

**LED BY THE SPIRIT**  
**ACTS 2: 1-21; ROMANS 8: 14-17**  
**DR. JEANIE STANLEY**  
**PENTECOST: MAY 23, 2010**

**Acts 2: 1-21.**

*2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 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. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. 5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs-- in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."*

*14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20 The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. 21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'*

**Romans 8: 14-17**

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.*

**Please pray with me.** Abba, Father, on this Pentecost Sunday, we give thanks for the gift of the Spirit and your call to be the church of Jesus Christ in this time and place. We give thanks that we are children of God and need not fall back into fear. Open our hearts and our minds to hear your word for us this morning. By your Spirit, help us discern how to witness to the faith we have been given. Inspire us with your visions and dreams so that we speak your truth to those who need to hear it. May we call on the name of the Lord and be saved. Amen.

Take a deep breath in and out. Again. It is the breath of life. We often take the breath of life for granted until we have trouble breathing. A friend of mine suffered a stroke in her eye probably in December. After months of diagnostics, they believe the underlying cause may have been sleep apnea. It affected her

heart, her thyroid, her vision and more. She is doing better now that she uses a breathing machine at night, but they suggest it will take a year for full recovery. Breathing is essential for life. If we do not take in enough oxygen, every organ and life itself is threatened.

Just as we need to breathe in oxygen for our physical life, we need to breathe in the wind of the Holy Spirit for our spiritual life. We celebrate Pentecost as if it is a party. It *is* a celebration; but the Spirit is life giving, and the Spirit comes from God.

According to the Book of Acts, the disciples who gathered on Pentecost included the original 11 apostles, as well as other followers numbering 120. After the ascension of our Lord, the disciples gathered together, but they lacked hope and direction.

Some of us may feel that way this morning. We may believe in Jesus Christ, but we lack vision and hope right now. Like the first disciples, we gather before God. We come to church, but we do not know what to do next.

The early Christians were grieving the death of Jesus. They rejoiced that he rose from the dead and returned to God, but Jesus was no longer with them – to laugh with them, eat with them, talk to them. They missed him. Some of us know how they felt because we are grieving. We have faith, but we miss the presence of someone we love.

The first disciples probably were scared. They did not know what their future would hold. Neither do we. Some of us face uncertainties about school, work, health, finances or relationships.

According to the Book of Acts, the arrival of the Holy Spirit changed everything. I encourage you to read the first few chapters of Acts this afternoon. You can feel the energy.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit sounded like the rush of a violent wind. All at once the disciples were on fire with enthusiasm and purpose. It was not their circumstances that changed. It was the disciples who were changed. As a result of their faithful response to the Spirit, the church was born. They were led by the Spirit.

Peter quoted from the Prophet Joel when he spoke to the crowds on Pentecost. Peter shared Joel's vision of God's Kingdom – the last days when God's Spirit would be poured on all people. Repeating the prophecy of Joel, Peter declared that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Praise God! Three thousand people came forward that day.

*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, Peter told them, so that your sins will be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and for your children, Peter assured them. The promise is for everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him. What better witness can we give?*

Peter was a fisherman, yet all at once he spoke eloquently like a prophet. Sometimes I wonder what went through Peter's mind before he stepped up that day. I wonder how many times we do not step up to use the gifts we have been given by the Holy Spirit. Thank God for the Peters of this world. Thank God for disciples who are led by the Spirit.

One of the lessons of Pentecost is that the Holy Spirit can witness powerfully through us if we let it happen. Peter was not the only one who spoke with conviction on Pentecost. According to the scriptures, all the disciples were speaking by the power of the Spirit. The crowds were amazed. The crowds understood what the disciples were saying, even though they spoke different languages. “Aren’t these Galileans?” the crowds asked. “How is it that we understand them?”

Their reaction may not be so different from that of our congregation on Youth Sunday last week. Was that the same Ryan Bain we knew? The music was new and different. Did we really do Istanbul and Constantinople? What a lovely smile we saw on Maggie’s face as she narrated the puppet show. What a beautiful voice Megan has. We did not know she played the guitar so well – did she? Wow, the dramatic reading Carling gave was awesome. Who knew that Jakob was another Bob Dylan? How about Abby and Addie and Kylee? And Katie and Tristan? We were amazed. Fist bumps, high fives and all –thanks Casey and Ryan for showing us a new way to share the peace of Christ. What an experience to have the offering collected by a ballerina. Led by the Spirit generations really can work together to share God’s love. We may speak different languages, but we understood. We shared God’s love.

The Spirit moved powerfully years ago, and the Spirit moves powerfully today. In our early years Mission Presbytery recognized this congregation for having spiritual energy, but we never know all the ways the Spirit blows in our midst. The Spirit blows where it will.

We are more apt to recognize the Spirit moving through those who stand out as speakers, musicians or leaders, but the Spirit gives life in ways that few will see – in the warmth of a prayer shawl, in a smile over a cup of coffee, through the willingness to listen, through any small act of kindness, through the myriad of gifts given without our knowing, through the flowers planted to God’s glory, the shelves stocked with books, the children fed and nurtured during WOW or Parents’ Night Out, through women’s retreats and small group studies. The Spirit brings life to us all.

Another lesson of Pentecost is that the Spirit blows us into community. The Spirit helps us communicate with each other and minister to each other. The Spirit gives us the words to say and the actions to take in Christ’s name. The Spirit forms the church.

The Spirit leads us to witness the love of Jesus Christ for all people. Whether we witness by speaking God’s Word, ringing bells, singing or playing an instrument, by praying, by hammering on a roof for Community Restore, by making crafts with children during Summer Bible Adventure, by baking cupcakes, teaching, or moving around chairs and tables for a wedding, the Spirit blows mightily in our midst. In Jesus Christ and led by the Spirit, generations work together to live and share God’s love and the Word with each other, our community and the world.

The Spirit gives us a vision of heaven, a vision of the Kingdom of God, not so we can spend this life contemplating the next. The Spirit gives us the vision of God’s Kingdom so that we experience new life today.

Every time I feel the Spirit, I want to pray. In the African American spiritual we sang earlier, the second verse says there is but one train upon this track of life. It runs to heaven and then right back. The Spirit gives us a vision of heaven so that we might experience new life right here today. Receive the Spirit this morning, my friends. Breathe it in. Have visions, dream and prophesy. Feel the Spirit and pray. Then go out to share the Good News.