

Call to Worship

Come, Holy Spirit, Come! Come to us who wait for your holy breathe upon us. Come in your power and your love, to quicken our spirits, to burn as a flame in our hearts, to give us voice, and words to speak.

**Receive us as we are, and make us more than we are. Make us your inspired prophets, unafraid proclaimers of the good news of Jesus Christ in whose name we are gathered.**

Prayer of Invocation

**Come, Holy Spirit, descend into our midst. Fill our hearts with the excitement the apostles felt when you sent them into the streets to proclaim the good news. Grant us the courage that we may go forward, like the apostles, filled with your Spirit, to tell of the joy we share in this fellowship. These things we pray, confident in your presence. Amen.**

The Word

Acts 2:1-21

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.**

There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. They were surprised and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language?"

Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!" They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, "What does this mean?" Others jeered at them, saying, "They're full of new wine!"

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! These people aren't drunk, as you suspect; after all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! **Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 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.**

Even upon my servants, men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and a cloud of smoke. **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. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

Living the Word

“Un -quenchable Fire”

Today we celebrate Pentecost. The coming of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Fire to the people of God who were the first to follow the teachings of Jesus. It is really amazing the outrageous stories of the Acts that the Apostles were able to do after they accepted the Holy Spirit for themselves and as a community of faith in Jesus.

Outrageous: Peter when told not to preach in Jesus' name, continued as he knew God wanted him to. He and the Apostles were thrown in jail, but 'an angel of the Lord' let them out. They continued God's work and 'many signs and wonders happened. People were healed and they believed enough to put other people in the shadow of where the apostles walked to receive healing, that is ridiculously outrageous.

Even so 'they added large numbers to their church every day.' As a community they prayed together over Tabitha and she was raised from death. You say 'it can't happen.' Scripture says it did. They ate with people outside of their faith, as Jewish people. This was unheard of as they were to keep certain food rituals and not eat the unclean foods. What could inspire them so much to do such outrageously great things? An un-quenchable fire. One that Jesus had told them he would send...and he had – at Pentecost.

This week on Friday, over a thousand United Methodist clergy and lay people from all over Wisconsin are meeting for the Annual Conference of our denomination. Bethe Wiberg and myself will go, we will be voting on petitions and delegates for General Conference 2020 (which will be held in Minneapolis MN.

They meet every four years to try to find new and better ways to be the church and serve the world. They follow the mission “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” To do that there has to be an unquenchable fire, to keep us inspired.

Pentecost is not just United Methodist but celebrated in all Christian Churches. We are celebrating today, by wearing red, a sign of the unquenchable fire. Some churches will have birthday cake as today is a celebration of the birth of the church. Carolyn has announced a Birthday party for our church to happen on September 8<sup>th</sup> and we are hoping to have some flames that day as well! The celebration begins today, the Holy Spirit is alive and ready to lead us forward, so let's go with it. It is a good time to celebrate the church.

How long had God been planning that first Pentecost Party? The poetry of Genesis, chapter 1, describes God's creative spirit, blowing over the formless void, and Genesis 2 narrates the life-giving breath of God. Later the spirit appears in times of darkness and distress.

In the time of the prophets, when part of the nation of Israel was in exile, those left behind gathered the pieces of a the shattered world of Israel, and the prophet Isaiah promises the coming of one, on whom this spirit shall rest, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. John the Baptist, in the time of oppression by the Roman Empire, also told of one who would be baptized by the Spirit, and Jesus later agrees.

So too, God has been planning this Pentecost Party at Hayward United Methodist Church. It has been long in come, the talk of the need for a new way, in this beautiful of land of lakes and trees, and people. 35 years ago thoughts prayers and planning began for new ministry in this area. We have just studied again with up-dated and more in-depth demographics and statistics of the area, the need that is still here.

Bishop Jung has made it possible for us to work through the MCCI program and we have begun to explore the options once again.

In the extensive planning of the Apostles Pentecost Party, the Spirit of God was weaving together the generations through a spirit that brings forth life out of death and hope out of despair. There are many of us present today that recognize the darkness and distress of this world.

We all witness the growing gap between the haves and have-nots, the growth in poverty and unchecked disease, growing divisions between countries and within economies, as well as growing intolerance of some toward others who are different from themselves. We feel the gap growing between the generations and how we all view 'church.' Yet we celebrate our glimpses of the work of that Spirit, and we await again, God's breath to blow our way with life-giving Spirit.

After thousands of years of preparation for this party, including hints and glimpses of the Holy Spirit recorded in Old Testament scripture, who had God chosen to be present at the original Pentecost Party? Acts chapter 1 verses 13 & 14 , *"When they entered the city, they went to the upstairs room where they were staying. Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James, Alphaeus' son; Simon the zealot; and Judas, James' son— all were united in their devotion to prayer, along with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers."*

Then in chapter 2:5-11 as we shared this morning: *"There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. They were surprised and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language?"*

*Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; as well as residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya bordering Cyrene; and visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!"*

Please don't be caught in my impressive display of pronunciation, I have practiced that list for many years. Instead hear that first verse: *"There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem."* Interesting that God would invite them to the party, but then again, they were the chosen people. In fact sometimes we forget that Jesus was Jewish. They were invited long before we were. Some accepted the invitation and came, some didn't. How many of us have been invited to live according to God's Spirit and have accepted. When you say "Come Holy Spirit, Come" Are you really prepared for what might happen at the party?

Not everyone got their invitation that day...Some had to wait for witnesses to share the story of the first party before they could celebrate. All are included in the invitation, but until someone was willing to witness about this new church, personally delivering, by word of mouth, people didn't know they were included.

It seems that many of us get to an age where a party for us isn't as hopeful and can even be depressing. At the beginning of the Apostles story, we can imagine them moping in their state of abandonment, and not for the first time. They had been with Jesus for three years and then he was dead, resurrected and

gone, leaving a trail of mysterious promises about an advocate that would follow. Now they wait, disappointed and losing hope. It is difficult to disciple others to Christ when you are consumed by waiting your way into hopelessness. In the midst of the wilderness of anything to celebrate, they live in fear of transitions begun and changes beginning to happen.

Nightmare thoughts come to pass - who will the advocate be? How with things change? I like the way things have been, why do we have to accept change? What more will we have to do? Many in this sanctuary know these fears. Some are transitioning from the challenges of independence to a whole new set of challenges that accompanies getting older raising families and planning for futures in a world full of unpredictable economies and unequal access.

Others of you may be realizing that though your pew doesn't change, your church and your world does. You may be mourning the constant stability you once loved. Times of life transition come with promise and hope, with fear and grieving, and we experience them all.

Finally, after the preparations and the invitations, after the grieving and the sense of loss, we celebrate with the Apostles that at this party everyone can take home some incredible party gifts. For the Apostle party goers of the first Pentecost, they had been given the three years of teachings with Jesus and this became more like a graduation party, as they received their voices to go into the world as witnesses with the Good News.

Just several of the party gifts that this church has to offer are: Bible Study so you can also learn what the Apostles did; a location on the edge of town, where many pass by us every day; an octagon with a spire on the roof that is a beacon to all who look up, handicap access so all can come in, a friendly atmosphere with potluck waiting in the Fellowship Hall where you can share table where connections can be made with others; all of which making it easier to invite the world into our space.

Every Pentecost we should be able to look back at the years before and see where we have experienced the Holy Spirit working through us to make disciples of Jesus for the Transformation of the World. As I look back over the last three years I see many things that this church has done.

In the essence of time I will only list a few of the many that have really affected me personally:

1. Watching the mission giving in so many ways to the world and to the community; one example is how far I have seen Ruby's Pantry grow and serve over 500 people last year as an organization that comes together to serve this community.
2. The study of the demographic numbers of this area, along with the knowledge that there is a need for a United Methodist Church in some form to be the people who live with "Open minds, Open Hearts and Open Doors."
3. People attending extra events to hear of some things we can do, with help from the MCCI group, to keep this church vital and growing.

Pentecost today challenges this congregation to find the Spirit within them and to locate, claim and utilize your authentic voices, gifts and skills with which to love and serve. The relevant question becomes not only "How will I respond to these party gifts of the Spirit?" "But how will we as a church, respond to these gifts?" The Holy Spirit is an unquenchable fire that cannot be put out, as long as we allow ourselves to feed into the fire.