Ray City UMC
8 June 2025
Sunday Worship

GATHERING HYMN
CALL TO WORSHIP (slides)
Beloved, pay attention! The Holy Spirit sweeps among us, binding us together as family in Christ.
We are children of God, heirs of grace.
Beloved, have you noticed? The Holy Spirit moves among us, creating and renewing the whole of creation, inspiring us to co-create with God and one another.
We are children of God, co-creators in grace.
Beloved, be encouraged. The Holy Spirit lives among us, surrounding us with mercy and grace, witnessing to us about God's steadfast love for God's people.
We are children of God, witnesses to grace.
Beloved, pay attention! Whether in a rushing wind or a gentle breath, the Holy Spirit welcomes you here, for we are all children of God, brought together by grace.
We are children of God, knit together by the Spirit. Thanks be to God! Amen.
Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, October 2024.
WELCOME ALL & GUESTS
ANNOUNCEMENTS
OPENING PRAYER
Like the believers gathered together so long ago on that Day of Pentecost, Holy Spirit, help us feel your presence as we worship. Rush into our hearts, saturate our souls, and empower us to live our lives faithful to God. Amen.
1st SCRIPTURE READING: Romans 8:14-17

WORSHIP IN SONG
PRAISES AND CONCERNS
PASTORAL PRAYER
INVITATION TO THE OFFERING
DOXOLOGY: UMH PAGE 95
AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: APOSTLES CREED UMH 881 (SLIDE)
GLOIA PATRI: UMH PAGE 70
2ND Scripture Reading: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

MESSAGE: Pentecost – The Spirit of Adoption

The Origin of Pentecost?

Shavuot was the celebration of the beginning of the early weeks of harvest. In Palestine, there were two harvests each year. The early harvest came during the months of May and June; the final harvest came in the Fall. But it was later associated with a remembrance of the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Shavuot was the celebration of the beginning of the early wheat harvest, that always fell sometime during the middle of the month of May or sometimes in early June. According to the Old Testament, you would go to the day of the celebration of Firstfruits, and beginning with that day, you would count off 50 days. The fiftieth day would be the Day of Shavuot. So Firstfruits is the beginning of the barley harvest and Shavuot is the celebration of the beginning of the wheat harvest. Since it was always 50 days after Firstfruits, and since 50 days equals seven weeks, it always came a "week of weeks" later. Therefore, they either called it the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks.

Pentecost from Greek word meaning the “50th day” became a major festival in the Christian church, celebrated on the Sunday that falls on the 50th day of Easter. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and other disciples following the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2), and it marks the beginning of the Christian church’s mission to the world.

The promise of Easter opened God to the world through Jesus and then the Holy Spirit making God’s promises of love, grace, redemption, and relationship accessible to everyone.

Pentecost is the Sunday we celebrate the birthday of the Christian church.

It wouldn’t be Pentecost without at least reading the Acts 2 text. So, we’ll listen to that again this year, but we’ll also listen to the psalmist describe the movement of the Spirit in Psalm 104:24-34 and 35b. As a bonus, we’ll even give a brief nod to the Romans

“There go the ships” (Psalm 104:26 NRSV)—a great Pentecost opening line, don’t you think? “There go the ships.” A follow up from the Memorial weekend event in Indianapolis, “Start your engines!” A taste of the summer to come with the kiddos shouting, “Look-it, mom, look-it!” “There go the ships,” writes the psalmist. And our breath is taken away as a whale breaches and splashes down in the waves – “the Leviathan that you formed to sport in it!” “Look-it! Did you see it?”

Maybe that should be the watchword for Pentecost this year: “Did you see it?” When the Spirit blows, all kinds of things happen. Maybe we’re so conditioned to look for what’s wrong that we miss the activity of the Spirit in the world around us. We miss the movement of nature, the sporting of creatures almost impossibly huge playing like puppies in the rolling waves. They owe their existence and this exuberance to the Creator. And the psalmist implies that this expression of joy and the very life and breath in their bodies are expressions of praise. We may get confused as we read the final verses leaving the reader with unanswered questions.

3RD SCRIPTURE READING Acts 2:1-21

Acts 2 introduces language into the story. After quickly dispensing with a description of the event - only four verses of a struggle to describe what happened – we are moved to the effects. We can’t describe the coming of the Spirit. “A sound like,” Luke writes; “*as of* fire,” he mutters. It was wind but not exactly; it was fire but not quite. It’s as if this Spirit stuff is beyond words.

Except words are what carried the day. Luke moves on past the event, as indescribable as it might have been, to talk about the result. Something happened, and then words exploded from each of them. Words, not of confusion or of uncertainty. Words that were unfamiliar to those who spoke but the sounds of home to those passing by. They were words of welcome, of acknowledgment. They said, “You matter. You are important, in the quintessential you. The contextual you. The native you.” “They were words,” Paul says in Romans, “of adoption.”

But wait, aren't these words about God? That's what Luke says. "We hear them speaking about God's deeds of power" (Acts 2:11 NRSV). They weren't words about the hearers; they weren't words about our issues, our concerns, or our hopes and dreams. They were words about God. But the very act of translation says that we care about those who hear. Learning a new language is a form of hospitality. And the disciples didn't use Babbel to teach them how to speak to the multitude passing by in the street. It was a divine approach. We might even argue that it is the reverse Babel (see what I did there?) by using language to connect rather than confuse. The effort was God's in this instance, a clear sign that we are invited to use whatever tools we have to cross the divides. We are invited, as Paul tells us, to adopt even those who are different from us. Those who speak differently, think differently, or live differently. Pentecost is a call for the crossing of boundaries, for acknowledging differences with grace and hospitality, and for being interested enough in people to learn something new about them.

Some read the "we" in the text from Romans to be an insider word. And it certainly can be read that way. It is descriptive of the life we who have claimed Christ live in community. We are heirs, and we know suffering and glory both. When we lay this text alongside the Pentecost story, however, we need to reevaluate the "we." The family is bigger than we realized. The Spirit is leading us to places and people we might never have imagined before.

Whom do you see around you? Where is the Spirit moving in your community? Those are the questions that our texts and the

celebration of Pentecost ask us. Where are your ships sailing? The psalmist is asking us to raise our horizons. Who has been adopted with you? Paul wants us to see connections. To whom can you speak of the great deeds of God? Luke says go beyond your limits. This Pentecost, let's be the church at work in the world.

BENEDICTION

May God, bless each of you today and carry you on the wind of the Spirit into the world as children of God to share God's love, grace, redemption, and relationship has been so lavishly given to each and every one of us. Amen.