

“Waiting? But I Don’t Want to Wait!”

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Scripture:

Acts 2:1-21 (NRSV)

1 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.'

The Sermon:

It doesn't really say it in the text, but it sounds to me like the disciples were just waiting around for something, anything.

And they got so much more than they imagined. A mighty wind, a mighty roar of energy, a flaming headache, a stomach-churning need to get out and say something no matter the language barriers!

Hebrew scholar and UCC theologian Walter Brueggemann has said: "If you do not let the Gospel use you to create a new world, then all you can do is be a slave to the old one."

He was speaking to a group of pastors; but truly, to be church now, to be a community of Jesus' followers, to be baptizing babies and adults, teaching children and adults, praying together children and adults... is to choose something both ancient and yet radically new and different. **It is to choose a new world.**

Our nation and the world around us swirls with anger, and bigotry, fear of the other that is so vicious it leads to murders and bombings; such terrible name calling and cruelty that it leads to self-wounding and suicides. We are a nation of closed hearts, gated communities, bullying and burning crosses; pepper spray is available for teens to use on each other in high school bathrooms, for pity's sake. (In North Carolina a high school has made this available so that teens can pepper spray any transgender teen who might need to use a bathroom.)

Yet this is not who we are!

We are called to be focused on the love of God, the reign of peace with justice, the end of wars, the end of hatred and violence.

We are called to welcome all in, break bread together, listen attentively, learn humbly, pray hard for understanding and mercy, for joy and for peace.

We are called to build bridges, not burn them.

We are ordered to repentance from a life of selfishness, privilege and abuse of power.

We are choosing to create a new world.

And if that is not what you are about when you come here, then pray for the strong tempest of the Holy Spirit in your life, if you dare!

For that is what church is, and that is what Spirit does...in the name of God, in the love of Jesus, in these ways; we are called to new freedom and a new world.

We are not here to save this building, though it is beautiful and historic and an important architectural gem in this city.

We are not here simply to find friendship and food here each Sunday.

Instead, this grand old architectural gem could house nonprofit offices, and a bakery, rooms for young adults to live in while they give a year of service work to our very own Justice Leadership Program. This place could be home to another congregation needing a safe place to worship and grow. Our building could house a dance program, an after school program, who knows what else could go on here!

I already know that much that is good and up-building does go on here!

You already know that we here strive to do good in our neighborhood, our city and our nation, even far away...whether it is with our friends in Felsorakos or whether it is in the midst of the ravages of war and natural disaster.

We are Christ's church, we are the Body, we are the Building that Christ is the very Cornerstone of...**and we will not be slaves to the old world of hate and fear and war.** So whatever we do, both in this place and beyond it with our lives, let us do it with the clarity and the courage of those who gathered on Pentecost.

No more waiting. No more being fearful or despairing, with only vague hope, tepid dreams, locked doors and mumbled words.

At Pentecost they found their voices and spoke up and spoke out!

Come awake in your yearning! Our Pacific Northwest Conference has hope and dreams to be a church of risk taking, welcoming, new idea dreaming communities.

Churches without walls, praying people without fear or despair because we have the promise of the resurrection, all of us pushing back against the culture of hatred, cruelty and vulgarity that we see right now.

I just spent two days with a group of 24 people who talked about these things, and committed their time and energy in the year ahead...

- There will be “treasure trunks” of great materials for churches to share; whether it is all you need for an adult class on anti-racism, or a “treasure trunk” of materials for a new way to run a Vacation Bible School! They will be shared, free of charge, with any church that wants to tap into new resources and ideas.
- There will be local gatherings planned to meet our newest minister, Courtney, the Minister for Church Vitality. When she joins us in September, her plan is to meet and empower the rural and small churches of our Conference, first!
- There will be intergenerational retreats for church folk to come together and share their stories of success and failure, of life and of death and of hope for their resurrection as communities of faith!
- There will be fresh useful communication tools to help us share what we have and what we know, and realize that we are not alone in our struggles and our joys. We will swap pulpits with one another, find ways to hear and see each other as far flung communities of faith!
- And yes, there will be access to more money to help churches take new ideas and bring them to life!

I just know this...the waiting is over.

For the disciples, it is over.

For us, it must be over.

We must listen for the oncoming roar of the Spirit. God’s Spirit. Not soft like a breeze, but a roar of fire and a rush of wind like the sound of an oncoming train.

I want to have that fire! I pray you want to be part of that roar!

The disciples moved from chaos, to communication; from cowardice to courage!

They are our ancestors...

We are their future...could they ever have dreamed of us?

I don’t think so, but they spoke up for us, they went out for us, they dreamed and they taught, they healed and shared and spread the love of God...for us and the world.

We cannot see our heirs...

But we can speak up for them, we can dream, we can teach, we can heal and share the love of God, for them.

The waiting is over. It was over, 2,000 years ago.

Come, Holy Spirit, come! This is our day; this is our time. Come to us, give us courage and voice to be your church, your people for all people!