

Day of Pentecost

May 23, 2021



St. John United Church of Christ

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**NOTICE: THERE WILL NOT BE A MAILING OF
THE BULLETIN NEXT WEEK, MAY 30.**

Finding our Pentecost Voices

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRELUDE: “The Church’s One Foundation”

James Denton

***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

Here we gather for song and scripture, seeking comfort and hope, seeking to be inspired as well as challenged.

Here we gather to retell the ancient tales and wonder how God’s story continues to unfold.

Today we tell the story of Pentecost, the story of the Holy Spirit rushing in like a wild wind and dancing like flames upon each of the disciples,

And we ask ourselves where we see the Holy Spirit present our world today.

Today we tell a story of the Holy Spirit igniting hope again. We will hear Peter claim his identity, tell his story, and inspire others to see the Holy at work in the world.

And we will ask ourselves if we are ready to share our own stories.

Friends, welcome. Welcome to this place with all questions, doubts, wonders, and find here an invitation to experience something ancient and something new.

May we be open to the Spirit.

May we be open to learning and learning from one another.

May we grow in faith, hope, and love. **Amen.**

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Reader 1: Spirit of God, our prayers often ask You to be present in our lives and in our world. But we confess that we are terrified that You might actually show up.

Reader 2: We remember the stories of You appearing as a burning bush, and then Moses and Sarah leaving everything familiar behind.

Reader 1: We remember the stories of You kindling the imagination of the prophets, and then each putting their lives on the line.

Reader 2: We remember the stories of You igniting courage within Shiphrah and Puah, Deborah and Esther, Elizabeth and Mary, and then each challenging the status quo.

Reader 1: We remember the stories of You sparking action within the early Church, compelling them all to embrace something completely foreign and new.

Reader 2: We confess, Dear Spirit, we are afraid You will call us to move outside our comfort zones. We are afraid You will kindle a passion within us we will be unable to ignore. We are afraid that You will rearrange our lives beyond recognition. Forgive us for the fears that have been holding us back from inviting You truly into our lives...

Silence; we leave space for people to examine their hearts, and, to silently name what fears they are holding on to that may inhibit their connection to the Spirit of God.

***ASSURANCE OF GRACE:**

Beloved people of God, find comfort in the news that the Spirit of God may be a formidable force, but She moves alongside people and equips those who are open to the work ahead. Peter, known more for his denial and disbelief than his bravery, suddenly had courage with the Spirit alongside him. The disciples, not known for being gifted communicators, suddenly broke down barriers with the Spirit alongside them.

Beloveds, do not be afraid. Remain curious. Be open to the surprise. Celebrate that God is indeed about to do a new thing with you.

GLORIA PATRI:

Glory to the Creator, the Christ,
the Holy Spirit, Three-in-One,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world
without end. Amen. Amen.

CHILDREN'S VIDEO: "What is Pentecost?"

HYMN: "Spirit of the Living God" NCH 283

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2:1-21

2 When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

⁵ There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. ⁷ They were surprised and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them?” ⁸ How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!” ¹² They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, “What does this mean?” ¹³ Others jeered at them, saying, “They’re full of new wine!”

¹⁴ Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, “Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! ¹⁵ These people aren’t drunk, as you suspect; after all, it’s only nine o’clock in the morning! ¹⁶ Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ *In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young will see visions.
Your elders will dream dreams.*

¹⁸ *Even upon my servants, men and women,*

*I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.*

¹⁹ *I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.*

²⁰ *The sun will be changed into darkness,
and the moon will be changed into blood,
before the great and spectacular day of the Lord
comes.*

²¹ *And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be
saved.*

GOSPEL READING: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

²⁶ “When the Companion comes, whom I will send from the Father—the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ You will testify too, because you have been with me from the beginning.

16 ^{4b} “I didn’t say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I go away to the one who sent me. None of you ask me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶ Yet because I have said these things to you, you are filled with sorrow. ⁷ I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don’t go away, the Companion won’t come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will show the world it was wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment. ⁹ He will show the world it was wrong about sin because they don’t believe in me. ¹⁰ He will show the world it was wrong about righteousness because I’m going to the Father and you won’t see me anymore. ¹¹ He will show the world it was wrong about judgment because this world’s ruler stands condemned.

¹² “I have much more to say to you, but you can’t handle it now. ¹³ However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth. He won’t speak on his own, but will say whatever he hears and will proclaim to you what is to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and proclaim it to you. ¹⁵ Everything that the Father has is mine. That’s why I said that the Spirit takes what is mine and will proclaim it to you.

Holy Spirit, Holy Words.
Thanks be to God, Amen.

MESSAGE: “How to make God known to the world?”

Last week we learned that the work Jesus is calling us to continue, is making God known to the world. The world is a big place with many people of different cultures, ethnicities, economic issues, languages, and also physical and mental abilities. This miracle that happened to the disciples that allowed them to preach to people of other languages was wonderful.

Yet, I think for us, language is not the issue to spread the good news. Well, yes, we have different slang or pronunciation of words. I’ve even detected what I call a Southern Illinois Twang from a roommate I had in school. Yet there are other barriers to sharing God’s Word. I’m thinking of the best way to speak to youth, or how to make children understand difficult religious concepts that we ourselves find confusing.

The Holy Spirit helps us to adapt to these types of situations. We have children’s Sunday School, children and

youth Bibles, Vacation Bible School, youth mission trips, Church Camp, etc.

However, there are other people who have a difficult time with communication. How do we reach those who cannot hear, cannot see, cannot speak? Those who don’t remember and those whose brains have become injured, old, or jumbled, such as long-term care centers. How do we reach these people?

As we have found during this pandemic, when schools want to teach via computer, what about those who can’t communicate that way. They can’t afford computers and the internet. Even if they could, perhaps there is no internet where they live. They may have a telephone but you can’t teach for hours on the phone. How can we reach them?

And what about those people who won’t listen because they believe they have been hurt by God. For example, “Why didn’t God stop the covid that killed so many people?”

And then there are those in our communities that seem to be voiceless and invisible. Everybody else tells them what to think, where to live, where to get a job, how to raise their children, how to dress, how to fix their hair. The opinions and needs of these people are never heard. No one wants to listen to them.

It may not be enough to know how to speak in many languages. This task of making God known might be harder than we thought it would be. Maybe the Holy Spirit can help us. Pray about it and see what happens. Amen.

MUSIC: “Hallelujah” Leonard Cohen St. John Choir
Solos by Freddie Rice and Heather Hamilton

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

O Holy One, we are hungry for your Spirit, even if we don't understand it. Yet we trust you to share your wisdom and your compassion to all of us, that we may share the same with others. Help us know the Holy Spirit as we know Jesus. We need to trust that the Holy Spirit is always with us to guide and protect us and to give us the inspiration and energy to work for others, as Jesus did. Guide us to make God known to the world in any way we can.

This day we lift up all those on our prayer list, and all others who struggle with their health, physically, mentally, or spiritually. We pray for those who are innocent victims of the conflict in the Middle East. Both sides believe their god is the true god, yet they forget that it is the same God for all sides, all people, all customs, all cultures, all ways to worship. Help them realize that peace is the best for all people, including themselves. Teach us to be the peacemakers for all, as we pray in the name of your son, Jesus.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING:

As people of God, we are called by the Spirit to continue the work of Jesus and the disciples who sought to build up beloved community. We are each equipped by the Spirit

with particular skills, gifts, passions, abilities, and experiences to continue that work.

In these moments of quiet and reflection: what is it that you have been gifted with and are open to offering this day to bring about God's beloved community on Earth?

DOXOLOGY:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

You, too, are Mind, and Body, and Spirit, O God. We bring our offerings to support the church's ministry of learning and doing and praying to the glory of your name. Amen

BENEDICTION:

That Pentecost day, with the Spirit in the air,
the disciples were suddenly clear about their stories
and their intention to share their stories with the world.
Maybe it was the rushing wind that had jolted them out of complacency.
Maybe it was the dancing tongues of fire that landed on each one that ignited them to action.
Maybe it was the hope that comes with having the Companion, the Advocate, nearby.
Whichever it was, the disciples found their authentic voices and soon after discovered they had a story to share with the world.
Go forth into this day, with the Spirit in the air,
to share your stories of God's love with the world.

Go forth into the world in the name of God, the one who creates you;
go in the name of the Jesus who shows us the way;
and go in the name of the Holy Spirit,
who is with us now and always.

POSTLUDE: “Gloria From Twelfth Mass” W.A. Mozart



PRAYER LIST: We pray for the health and well-being of all affected by the pandemic and we especially pray for:
Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, P.J. Bennett, Nelson Libell,
Joe Knapp, Jim Garrett, Durrelene, Marlene, Kathy and
Linda (friends of Jackie Canterbury), Ronald Bopp (husband
of Pastor's friend), Agnes Doctolero.

“Come, O Spirit, Dwell Among Us”

Janie Alford – Hal H. Hopson

Come, O Spirit, dwell among us,
come with Pentecostal power,
give the church a stronger vision,
help us face each crucial hour.
Built upon a firm foundation,
Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone,
Still the church is called to mission
That God's love shall be made known.

Come, O Spirit, dwell among us;
Give us words of fire and flame.
Help our feeble lips to praise you,
Glorify your holy name.
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Three in one: what mystery!
We would sing our loud hosannas
now and through eternity