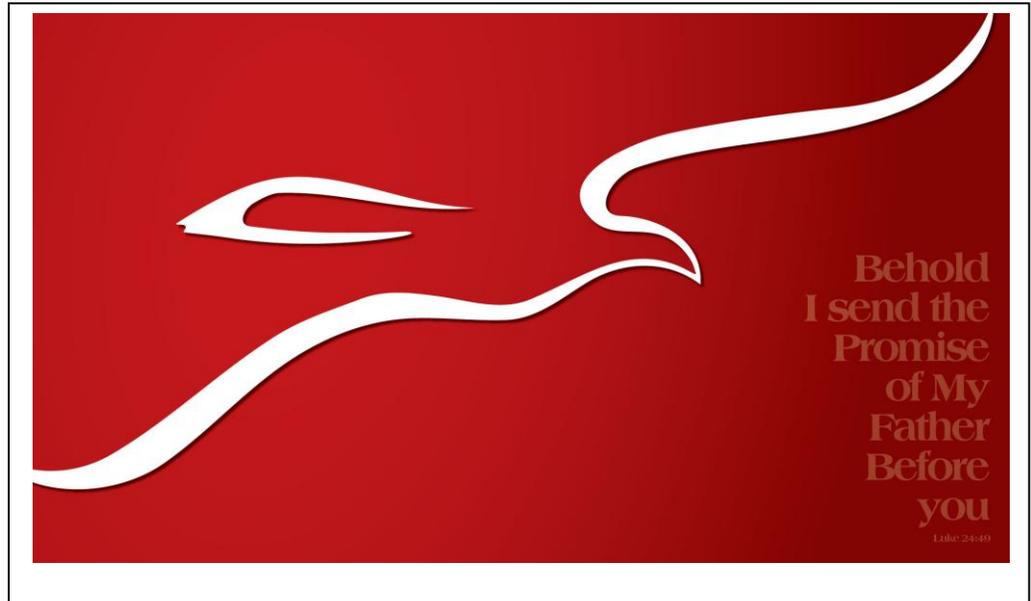


Wednesday June 4, 2014

Dear Friends,

Today I am reading
Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where



they were sitting. Divided tongues as of fire, appeared among them and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

And 1st Corinthians 12:4-7

Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

When I was young, I was taught to be afraid of the Holy Spirit. Because people who were "filled" with the Spirit did very unpredictable, sometimes crazy things. Like speak in tongues. Like fall down in the midst of a worship service. And in my controlled Presbyterian early childhood, that was just not something we talked about, much less DID... (are you kidding me?)

If we want to encounter the Holy Spirit of God, where would we look? And how would we know that we are in the Spirit's presence?

In Scripture, the Spirit is often compared to the power of wind, blowing where it will, sometimes gently and at other times with a tremendous force. (Based on my childhood, I like the gently kind) But the Spirit is also described as breath, the life force

within each person. And so if we believe the images of the Spirit presented in Scripture, our search must go deep within ourselves and far beyond us, the way we breathe--in and out, traveling freely across the world.

The Spirit IS a force to be reckoned with. In the book of Acts, the Spirit cares about the way we communicate with each other. Paul tells us that the Spirit functions within us, freeing us up to exercise our God-given gifts. At various times in the life of the church, --- like baptism, confirmation, commissioning on a mission trip, etc. we pray and ask God to release the Spirit in these people that they might experience God's power working through them.

I like that. God works in us. Is there ever a time when we would prefer God's Spirit to just leave us alone? Life is tough. And what if the Spirit is disruptive and unsettling? That is very possible. What if the Spirit takes us where we don't want to go? Or has us do something we don't want to do?

Pentecost usually occurs at about the same time as hurricane season. For the people who live in Florida, South Carolina, Texas, Louisiana, and other such places near the coast, WIND is not welcomed! And God (the Holy Spirit) can appear to us with hurricane force and not be welcomed because God rearranges our lives. In the magical land of Narnia, CS Lewis describes God through the character of Aslan, a great and mysterious lion. One of the children encountered the lion and wondered, "Is Aslan SAFE?" The answer was "No. Aslan is not safe, but Aslan is good."

Maybe God's spirit is not always safe, but definitely is always good. Sometimes we have to be stirred up to see the new possibilities before us. We get trapped--trapped by life, trapped by the familiar, trapped by fear, trapped by too many good things, or too many bad things' afraid to change and afraid to stay the same, we get into the rut of just surviving.

Pentecost marks the descent of the Holy Spirit, right after the ascent of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit different from our spirit. The Holy Spirit is a force, that if we have the courage to work with it, will make us into people who can BE more and DO more than we can do on our own, and not just for ourselves but for the world. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to choose love instead of hate, grace instead of judgment.

I believe that the Spirit is present here with us at the church. Someone told me that things felt a little out of control--we have new people coming (praise God) we have lots of children and youth (praise praise God), we have new staff (praise God) and we are trying to grow into all that is happening around us. The shaking and stirring in our midst may be what we need for reasons beyond our understanding right now. Maybe some of it, is the raw material that God is ready to work with-- I remember the children's song in the play a few weeks ago, "Heavenly Father, you're the great potter, I'm the clay... Mold me and make me." That's us--God is molding us and making us, helping us to stretch and grow.

My prayer is that we find a way to encounter the Holy Spirit at the deepest level of who we are. Pay attention to your breathing in and out, allow God to enter into each breath, and listen from our hearts. The Spirit is around us, within us and between us, a force to be reckoned with and God's great gift to us, as promised by Jesus. :)

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CALENDAR:

UMW meets tomorrow June 5 at 5 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Note the new beautiful color coming to life in our Fellowship Hall.

Parking fundraiser for Czech Republic mission is this weekend in our parking lot. If you are going to Blue Plum, come and help out the church by parking here.

Sunday June 8, Pentecost, A Birthday Party for the church.

NO 8:15 SERVICE NOW OR FOR THE REST OF THE SUMMER. WE WILL COMBINE SERVICES, so WE CAN be together as a community, fellowship at Lemonade on the Lawn, and see what God has planned!!!

Holston Annual Conference is June 8-11 at Lake Junaluska

Pillar Chairs will meet Tuesday June 10 7 pm.

PRAYER REQUESTS/PRAISES:

Please pray for:

Edna Johnson, recovering at home

Garland and Jean Thayer, who have had more than their share of sickness and struggle recently: Garland's brother had open heart surgery, his sister had a major stroke, their son was in the hospital at Fort Sanders--all last week. Now this week, their other son, who lives in South Carolina, is having open heart surgery Monday. Please pray for God to give Garland and Jean strength, and healing for their loved ones.

New service, THE BRANCH, starting June 22 at 11:30 in the Fellowship Hall. Please pray for this service, for God to inspire us as we seek to inspire others and for this service to reach new people for Jesus Christ.

"Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

--St Francis of Assisi

Blessings,

Jane Taylor, First United Methodist Church,

Johnson City, TN