

June 4, 2017
The Day of Pentecost
Filled with the Holy Spirit
Numbers 11:24-30; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-31
The Rev. Dorothy Cottingham
Christ the King Lutheran Church, Tigard, OR

Fellow Ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ
Grace to you and peace for God our Creator
Jesus our Savior and the Holy Spirit, our breath.

Pentecost!

I think it's safe to say that Pentecost is not the most beloved of Christian feasts, nor is it easily understood, then or now. Marketers haven't figured out how to monetize it. There is no baby in the manger, no empty tomb and bunny, no secular proximate secular holiday allowing for a weekend getaway. Besides that, it's just plain weird. The sound of rushing wind. Tongues of flame landing on heads. People speaking in languages they don't know. Other people accusing them of being drunk at nine o'clock in the morning. To quote Bill Murray's character in *Ghost Busters*: "Dogs and cats, living together! Mass hysteria!"

Pentecost was mass hysteria. It is equally confusing for the church, today. Sure, we sometimes remember to wear red, but not everyone got the memo. Pentecost comes at the time of year when we are planning vacations. Church staff and pastors included. Those plans are interrupted by this chaotic event.

If you were confused by the multiple languages read this morning, imagine how the devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem felt that morning. The sound of rushing wind drew them into the streets and what they heard there was even more bewildering. And then there was that whole tongues of fire thing in addition to different languages puzzle.

Pentecost is not for the faint of heart. But, then, neither is Christmas or Good Friday or Easter. Pentecost completes Easter. Without Pentecost, Easter must carry the burden of saying farewell to Christ who is raised from the dead and is returned to glory at the ascension.

Without Pentecost, Easter offers us an image of the risen Christ whose ascension leaves the church with nothing but fond memories of how it once was when the Word was made flesh and lived in the neighborhood.

WITH Pentecost, Easter's promise of the risen Christ dwells within us in the person of God, the Holy Spirit the comforter, the guide, the teacher, the reminder of the living Christ. WITH Pentecost, the church does not simply celebrate Easter, the church – you and me – participates in Easter. WITH Pentecost, the risen Christ says hello to the church, not goodbye.

It is no accident that we begin and end the Easter season with the same gospel reading, John 20:19-23. It is the fourth evangelist's telling of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Not as public as the Acts account, yet equally dramatic. Both texts launch the disciples into the world with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost is the yearly rekindling of the fire within God's people to bring the good news to all the world. We are reminded that Peter's sermon shatters the barriers between nations. In that sermon he declares that children will prophecy, young men will see visions, old men will dream dreams, women and men and slaves will receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

Moses dreamed of a day when all of God's people would receive the Spirit of God and speak in tongues. Folks with weird names like Medad and Eldad were called to prophesy, to tell the good news. YOU have received the power of the Holy Spirit in your baptism.

Remember how crazy things happen when angels show up? It's about to get crazier. When the Holy Spirit shows up barriers come down, borders burst open, foreigners preach everybody seems drunk. If you're hoping these walls will keep you safe from her rushing wind, tongues of flame and foreign languages, hang on tight. These walls are but a ministry tool. These walls are not meant to contain or protect us. These walls are meant to be a place where community is strengthened and nourished at this table. These walls are meant to be the place where the people of God sing out their praise.

The community that God's Holy Spirit forms transcends these walls just as they transcended language on the first Day of Pentecost. Because of Pentecost, we are transformed. We are enlivened and recreated by the Holy Spirit.

In her work *The Eighth Day of Creation: Gifts and Creativity* author Elizabeth O'Connor tells this story about the artist Michelangelo:

On a blistering hot day in Rome, Michelangelo was pushing a huge rock down the street toward his studio. An onlooker, lazily sitting on his porch, was taken by the sight of this old man wheezing and sweating to move the nearly immovable. "Hey, down there," the onlooker shouted, "why break your back for a worthless piece of stone?" Michelangelo stopped, wiped his brow, looked up at the scoffer and replied, "Because there is an angel in that rock who wants to come out".

Perhaps the work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and today is to release the angel from the rock. To transform and enliven the Body of Christ.

No sermon was preached, no one was healed, no one was baptized, no evangelism took place until the Holy Spirit was released on the disciples, on us. It is only because the angel in us is liberated by the Holy Spirit that are we able to share the good news. And it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that this angel set free in the lives of the people who hear the good news.

We are now sent, like the disciples, on a mission to do what Jesus showed us to do. We are sent to teach, heal, exorcise, baptize.

This doesn't sound like much of a summer vacation or even a summer mission trip.

This sounds like a new way of being in community for and with others.

There is no summer vacation for the church.

There is no summer vacation for the Holy Spirit!

So, hang on, we're in for a wild and crazy ride.

DO remember, there is no need to be afraid.

God - Creator, Redeemer and Breath – is the ride master.

Thanks be to God!