

Grace Devotion

Week of May 19, 2024

Pastor Fred Young

Happy Birthday! Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian church. It is a day of great celebration. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit manifested by tongues of flames and rushing wind, creates a community of believers equipped to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. I am struck by the unity and love expressed in the many voices of those first followers who gathered from all over the world to enjoy fellowship and a feast in the holy city of Jerusalem.

Pentecost is all about the unity we have been celebrating in the Gospel of John during the Easter Season. Shaking faith up and breaking down walls, inviting everything and everyone to be part of God's community. God's grace abounds! Instead of a common tongue, one language, the Spirit gifts those present with understanding and knowledge that reach beyond the barriers of human capability. Everyone is welcome, all are loved, healed and heard.

Peter's message to those gathered at that first Pentecost was to ensure them the Spirit helps make sense of the present. His words to them explained what God is making possible in their lives, even when all hope seems lost. The Acts of the Apostles account of the first birthday party of the church is often compared to those who gathered on a plain in the land of Shinar, many generations before. These ancient relatives collaborated to build the Tower of Babel in hopes of reaching God.

As people of Pentecost, God invites us to experience the fullness of faith, to experience our physical body as a gift that holds the Spirit. To breathe in deeply, take it in, and be changed. The Spirit does not always come to make us comfortable, but to make us into a community, in all its difficulty and grace. God IS still speaking; how will this community of faith interpret the call? How will we keep the church alive? The Holy Spirit's presence is a gift. You are a gift. Go fourth and share Christ's love.

This Grace That Scorches Us
A Blessing for Pentecost Day

Here's one thing you must understand about this blessing:
it is not for you alone. It is stubborn about this.
Do not even try to lay hold of it if you are by yourself,
thinking you can carry it on your own.

To bear this blessing, you must first take yourself to a place where everyone
does not look like you or think like you,
a place where they do not believe precisely as you believe,
where their thoughts and ideas and gestures
are not exact echoes of your own.

Bring your sorrow. Bring your grief. Bring your fear. Bring your weariness,
your pain, your disgust at how broken the world is,
how fractured, how fragmented by its fighting,
its wars, its hungers, its penchant for power,
its ceaseless repetition of the history it refuses to rise above.

I will not tell you this blessing will fix all that.
But in the place where you have gathered; wait, watch, and listen.

Lay aside your inability to be surprised,
your resistance to what you do not understand.
See then whether this blessing turns to flame on your tongue,
sets you to speaking what you cannot fathom
or opens your ear to a language beyond your imagining
that comes as a knowing in your bones,
a clarity in your heart that tells you this is the reason we were made:
for this ache that finally opens us, for this struggle,
this grace that scorches us toward one another and into the blazing day.

—Jan Richardson *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*

PRAYER

Dear God, send you blazing Spirit upon us. May it challenge us and move us forward. Amen.

Blessings! Pastor Fred

May 19, 2024
Pentecost

Welcome/Announcements
Westminster Chimes
Prelude

** Song: "What A Friend" ~Matt Maher

** Call to Worship

Lector: Come, Holy Spirit, fill this place,

Congregation: **Ignite our hearts with your grace-filled presence.**

Lector: As tongues of fire, let your presence descend,

Congregation: **Empower us, Lord, our hearts to heal and strengthen.**

Lector: Spirit of God, our friend and guide,

Congregation: **Lead us onward, to love without end.**

** Opening Prayer: (pray silently or aloud)

Gracious God, On this day of Pentecost, we gather in Your presence, awaiting the outpouring of Your Spirit. Fill us, O Holy Spirit, with Your divine presence and power. Ignite within us an intense love for You. May Your Spirit move among us, inspiring, guiding, and transforming us. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

** Sharing the Peace of Christ

** Hymn: "Spirit of the Living God" #247

Joys and Concerns
Praying for Others
Lord's Prayer
Prayer of Confession/Silent Reflection/Assurance of Grace

Thank you for sharing your tithes and offerings

** Doxology #625

** Prayer of Dedication

** New Creed*

Time for the Young at Heart

Hymn: "Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart" #249

Scripture Readings: Acts 2:1-4; 14-21

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15:

Message: "Spirit of Truth"

** Song: "Soul On Fire"

** Final Blessing

Please remain standing to sing "A Choral Benediction"

Postlude "Lead On, O King Eternal" ~David Lowe

*On the screen

** Please stand, if you are able.

Announcements

We will have a reception of new members on May 26th! If you would like to join Grace UCC as a member, please contact the church office or Pastor Fred directly.

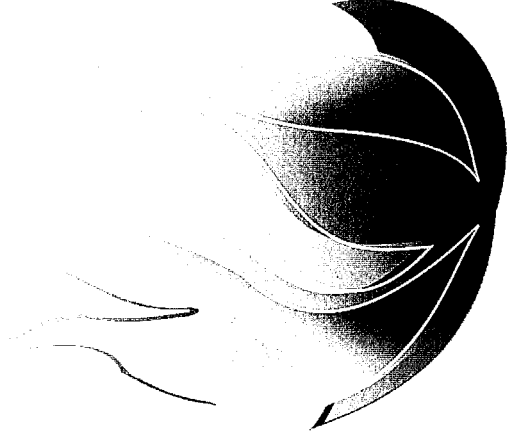
Upcoming Events

- MAY: Koins for Kinny (collection during the entire month of May)
- Bible Study Movie @1pm: Wednesday, May 22nd
- Town Hall Meeting: June 23rd during worship
- Potluck and Crooners: June 23rd immediately following worship

Volunteer Opportunities—Sign ups in Gathering Place

- Volunteer counters after church
- Lectors
- Snack providers

Spirit of Truth



Grace United Church of Christ

100 Fourth Street

Hanover, Pennsylvania 17331

717-632-1146

In case of inclement weather, please check Facebook or call the Prayer Line 717-634-8865

How to rest in God's grace

Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.— Romans 6:14

There's a story about a student at Cambridge University in England who entered the classroom on exam day and asked the proctor to bring him cakes and ale. The proctor refused, and couldn't believe the young student's audacity.

So the young student pulled out a copy of Laws of Cambridge, which had originally been adopted 400 years ago. And he read, "*Gentlemen sitting for examinations may request and require cakes and ale.*" The proctor was forced to comply. Pepsi and hamburgers were judged the modern equivalent, so the necessary accommodations were made for the student.



A few weeks later, the student was summoned to the office of Academic Affairs, where he was told he would have to pay a fine of five pounds (about the cost of the meal). He was not fined for demanding cakes and ale, but for blatantly disregarding another obscure Cambridge law: he had failed to wear a sword to the examination.

In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel worked tirelessly to keep the written law – but they always failed. And even today, we will fall short if we try to work our way to salvation. That's why grace is so wonderful.

Jesus is the only one who ever kept God's law perfectly. **So instead of working to keep the law to the letter, find rest in the magnificent grace He's given you!**

Prayer Challenge

Thank God for the grace you have in Christ – that you are set free from working for your salvation.

Questions for thought

In what ways are you tempted to try and work for your salvation?

What does resting in God's grace look like for you today?

<https://www.seniorlivingministries.org/2024/04/how-to-rest-in-gods-grace-3/>



Name: _____

Psalms 104:24-35b

Date: _____

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Clothed
Garment
Chariot

Honor
Stretched
Ministers

Majesty
Heavens
Messengers

Thyself
Chambers
Foundations

Acts 2:21

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