

June 2018

Acts 2: When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] 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.

With Pentecost just yesterday as I write this note, it strikes me what a surprise Peter and that group must have had in Acts 2. We don't know what they were doing at 9:00 AM that brought them all together. We are not told how many are there, but it is clearly more than the 12 disciples (Matthias was added to replace Judas in Chapter 1). Peter has already shown some leadership. In Acts 2, there is no planning, no intention for what happens...but the Spirit makes the uncertain and perhaps befuddled apostles/disciples DO SOMETHING. They become a voice that astounds other people. In a sense, there is a surprise party. The Holy Spirit gives the first manifestation of many of the promises heard especially within John's gospel. Yet Luke (the author of Acts) isn't at all concerned with the early efforts of the church; he's interested to chronicle the power they demonstrate when directed by the Spirit.

The season of Pentecost dominates the rest of the liturgical year—called “common time”—marked by green paraments. It is a time where the character of Christmas (still far away) and of Easter (now past) give no firm footing. It's not a life or death issue (notice the pun) when we talk about the Holy Spirit. What it is is this: a time of knowing if we have the same power that permeated the early followers. What energy and zeal marks the Spirit among us? I see this in various ways. An example: the opportunity of fellowship in the Spring Fling.

Might the summer offer a “surprise party”...to throw “a party” that puts people (including us) off balance in TRUST that God has a purpose for us in the summer days. Think of a favorite activity. How would that be shared with someone else? Where have you traveled? What have you seen? How would our garden be a nice evening for a social event? Do you have a graduate who is on the precipice of a “new day and new life?” What should we be doing for them? Is there a neighbor who needs some of our attention? What voice are we offering in the season of the Holy Spirit?

I guess part of what I'm sharing comes from a couple visits I made today. They are both people who face some challenges. At the same time, they are SO thankful for that visit. We talk about the Memorial Garden and their children and concerns they know they're facing. The surprise is the joy sensed in what many would consider a difficulty. I asked one to do me a favor; to say the Lord's Prayer. It seems foolish and meaningless, but I said it is a reminder of their church family—AND the connection to the whole church that goes back to those early days where flames and passionate speech that affirmed Christ exercises power in their and our lives.

Life will be changing. I love visiting our folks. I need them to be remembered more as I approach retirement. We need to bring the “party” to them. I am blessed in having two (2) people who are thinking about deeper commitment to Faith United—with possible Seminary courses and helping as assistant ministers. There are tasks like changing the outside greeting flags, caring for the Memorial Garden, choosing a message for our “see through” cross at the ramp entrance. These all need someone who will take a small task. The spirit is there in those small things; in the memories and the work that others may miss.

With blessings, Pastor Joe