

# The Living Word

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## Happy Birthday, Church, It's Pentecost!

*(excerpted from numerous websites)*

If you go back and read the Old Testament, you will discover that Pentecost was one of the Jewish feast days. Only they didn't call it Pentecost; that's the Greek name. The Jews called it the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks. It was the celebration of the beginning of the early wheat harvest, and always fell sometime between the middle of the May or in early June.

Like Passover, Pentecost was a pilgrim festival. That meant that according to Jewish Law, all the adult Jewish men would come from wherever they were living to Jerusalem and personally be in attendance during this celebration. Pentecost was a holiday; no servile work was to be done. There were certain celebrations and sacrifices and offerings which were prescribed in the Law for the day of Pentecost. On Pentecost, the High Priest was to take two loaves of freshly baked wheat bread made from the newly harvested wheat and offer them before the Lord. In short, Pentecost in the time of the Apostles was a great and grand harvest celebration. The streets of Jerusalem were clogged with thousands of pilgrims who had come from every point of the compass to celebrate the goodness of God and the bringing in of the wheat harvest.

At the Pentecost described in Acts 2, three unusual things happened: the rushing wind, the tongues of fire and the actual speaking in tongues. Those three things are rightly seen as "signs." They draw our attention to something else—the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. If you focus on the signs, you miss the whole point.

The coming of the Spirit was the important event. It was the coming of the Holy Spirit that transformed Peter the denier into Peter the preacher. It was the coming of the Holy Spirit that took Thomas the doubter and turned him into Thomas the missionary. It was the coming of God's mighty Holy Spirit which took those cowardly, fearful, doubting, hesitant disciples and made them flaming evangelists for Jesus Christ who were ready to lay down their lives for him. It was the work of the Holy Spirit coming into ordinary men and women who transformed them from ordinary men and women into evangelists for Jesus Christ.

Just as the ministry of Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit descending on Him at His baptism, so the ministry of the disciples depended on them receiving the Holy Spirit and relying on His power.

In today's church, we use red as a visual reminder of the "tongues of fire" that empowered the apostles and others to proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection in many languages to the crowds of pilgrims from many lands. Pentecost marks the beginning of the Season after Pentecost (which this year lasts through November 25), the time of the church year to support the whole congregation in living out the gifts **we** have been given in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. So wear red on Pentecost, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, and get ready to party!

## *Living Stones*

*Anything worth doing / is worth doing badly. / No one ever did something well  
without doing it poorly first. / But if we're going to get real,  
the chances of your ever getting / really good are slim at best.  
The Olympics and the pro leagues / fled with the end of puberty.  
Maybe the Nobel or Pulitzer / is out there waiting, but / I wouldn't hold my breath.  
Even on our best days / most of us are merely competent, / and much of the time  
adequate is a stretch. / Appearances aside, this might be  
one of the happiest things I know.  
I hereby absolve you / of the need to be better / than anyone else. Poof.  
It is possible to suck at things / with great love. Grab your uke  
and I'll get my mandolin.  
Meet me on the porch. We'll play together, under tempo  
and ever so slightly out of tune.  
—“Badly” by Lynn Ungar (5/14/20)*

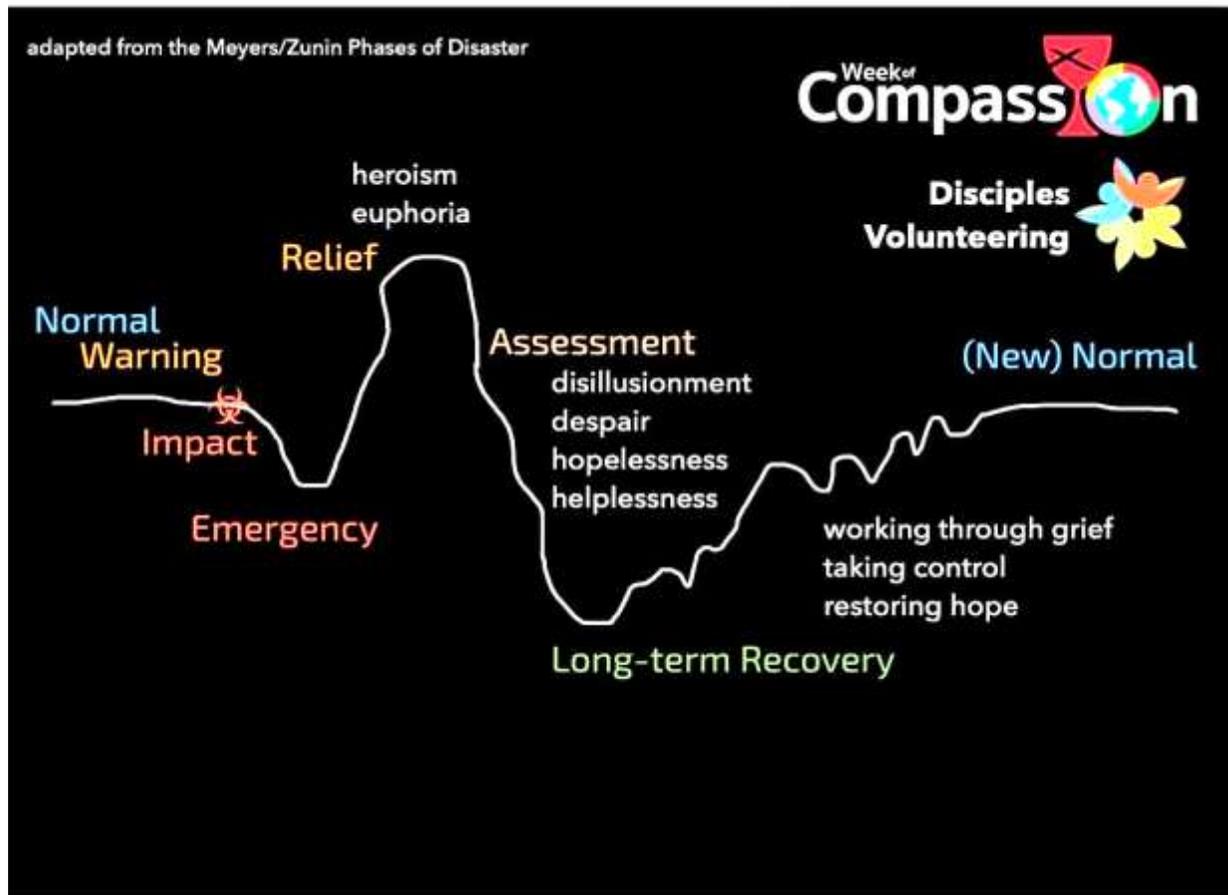
There is a tenuous light appearing at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel, and many of us are leaning forward trying to glimpse what a “new normal” might look like. Yet even as we lean in, hopeful, we are as exhausted as we’ve been at any time over the past year. The constant changes, adjustments, isolation, fear, grief, and anxiety have taken their tolls on our spiritual, emotional, and physical health. And so, it is no surprise to me that many of us feel a mixture of excitement and dread at the prospect of opening up (churches, schools, restaurants, gyms, theaters, etc. etc.) and moving our next stage of life together.

Recently, I listened to the On Being Project interview between host Krista Tippett and clinical psychologist and community health professor Christine Runyan ([Christine Runyan — What’s Happening in Our Nervous Systems? | The On Being Project - The On Being Project](#)). I highly recommend it! Their conversation centered on the ways that stress and trauma have affected our bodies—particularly our nervous systems—and our entire lives over the past year as we navigate the treacherous ground of pandemic, along with multiple racial reckonings and ruptures, the brutality and fallout of the election, and ongoing economic and safety uncertainties. Runyan explains that the pandemic has disrupted our mind-body connection, and that disruption has become the shaky foundation on which we have carried all of the other events and losses and traumas that have followed. None of this has been easy. And expecting that we might walk effortlessly through this hazardous terrain is unrealistic and potentially harmful. We only have what we have to deal with the challenges we face, and of course—of course!—we are feeling overwhelm, irritability, frustration. . . . Just look at our current conditions. Your responses to our current reality—whatever they are—are normal responses to the layers of trauma we are living through in these incredibly unfamiliar, unusual, unpredictable, uncontrollable circumstances. Our responses might be fight or flight (highly activated adrenaline); our responses might be freeze (apathy, detachment, disembodiment, dissociation, numbing). The fact is that our windows of tolerance—however big or small—have been disrupted by the virus and our surrounding social circumstances. Tenderness and compassion with ourselves are necessary.

*So, what do we do? Or, perhaps more appropriately, how do we be?* Runyun says, “We are pretty conditioned to turn away from discomfort and suffering in our society. We are not very good at allowing for grief, which is always on its own timeline, and it’s unpredictable in its own right. And this is a tough one, because it’s not a pinpoint experience . . . because we’re still in it. We’re trying to grieve a trauma that is still ongoing. And I don’t have the answer to how to do that, other than one breath at a time.” So, perhaps, we start by naming the trauma, the grief, we feel. Perhaps we start by extending compassion—to ourselves and those around us. Perhaps we start by breathing—one breath at a time. Remembering that we are not alone. Acknowledging that we are connected to a beautiful community of faith and an abundant and abundantly loving God who never forsakes us, no matter our circumstances.

And we must take this compassionate engagement into our conversations with one another about when and how and where we gather moving forward. There is no right or wrong answer. And HOW we make our decisions is as important as the decisions themselves. There is no doubt our lives have been changed. My prayer is that we are ever-more-deeply led by compassion and grace.

See you in (zoom) church,  
Christy



**ZOOM WORSHIP**

As we continue to shelter-in-place, we will continue to worship together online using Zoom. Bible Study begins at 9:30. Worship begins at 10:30. Please join us for any or all of this time together by clicking the link below and joining us through video. Or alternatively, you can dial in by calling the number below according to your time zone. The instructions to connect are fairly easy, but if you need help, please reach out.

In preparation for worship, please have communion elements of some form with you so that we can all partake together. This can be bread and juice—or any other elements that evoke the Last Supper for you. You may also want to light a candle near you as we worship together.

**HYBRID MINISTRY IN A POST-PANDEMIC CHURCH**

Register now for Hybrid Ministry in a Post-Pandemic Church

**Thursdays, May 27, June 3 & 10 | 9 - 11 AM CDT**

**LIVE ONLINE**

Digital technology is shaping our values, and our churches need the capacity and will to engage with a changing culture. Find out what you can do.

**You'll learn:**

- An understanding of hybrid ministry in a variety of contexts
- The limits of hybrid ministry
- An ability to envision and create hybrid ministries within your faith community
- ... and much more

Join Ryan Panzer, the author of *Grace and Gigabytes:*

*Being Church in a Tech-Shaped Culture*—and learn how you can start adapting. Sign up today!



**MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH**

Did you know that May is Mental Health Awareness Month?

Several of our members are on the Common Ground Mental Health Team and have been organizing around finding resources and access for mental health services in Solano County. There will be a new Mobile Crisis Unit starting in May in Fairfield and expanding to Vallejo in the following months. Starting with the new school year, 13 Wellness Centers will be opening up in Vallejo to assist students and parents with mental health services right at the school. They are looking for volunteers to staff the centers, so I am looking at you retired teachers, social workers, educators!

Those are just a few of the services available. There is a lot of room to grow and a lot of holes in the system to fight for! Let me know if you are interested in joining in a conversation regarding mental health services, and I will be happy to have that conversation with you.

Thank you, Allison

Here are a few resources for you. Please share with anyone in need.

- Solano County Mental Health Services  
<https://www.solanocounty.com/depts/mhs/default.asp>
- Nami Solano County - Mental Illness Awareness & Resources  
<https://namisolanocounty.org/>

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255), press 1 for veterans
- Institute of Aging Friendship Line: 1 (800) 971-0016 (older adults 60 and over)
- Lifeline for Deaf & Hard of Hearing: 1 (800) 799-4889
- Teen Line: (310) 855-HOPE or (800) TLC-TEEN, text "Teen" to 839863

The poster features the Solano County Behavioral Health logo with the slogan "TOGETHER WE CARE" and a tree graphic. The main text reads: "Solano Behavioral Health COVID-19 WARMLINE", "Call us- we are here for you!", and the phone number "707-784-8539". Below this, it states: "Our ACCESS team is opening the Behavioral Health COVID-19 warmline to anyone who may be experiencing stress, anxiety and/or feelings of depression, while dealing with the daily struggles and disruptions in our lives due to COVID-19. A therapist is ready to listen, offer support, suggestions, as well as referrals to appropriate mental health or substance use services." An orange box contains the text: "Available Monday - Friday 8 am-5 pm English and Spanish Confidential Line and Voicemail" next to a graphic of three hands. At the bottom, it says "For more info about us, please go to https://www.solanocounty.com/depts/bh" and includes social media icons for Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter with the handle "@solanocountybh".

**GREEN CHALICE: STEWARDSHIP OF OUR RESOURCES**

As part of our Earth Day celebration in worship on April 18<sup>th</sup>, I presented a brief but fact-filled PowerPoint slideshow on energy, conservation, and the environment. I packed a lot into just a few minutes and just brushed the surface. I hope to use this space to highlight and expand on some of that information.

This month, in light of all the drought warnings and in some areas, restrictions, I want to tell you more about a water-saving device that can be used in anyone's home. You may not think about this, but do you realize how many gallons of water you send down the drain, unused, while waiting for the water to get hot? An average home has 125 feet of 3/4 inch pipe. This holds 3.14 gallons of water. If hot water is used 10 times per day, 31 gallons of water is wasted running the faucets/shower to get the hot water. In a year, this equals 11,461 gallons of water. Over twenty-five millions homes waste approximately 300 billion gallons of water annually. You pay for this potable water, wasted energy and sewage fees.

Installing a hot water recirculation system saves TIME, ENERGY and WATER. Recirculation systems can be used with tank or tankless water heaters. They are easy to retrofit in existing homes (most installations take less than ½ hour). How does it work? In the brand I sell, AquaMotion, a small pump at the tank or tankless heater, or installed under the sink, forces the lukewarm water from the hot supply line into the cold supply line. If a dedicated return line is used it returns the lukewarm water to the heater. (This pump is so energy efficient it costs only \$3.00 - \$8.00 per year to run, paying for itself in 1 to 3 years.) A sensor/switch (Aquastat) built into the pump or a by-pass valve transfers the lukewarm water into the cold pipe. The valves maintain average 93° F at the sink. The under sink pump starts when temperature drops to 85° F and stops when it reaches 104° F. The pump runs about 3 times an hour for 2 minutes. A built-in 24-hour mechanical timer allows the user to set the time when he wants instant hot water. An ON CALL button, motion sensor or app can also activate the system. I'll be happy to talk to anyone who wants more information on how this can save you time, money and water. Here's a video you can check out, also:

<https://youtu.be/hYcaZY3YzfE>

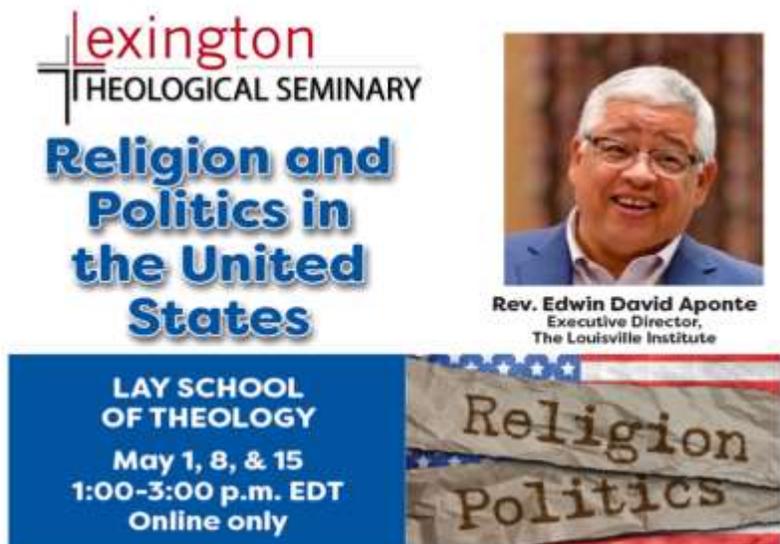
John Grose

**DON'T FORGET:**

To help earn money for the church beyond your generous donations:

- ✓ Use [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) (instead of Google or Bing) for your internet searches.
- ✓ Start at [www.goodshop.com](http://www.goodshop.com) when shopping online.
- ✓ Sign up at [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) for when you patronize local stores and restaurants.
- ✓ Take your recycling to Valcore ([www.valcorerecycling.org](http://www.valcorerecycling.org)) and ask that the money go to the church.
- ✓ Use [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com). The first time you use it, you will be asked to select a charity to support. Pick our church, and don't forget to bookmark the page!

**RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES**



This course will study the historical relationships between religion and politics in the United States. Pastors and lay leaders will draw upon historical, cultural, social, and theological studies to obtain a better understanding of religious participation in U.S. public life, the nature of civil religion, and Christian participation in the public sphere. Special attention will be given to the U.S. presidency in historical perspective and its interactions with Christian life and practice.

**Rev. Edwin David Aponte** is Executive Director of the Louisville Institute and serves as Research Professor of Religion and Culture at Louisville Seminary. As a cultural historian, Aponte explores faith, spirituality, and culture, especially the intersections of race, ethnicity, and religion as well as religion and politics. He is the author of *Santo! Varieties of Latino/a Spirituality* (Orbis Books, 2012), co-editor of *Handbook of Latina/o Theologies* (Chalice Press, 2006) and co-author of *Introducing Latinx Theologies* (Orbis Books, 2020), both with Miguel A. De La Torre. Aponte is an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church, USA.

You are invited to register [here](#). **Registration Fee:** \$60, nlimited number of participants per online login. Please plan to attend all classes, as each lesson builds upon the preceding one.

For more information, contact **Deena Ainslie** at (859) 280-1212 or email her at [dainslie@lextheo.edu](mailto:dainslie@lextheo.edu).

*The Lay School of Theology is a continuing education program for all who wish to enrich their Christian faith.*

**Mark Your Calendar**

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|-------------------|---|
| Saturday, May 8   | Cross Chat, 9:30 a.m. in the Peace Garden |
| Wednesday, May 12 | Administrative Council, 5:00 p.m.         |
| Sunday, May 16    | Elders' Meeting following Worship         |
| Wednesday, May 19 | Ministry Council, 5:30 p.m.               |
| Sunday, May 23    | Pentecost Sunday!                         |