

As a child I had a connection with the Spirit that was as real as the relationships I had with my family. My imagination intertwined with my prayers and gave life to gentle divineness as I would act out my future in my room, play in the yard, or dance around my house. There was a beautiful fluidity between my breath and the breath of God.

Now cherished memories, I recall the manifestations of the Spirit in my life. I suppose the Spirit never went away from me, more likely I allowed my imagination to fade and my dreams to move to ones of stresses rather than a future of grace.

As a child I would not have called my dreams and conversations with the Spirit to be ones of Grace but in soaking in the memories of childhood today I know the future I could envision then was one saturated with God's grace.

In adulthood my involvement with the Spirit comes in freeze frames – you know like the ones in 90's sitcoms where the cast would freeze but one character, and they would turn to the camera and reveal something about themselves or a key piece of information for the storyline then unfreeze and go back to whatever had been going on.

These freeze frames with the Spirit happen for me when an unexpected breeze envelopes me & causes me to pause, when I hold my nieces or nephews and they sink into my chest, when I'm hiking and I look around to see how small I am in the vastness of nature, when I feel uncertain or perhaps frazzled and I close my eyes and take a deep breath, one that fills my entire body as it seeps deep into my very core and as I exhale I feel the grace and peace of God washing over me.

My relationship with the Spirit isn't as playful, all encompassing, or prophetic now as it was when I was a child, but by the grace of God the Spirit continues to find ways to dance with my soul.

One of my sisters once asked me how I knew that I was experiencing the Spirit of God and as I thought of my response I was reminded that throughout Scripture folks had to answer that same question, including those at the feast of Pentecost.

When I would share how I experienced the Spirit over the years my sister never questioned if I had been drinking – well at least not to my face – not like the gathered crowd in Luke’s account of the Pentecost Story did.

The disciples didn’t get a chance to process what was taking place so that they could make sense of it before having to explain it to others. They had to trust that they had received the Spirit of God, just as Jesus said they would, and trust that what they were sharing with the gathered crowd was as true as their very lives.

Those gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost – the feast to commemorate the Spirit’s movement among their ancestors when giving the law at Mount Sinai – they were gathered to remember the Spirit not expecting to receive the movement of the Spirit again.

The disciples were there too, but they waiting in a room after Christ had ascended to the heavens. A gathering similar to the when Jesus had his feet washed by a woman, when Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, what we now know as the final supper, and after Jesus’ death as they hid.

The gathering for Pentecost also marked something significant for the disciples, they were waiting to receive the Spirit so they could leave Jerusalem and proclaim the Good News.

In this waiting there came a loud sound of a violent wind that filled the entire house. The loud noise stirs up a commotion because a crowd had come to see what had caused such a sound. As the Pentecost crowd peers through the windows and doorways of the house they hear the disciples speaking a

language that wasn't their own, yet they could hear it in their own native tongue.

The Spirit of God moving among all present in a semi-chaotic experience and as She moves She claims them through the words of an unlikely proclaimer ... Peter. As Peter hears the questioning of the crowd he speaks boldly and proclaims the Gospel, as he notes that those speaking can be heard in different languages were not drunk on new wine but bathed in the Holy Spirit.

Then Peter having named the Spirit's presence and giftings calls forth the words of the Prophet Joel, reminding all there that they are called to prophesy and dream dreams of God's Kin-dom on earth, and that all who profess God shall know salvation. And with this proclamation the church was born.

From a group of friends who had lost their leader and were unsure of their future the Spirit moved and from that space the church came to life.

As the crowds dispersed from this mystical experience – some have even called it the reversal of the tower of babble since all were speaking different languages and could they understand each other – the disciples move forward with the leadership of the Spirit and from their local community they create the church universal.

I imagine that night was draped in their recalling how they got to this place with them being baptized in the Spirit. Over the past three years, they had seen their friend, their Rabbi, preparing them to understand the work of God, the fulfillment of the law, explaining and practicing humble servitude as he prepared them for his death, to then witnessing him crucified, buried, and resurrected, and before his ascension giving them the charge to wait for the gift of the Spirit to proclaim the Gospel.

I can see them laying down for bed and their bodies being filled with endorphins that make it difficult to sleep and their heads being weighted by all the memories flowing through from the past three years and in particular that day. They had received the Holy Spirit and they were emboldened to lead.

The story of Pentecost can be difficult to connect to since it seems so grandiose and unlike how most of us have experienced the Spirit moving and creating in our lives.

Many of us are unable to understand another language that we haven't studied in our native tongue without a translator or with Google's new Pixel Buds that translate in your year in real time.

If any of us have heard the sound of a violent wind it most likely was nature warning us to seek cover and prepare for a storm.

And when we experience other cultures or expressions from other ethnic backgrounds we tend to find the fastest path to homogeneity and then hope others will assimilate.

The story of Pentecost feels disconnected from our daily lives. It is one of those great stories we tell but can struggle to find application in our experience of living in 2018.

Yet, even if we question how Pentecost speaks to our lives today, I don't think many of us in this sanctuary would say the Spirit has stopped creating, dismantling, and resurrecting us and our lives and our churches to wholeness. We still believe the Spirit is at work.

The ways you experience the Spirit in your life may not resemble mine or Peter's but if given time to think back on your life you could proclaim the Gospel work of the Spirit at times in your journey. With each Pentecost, we as part of the church universal are to explore what the Spirit is creating in

this community for us to prophesy and for us to dream dreams of.

Jesus was always explaining how the present connected to the past and what the present was doing to create a future that had heaven breaking through here on earth; the Spirit of God is continuing to ask that very thing of us, Calvary.

So what might the Spirit be calling for us to recall from our past and our present so that we can proclaim a future that strengthens us to proclaim the Gospel even more? Perhaps this ...

Calvary, you have a legacy of manifesting the love of God in your welcoming nature.

Our future shall be one where as a church those who have never felt welcomed find their home as part of us.

You have acknowledged your history of white flight and have sought to stay committed to this community no longer moving out or away from something.

As a church, we shall care for the communities and neighbors around this physical space in meaningful ways that have us learning what they need and walking with them to meet those needs, whether they grace our doorsteps or not.

You have responded to generosity in your personal lives by sharing with this community and our partners around the world.

As a church, we will build upon the culture of generosity to root ourselves in a mindset of abundance that opens unexpected responses of meetings the pains of this world with our time, gifts, and creative economics.

You have experienced long seasons of pastoral and staff leadership before a dozen years of recent transitions that have left a spirit of uncertainty and grief present.

As a church, we will take time to name the grief that comes with transitions in leadership so that we free our grief from fear and mistrust so that we practice confession, repentance, and forgiveness regularly.

You trust the Gospel message you have been given to proclaim and are continually discerning how to share it with all who need to hear such a word.

As a church, our confidence to share what God is doing in our community will grow so that when we talk about church with others in our lives it feels as natural as talking about our family or friends because that is what we have become for each other.

Calvary, we have received the Spirit of God so we do not need to wait as the disciples did, rather we carry on their bold proclamations. If we wait for all the pieces to fit perfectly before we think the Spirit is moving among us, we will miss out on what we are being called to prophesy in this time and in this place.

If we seek to be similar in how we engage church, missions, worship, and theology we miss the chance for the Spirit to move among us, translating our differences so we see each other for who we are – unique expressions of God’s love made manifest.

We shall open ourselves to the grace of God, it is only by God’s grace that the church began with people from conflicting walks of life, speaking different languages yet being understood, and once fearful deniers turned bold proclaimers coming together to share their lives in community.

The grace of God allowed their differences to be united by God’s transformative love. The Spirit is moving among us to do something similar in our community.

We are a dynamic group of people, with varying engagement with the Spirit, who are seeking to grow in our faith and change our portion of the world.

May we not see our differences as barriers to connect to each other but when we experience differences that are hard for us to understand or appear to cause a distraction for us that we practice pausing to explore what is happening within us first before we wish for others to change.

If we are not sure we really know the person who is different than us that we take the time to hear their story, learning more about them and growing to see them first as a Child of God more than our differences to them.

Take comfort in Peter's response to the crowd. He could have trusted that because the crowd was not speaking differently and that they were questioning if the disciples were drunk that the Spirit was not moving within them.

He could have allowed the differences among the disciples and the crowd to be a hinderance to the Gospel word he had, but he didn't.

No longer denying Christ to crowds, Peter trusts that the unity he was witnessing among the differences in the crowd was the work of God and he steps up to name that unity and move forward in God's Grace. We are invited to do the same.

The Spirit is moving within each of you and among our community, let us go forth born anew by the baptism of the Spirit and the grace of God, prophesying the Love and Light of God's Kin-dom and allowing ourselves to dream dreams of a world made whole by God's peace and justice.

Children of God, dance with the flames of the Spirit and create calmness over the chaos of our world, for we are the church.

Amen.