

Pentecost Sunday  
May 31

Christ candle is lit. Today we celebrate the marriage of Frank and Liz Casselman outdoors Memorial Day weekend.

Opening prayer:

Holy God,  
As we gather together in our homes for worship  
we pray that the Holy Spirit will come upon us  
with the truth that convicts,  
the love that convinces, and the power that converts.  
Amen

Sing or read together: "Breathe on me Breath of God" UMH #420

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love,  
and do what thou wouldst do.
2. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
until my heart is pure,  
until with thee I will one will,  
to do and to endure.
3. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
till I am wholly thine,  
till all this earthly part of me  
glows with thy fire divine.
4. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
so shall I never die,  
but live with thee the perfect life  
of thine eternity.

Offering:

As we share our tithes and offerings we recognize that these gifts are evidence of your Spirit's presence and work within us. We give to you God the credit for our eagerness to share.

Scripture Interpretation  
Acts 2: 1-21

Pentecost: The Birthday of the Church

The word “Pentecost” comes from the Greek meaning 50. It is the 50th day after the resurrection of Jesus and the color for it is red representing the tongues of flame.

Formerly an agricultural festival, Pentecost evolved into additionally a celebrating of the giving of the Law or Torah. It was when the followers of Jesus really became a church. The Holy Spirit was the gift given to Jesus’ followers . . . Breath or wind is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Israel celebrated Pentecost (also known as Festival of Weeks) long before Christ came. First fruits were gathered and bread (from harvested grain) was offered as a sacrifice to God.

The symbol of the dove pointing down shows how God comes to us and reminds us of Jesus’ baptism. The Holy Spirit came down in wind and fire.

Fire: 7 tongues of flame, from Revelation 5: 12 (gifts) power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing

Note: Joel 2: 28-32 is quoted.

1 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.

Celebrate Pentecost!

Pastor Heather

There is never any question what scripture to preach on Pentecost Sunday. Acts chapter 2 gives

us such an exciting description of that day. The rushing of wind and dancing of flames. The voices crying out in all languages of the earth and some that had yet to be spoken, heard for the 1st time. We have named this the birthday of the church, a day when everyone who calls on the name of God will be saved.

Perhaps the birthday of the church would be better celebrated with balloons and presents and cake and candles and ice cream and games and streamers and banners. Surely we should not be sitting like this in our own homes with so little contact between us. That 1st Pentecost must have been very different. Truly inspirational. Although I suppose if we acted the way the people did that day, others might think we were drunk too. Too much wine for communion, they might say. After all, who ever heard of a party during church?

As children growing up in the 1950's and 60's we were taught that church is not supposed to be a party. We were suppose to sit quietly and attentively and be serious. My mother expected my sister and I to follow along in the hymnal, bow our heads during prayer, listen to the scriptures and bring as offering to put in the collection plate when passed and listen to the sermon. Who can make a party out of that? Certainly, no one could accuse us of being drunk so early in the morning!

Things had been quiet for the disciples and other believers for the weeks following Easter. The dreams and visions of the followers of Jesus had just about faded after the initial enthusiasm. Easter was beginning to seem like a cruel joke, an idea whose time had not come. Where was Jesus, now that we really need Him? He said He'd return. He promised as an Advocate, a Comforter, a Counselor. Then the new age would dawn; the promise would be fulfilled. But each new day brought another day just like the last one. No more dreams and visions for them. The crucifixion had made realists of them all.

Then it happened. On the Day of Pentecost. How appropriate! Pentecost, the celebration of the giving of the Torah, the birthday of Torah which began the old Israel; the day of the celebration of the harvest of first fruits and the offerings of thanksgiving to God! Maybe it was just a neat bit of editing on Luke's part to place the birthday of the church, the new Israel, along side the birthday of the old. Yet there it is. The Holy Spirit comes to the community of faith in the rush of a mighty wind and in tongues of fire with such power that others around are drawn into the community. They too, then, receive the Holy Spirit by participating in the covenant community.

Of course there are always those cynics who toss off the good news; who refuse to participate, who say "they're drunk" or "they must be crazy". To them Peter recalls the words of the prophet Joel to remind them of the possibilities for life that had been spoken of a long time ago. Now the dreams and visions are coming true. The Spirit is being poured out upon us in new ways.

We all had dreams and visions once upon a time. Remember when you used to dream about how it was going to be when you'd finally be a teenager? My granddaughter Rowan turns 13 this week and she pointed that out in her call to me last week.

What about when you got our driver's license or graduated from high school or college and got to walk across the stage for your diploma? Our graduates this year are mostly recognized virtually. What about your dreams of retirement - maybe on hold now because of financial downturn? What would it be like if . . . or when?

I'm a 50 year walker. At one point, walking in a marathon like some friends have done, was one of my dreams. Arthritis in a hip put that dream on hold but prayer walking is something I do at least 5 days a week - in rain, snow, etc. and sometimes when I'm so tired I don't know how I'll finish my loop. I pray walk because that is where sometimes God gives me dreams and visions for the church, my family and friends. Those dreams and visions are possible because they do not depend on the strength in my legs, or on me at all, but they are born out of the promise and purpose of God. Sometimes, the seeds that are planted I've seen actually grow and be harvested. Our vision of young families once again being part of Calvary's church family, is happening right now. Those 7 babies born last year and one more coming in August are truly a gift from God. I feel so fortunate that I can see that vision unfolding for us.

Martin Luther King had a dream that described and defined the direction of his life. The movement toward the dream helped to make it a reality. I - we - have a dream of a church alive and moving and growing. It might take some different forms when we re-open July 5th - but the commitment and love and faith and stewardship and excitement of hearing babies crying and young children playing on the new playground and older people being able to share once again with their friends, with social distancing, is a dream many of us are visioning today.

That vision of Calvary UMC making a difference in our community and our conference and maybe even the world is coming. That church alive and well, surviving the pandemic and reaching out once again to serve the people of our community, and being witnesses will be our Pentecost story.

The Church has a dream expressed in the early prayers of the church, when it said "Thy Kingdom come, O Lord," and when it proclaimed "Amen! Come Lord Jesus."

Sing or read together: "Spirit of the Living God" UMH #393

Spirit of the living God, fall a-fresh on me.  
Spirit of the living God, fall a-fresh on me.  
Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.  
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Closing Blessing:

Go in peace and may the Spirit of the Living God fall a-fresh on us today.  
Amen.