into greater. Greater mothers, fathers, bosses, peers & people. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul writes, "So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image." The closer we get to the Holy Spirit, the more we can be transformed into "His glorious image." This purification process can sometimes feel difficult, but is ultimately for our benefit. Exercise hurts in the moment, but the benefits far outweigh the cost! A great litmus test for understanding our purification progress is to check if we are living our lives with the fruit of the Spirit, because if we are being transformed more into "His glorious image," surely we will be filled with the very characteristics of who the Spirit is.

Respond:

Take a moment to reflect on the fruits of the spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you about which fruits need purifying and ask for His help. Ask that He help to transform your thinking. Open your hands in expectation.

Write your response here:



Family Response:

Create a one page work of art that reads, “Made to reflect His glorious image,” to hang on your refrigerator, or in a central place in your home. Have each member of your family color a certain section or hand letter a certain section. Take a picture of your creation to share with us (be sure to tag @communitychurch).