

Pentecost is definitely one of my favorite festivals in the church year. I'm not even totally sure why, but it is. The imagery is great, with the flames and the wind and the dove. And maybe it's my tendency to root for the underdog that makes Pentecost stand out, since the Holy Spirit is the person in the Trinity who often takes a backseat...but it really shouldn't.

After all, the Holy Spirit is God's promised presence with us. When Jesus was still with his disciples, he promised them an advocate. And the Holy Spirit is what inspired the disciples to finally leave the upper room and begin to spread the Gospel. Without the Holy Spirit, we wouldn't be here.

Today is not only Pentecost, but also Confirmation Sunday! The question then becomes, why do we do the Confirmation rite on Pentecost? We don't need to, it's not a requirement. In fact, we could Confirm our young people on any day the church gathers for worship. However, anytime there is a transitional rite in the church, we tend to invoke the Holy Spirit: ordinations, baptisms, and confirmation. It makes sense then, to Confirm our youth on Pentecost or Reformation Sunday, which is another traditional festival some congregations use—these are both considered Holy Spirit Festivals.

Confirmation is actually not even a unique rite unto itself. It's really just an *Affirmation* of Baptism. When most of our youth were young, they were baptized, and promises were made on their behalf. Their parents or the folks bringing them to baptism promised:

to live with *them* among God's faithful people,
bring *them* to the word of God and the holy supper,
teach *them* the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments,
place in *their* hands the holy scriptures,
and nurture *them* in faith and prayer,
so that *your children* may learn to trust God,
proclaim Christ through word and deed,
care for others and the world God made,
and work for justice and peace.

And for the past however many years, it has been the parents' faith, the grandparents' faith, the congregation's faith that has stood up on behalf of the child's. Today, however, one of our young people is going to be making those promises for themselves after time spent learning more about the Bible and what we believe as followers of Christ. Today, Henry will be making a transition from his childhood faith to the beginnings of his adult faith and he will be able to take his place as a full-fledged member of this congregation with every responsibility and privilege that entails.

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians that we heard today, Paul describes all the different gifts that individuals bring to the table. The same God provides them and the same God activates them, but the gifts themselves are as unique as the people who display them.

As a congregation, it is so vital for us to remember this. To remember that each person who participates in our community has that unique set of passions, skills, and gifts that make them integral to what we do.

And it's not just the adults. It's not even just the confirmed. But it's *everyone*. Of all ages and abilities.

Let me address this next bit to anyone who identifies as a millennial or older:

The young people here at LCOS, regardless of whether or not they are confirmed, are not the church of the future, as some folks may be prone to say. They are the church of *today*, the church of *right now*, just like the rest of us. They might engage the Church in a different way, they might have ideas that seem foreign. We might not know just how to make room for them—but they are here, the same way any of us are. And we have made promises on behalf of them.

When a child is baptized, the parents make promises, but the congregation makes promises as well. The congregation promises to support and pray for each individual in their life of faith—and supporting them means finding ways to fully include their true selves in our community. You'll all make that promise again today—the promise to *continue* to support them and pray for them. Support does not require conformity, but rather encouragement and understanding.

After all, the Spirit that we celebrate and worship and remember today moves and guides the church in ways we often don't expect or understand...or even *want*. That is the story of the early church breaking open on Pentecost. All of a sudden, it's not just Jews, it's not even just people who speak Aramaic or Hebrew or even *Greek*: it's people of all tongues and nationalities hearing the Gospel. Eventually, as time goes on, the church opens up even more as newcomers aren't required to convert fully to Judaism in order to follow Christ.

The Book of Acts and the story of how the Spirit has led the church is a story of things cracking open in new and different ways and conflict arising because always, without fail, *someone* opposed it. But always, without fail, God was at work, bringing some new out of the ever-changing church.

It's been just about a year since I began my call here. On May 30th last year, we embarked on a new season of ministry together. We didn't get to that place on our own: we trusted that the Holy Spirit was at work in our mutual discerning. And we have leaned on the Spirit over the past twelve months to encourage and inspire us a long the way. As I look forward into the next year, the next several years, I eagerly anticipate how the Spirit will move and shape this community.

What advocacy will we embark on?

What services, food, clothing, or shelter will we provide?

How many people will feel God moving in worship?

How many ways will God expand faith through our community?

What parts of our congregational life will be deepened and strengthened? Which ones might we be called to adapt or say goodbye to?

If we are looking for it, the work of the Spirit is everywhere. Sometimes it makes sense and we can easily assent to it and embrace it. Other times, it might seem scary or strange or challenging and we might be tempted to shy away. But God's reign will continue on regardless. Are we ready to join in?

Amen.