**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**May 16, 2021 Day of Pentecost**

**Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor Marjorie G. McKenzie, Accompanist**

RH 15 Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above

BH 467 How Great Thou Art

BH 525 Here I am, Lord

**Call to Worship**

We are the Easter people!  
**We have witnessed the Resurrection of our Lord.**We are now called to be people of the Pentecost.  
**We are called to boldly share the good news of God’s love.**Open your hearts, O people, to God’s great power and love.  
**We open our hearts to hear God’s word for us and to joyfully proclaim Jesus Christ as our Savior.**

**Opening Prayer**

God of wind and fire, embolden us this day to receive your power. Help us to proclaim the wondrous things that you have done and continue to do in our lives. Give us strength and courage to share the Good News of your love and your presence. For we ask this in Jesus’ Name. AMEN.

**Call to Confession**

**Prayer of Confession**

**Creator God, with each breath of life you breathe, you give gifts to your creation, calling us to use your gifts to build up your kingdom on earth. We confess that sometimes we do not see your gifts for the treasures they are. We either take credit for them ourselves, or we dismiss them as not important. We privilege some gifts over others, forgetting that you care about tiny things as much as big things. And when we are called upon to use our gifts for your glory, so often we find ourselves distracted by our own desire and uncertain of your direction. Forgive us. Open our ears to hear you speaking, and our hearts to embrace your purpose.**~silence~ **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

This is the promise: “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh—young and old, men and women, rich and poor—and all people will see.” This promise is for you, and for us. No matter who we are or where we have been, the Spirit of the Living God falls fresh, with mercies new every morning. Know that you are forgiven, and let the Spirit speak through you!  
**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen, Amen.**

**Psalm 47:1-9**

Clap your hands, all you peoples;  
**shout to God with loud songs of joy.**  
For the LORD, the Most High, is awesome,  
**a great king over all the earth.**He subdued peoples under us,  
**and nations under our feet.**He chose our heritage for us,  
**the pride of Jacob whom he loves.**

God has gone up with a shout,  
**the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.**Sing praises to God, sing praises;  
**sing praises to our King, sing praises.**For God is the king of all the earth;  
**sing praises with a psalm.**

God is king over the nations;  
**God sits on his holy throne.**The princes of the peoples gather  
as the people of the God of Abraham.  
**For the shields of the earth belong to God;  
he is highly exalted.**

**Prayers of the People**

We would like to settle into a nice, comfortable routine, Lord, in which we don’t have to do much of anything, just sit back and relax.

We are tired and wonder if we have anything left to give of our talents, our spirits, our lives.

So the story of the disciples hiding in the upper room is not uncomfortable for us. We want to hide, too.

But you have come to us in your resurrection love - we have seen the prints of the nails in your hands and feet, we have felt the wound in your side.

We have been with you on the seashore, but we still quiver with fear and uncertainty.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us today!

Let the rushing wind of your spirit, stir us up to action for good and healing.

Let the flame of your power ignite our hearts with passion for justice and peace.

As we have brought names of people to prayer this day asking for healing mercies, may we also add our names, asking for empowerment and renewal of our spirits. Take us and use our gifts and our talents for healing in your world. Help us to be bold in our proclamation of your great Good News of love and hope.

**(The Lord’s Prayer)**

**Offering**

**Time out for Teaching: 7 Marks of a Vital Congregation (Part II)**

Last Sunday I provided you with a prayer card and a document describing one of about 7 different signs of a church that would be a vital congregation.

If you didn’t look at it yet, NO PROBLEM. I would like to talk about it some today, as well as introduce you to the ideas in Part 2 of this series. The First Mark of a Vital Congregation is a congregation which is a church committed to Lifelong Discipleship Formation.

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Acts 2:1-21**

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.’

**Sermon “Before the Fire” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

Today we feast at Luke’s table. And the great feast is the Word of God. Just a few days ago – Thursday, that is – was the “Ascension of Jesus,” always just a few days before Pentecost. Pentecost, a holy day in the Jewish calendar when people came to Jerusalem for Temple worship and sacrifice. Pentecost was also known as the Feast of Weeks. It was a festival of thanksgiving during the first harvest of wheat. It later became associated also with the giving of God’s Law on Mt. Sinai, to Moses. Jews from every part of the region were gathered there for this celebration of their first fruits and a celebration of God’s Law.

Remember that the Jews considered God’s Law their protection, and also a very part of their identity as God’s people. So it was something to celebrate. The Law was a sign of God’s unity with them, and that they had been marked as loved by God, protected by God. The Law was once the main thing that unified them, but during the time that Jesus came along, that was not exactly the case.

Historically speaking, Jesus came along at the perfect time. God’s timing is always perfect, even though we don’t always think so. But Jesus came along at a time when the Jewish religion had become very fragmented. The average everyday Jew was left out of the squabbles and politics of the day. You might say that they were a lot less democratic than we Presbyterians. The Jewish religion had broken up into factions – Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Sicarii, revolutionaries who were against the Roman Emperor, revolutionaries who supported the Emperor… And then, there were the “am ha-aretz” – “people of the earth” – the average Joe who was just trying to make a living, and trying to follow God’s Law the best that they could. They were just kind of left out, really like faceless people in a crowd. Before the fire of Pentecost.

There is a very interesting painting on the website of the Presbyterian Church USA. It is called “Before the Fire” by an artist named Lisle Gwynn Garrity. It features four swirls of reds and blues and inside of each are dark shadows of people, their faces invisible. Another row of these dark and faceless persons parades across the painting, none of them touching each other, seemingly disconnected. It is called “Before the Fire,” because it reminds us that the Holy Fire of God came to change all of that. To bring people together while declaring God’s mighty works. The Fire of Pentecost moves us and motivates us, unifies us as a congregation to celebrate God’s work and spiritual gifts. The Fire of Pentecost can fill us the urge to be a part of the bigger plan God has for us all, to unify peoples across their differences. So that we are not in our own little separate worlds, caught up in our own swirls of life without faces, without knowledge of each other and disconnected and missing out on the experience of God’s grace.

How lonely it must be, to not know one another and God. How perfect it is, to know that God brought so many of these people together, who didn’t even know each others’ languages, all there to worship Him for the gift of Harvest and the Law. How astonishing it must have been for all of those out of towners visiting Jerusalem for the Festival – to have arrived there and found others able to speak their language! Is that not what we all want? To know someone who can speak our language. This is a part of the power of Pentecost. People understanding one another by the mighty work of God, finding connection with one another who they never imagined knowing. People drawn to each other, because God creates within us the desire to be a church, to be a part of what is much bigger than ourselves, bigger than simply living in our own lives, as we did Before the Fire.

We are always in danger of returning to times like those, Before the Fire. A culture of individualism, of standing up on your own two feet, a place that despises the idea of being dependent on someone else. A world that is bent on winning instead of collaborating. A culture that doesn’t join anything anymore, not even bowling leagues. A society that doesn’t wish to hear the praises and good news of God. A world that is too busy to slow down and listen. We all come from our own separate worlds, but we do not abide only there. We abide in this life of faith in Christ, who is the Head of this Church and the Church everywhere God’s people can be found. Before the fire, we were not a people. But now that we have the fire, we are God’s People! Let’s renew our commitment to seeking out understanding. To trying to walk in one another’s shoes. To remember how to speak about our Savior in ways that others understand. There was once a time Before the Fire. But now, we have the fire! Amen!

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Betty (Alzheimer’s) and Dolores (paralyzed) – Glenda’s sisters

Betty Flint – fell and broke hip

Bill Humphrey - loss of his wife

Center Street UMC congregation, their pastor and his wife (John and Julie Barrett)

Chris Quintana, Sr. – healing from knee replacement

Dorothy Randals – at Autumn Blessings, for strength and comfort

Elmer Schuster – multiple dental procedures

Fay Birch – stage 4 cancer, prayers for her husband, Larry too

First Responders

Francis – Ryan’s Grandpa – traveling to see family in New Mexico

Juan and Rosa – for better health

Julie Sursa – pain with walking

Lissa – Glenda’s granddaughter (3 months pregnant, health concerns)

Lucy Jasper – Alzheimers/Dementia

Lynn Hawkins – looking for a new home in town

Rain - thanksgiving and please send more :)

Ruth Johnson – for general health

Sharon and Wayne Huffman – general health

Shay – Julie Sursa’s daughter

Students getting ready for end of the semester/graduation

Susie Martinez – may need eye surgery, foot pain, planning for EMS school

Teresa Gallegos-Brake  - healing from heart surgery

Travelers

All those suffering from COVID19, for the recent spike in local cases

**Announcements:**

**PW meeting after church Today!** Bring a sack lunch and we will kick off the 2021 Presbyterian Women season. We have much to talk about. Please come prepared to choose new leadership, hear some reports and talk about whether, when and how we might have a Rummage Sale!

**Session Meets after church next Sunday, May 22nd.**

