



Pentecost Sunday

I will pour out my Spirit
upon all people... Acts 2:17



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Welcome

Song: “He’s God the Whole World in His Hands”

Scripture: Acts 2:1-4 (CEB)

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

Message: “God’s Love is for Everyone”

Have you ever gone to a county or state fair? If so, take a moment to remember what it was like: lots of people walking around, going on rides, delicious aromas of food truck offerings, and a festive atmosphere. This is the description we find in Acts where the people have gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Shavuot which takes place fifty days after the Jewish Passover (thus Pentecost). This is a religious feast celebrating the first harvest and thanking God for the blessing of food. I remember being in Jerusalem even when there wasn’t a festival taking place, yet there were plenty of street vendors selling their hand-made items and homemade foods. It was there that I tasted some of the most delicious, fresh baked bread – really delicious – Yummmmmmm.

Anyway, thinking of our own experience at a fair, we can, perhaps imagine the great celebration that took place on that day we now call Pentecost. While crowds of people were celebrating, eating, singing and dancing in the streets, a 120 or so followers of Jesus were gathered together praying and waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Out in the streets, there were Jewish folks from countries all around Israel who had made the pilgrimage to celebrate Shavuot, so there were many different languages being spoken that probably caused communication to be challenging. However, this huge and very diverse group of people had all arrived with one purpose in mind: to give thanks to God for the gifts of life.

We can only imagine the difficulty in communication, and in the midst of it all, these Jesus followers were together in a large room praying and praying and waiting for the Holy Spirit to arrive, as Jesus had promised. In Acts 1, verse 8, Jesus said, “...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (NRSV) But they must have asked, “How are they supposed to do it?” They didn’t know for sure, but they could trust Jesus’ promise that he would send the Holy Spirit to empower them, and they knew they had a task: share the love of God in Christ Jesus with others.

I don’t know about you, but my experience of the Holy Spirit has been fairly quiet, subtle, and often a gradual realization. Biblical passages often describe the presence of the Spirit as a gentle dove. Surprise! This was totally unexpected! Here we find a powerful entrance of the Spirit who rushed in like a violent – not just gentle, but violent wind! Then tongues that looked like fire rested on the heads of the followers of Jesus, and they had one of the fastest Rosetta Stone language classes ever!

Suddenly, they were able to speak in many languages – the languages of the people who were in Jerusalem! They were clearly given the power to share the Good News through whatever language was needed to reach the people who were outside at the festival. A violent wind certainly got everyone’s attention, and then the followers of Jesus emerged – spilled into the streets to share the that GOD’S LOVE IS FOR EVERYONE! Jesus died and was raised from the dead so we could have life eternal! No one is excluded! Everyone is given the gift of love, no matter where they live or what language they speak!

It would be like going to another country where no one spoke English, and then suddenly being able to understand what they were saying! And, remember, Jesus told his followers that they would be empowered to share this good news with the entire world. The church of Jesus Christ may have been born inside a building, but when the Holy Spirit filled them

with joy, they couldn't stay inside! They ran into the streets, sharing the good news to all who could hear, and all could understand! God's love is for everyone! Such Good News is too great to keep to ourselves!

We just never know when the Holy Spirit will work or how. Often, it is when we least expect it, and we certainly can't control when the Spirit moves. The Spirit empowers us to BE the church in the world. Our proclamation is to not only grow in faith, but also to share the love of God with others.

So, what does that look like for us in this day and age? Where do we see the Spirit at work today? As commentator Audrey West asks: "Could it be on the young persons we fear we cannot reach, the older persons we fear will not try something new, the marginalized persons we too often do not even notice? If we watch and listen for the Spirit moving among them, perhaps we will hear them speaking, dreaming, envisioning, being caught up in the power of the living God." (found at Text This Week under commentaries for today's passage.)

Maybe we can't speak other languages, (pause) – wait! Maybe we do. We have the language of tweets, blogs, Facebook, and other digital media. We have the language of love in our songs, hymns, sermons, handshake, hug, smile, and the very essence of our mission and ministry as a church. We have the language of love in the ways we care for each other and others. We have the language of love in our outreach to the community and the world.

We are fluent in the language of love, and every single one of us certainly can share that love of God with others that is respect, caring, walking with the other person, and sharing words of support, comfort, or celebration with them. That is what it's all about. We reflect the love of God in the way we live our lives and through our words and actions. It is in sharing God's love with others, near and far – at church and in the community, locally and in the world that we continue the work of

Jesus in the world – yes, the WORLD! God’s love is for EVERYONE! We begin where we are, and we keep moving out. The church doesn’t stay inside but disperses into our world to BE the church. So, Happy Birthday, Church of Jesus Christ! Go out – BE the Church! Hallelujah!

Prayer:

On this amazing day, Spirit of God, we are reminded that you rushed in to empower the followers of Jesus to carry on his work in our world as your Church. We are part of that Church, and we seek your guidance and direction faithfully share the love of God with others, near and far. Lead us, guide us, and keep us on track, Holy Spirit. We believe that God’s love is everywhere! Open our eyes, hearts, and mind to hear and share that message with others. Amen.

Lord’s Prayer: (interpreted by Fred F. Keip)

Indwelling God, infused throughout all existence, we honor you with many names. Your realm is within the human heart. We accept life for all that it can be, on earth as throughout all creation.

May we continue to draw sustenance from this earth, and may we receive forgiveness equal to our own.

May we ever move from separation toward union, to live in grace, with love in our hearts, forever and ever, Amen.

Hymn: “They’ll Know We are Christians” (FWS #2223)

Video: God’s Love is for Everyone!



WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER

Juliann
Joan Allen
Naomi
Erin Frane
Madeline
Charles Gilman
Josh Jones
Aerial Silanpaa

Harry Junkins
Marilyn & Gil
Donna Smith
Sophia
Bobbie Noble
Dan Strange
Danny Westbrook
Pastor Sue Ellery

Christine & her parents
Jenn-Stebbins daughter-in-law
Those in nursing and assisted living care
Our Church family



WHO WE ARE

FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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