

Come Holy Spirit come. Come as the fire the burns, come as the wind the blows, transform and empower our lives. Amen

Today we meet the Holy Spirit again. We meet the Spirit, but this time together as a deanery, our geographic area of Episcopal churches, and our allies, who are with us this morning.

After all, the bishops of Michigan have spoken and they have said, “The faith communities of the Episcopal Dioceses in the state of Michigan are essential and always open. Open: (defined as) Offering the words of Jesus and embodying God’s Holy Spirit.” Today we have the chance to embody the Holy Spirit for ourselves. We have a chance to embody the Spirit in a way we never have before, in this time and this place. Where we are, here and now.

We see the disciples hiding from the public for fear that they would be put through what Jesus just had gone through. They were scared. They felt uneasy to leave where they were staying. They feared death. They did not want to fall victim the torture Jesus had just endured.

And many of us are scared to venture too far and leave a chance that we may fall victim to the coronavirus. Others fear going out jogging in certain neighborhoods with a dark skin color for fear they may be accused of a crime or be murdered. Some fear wearing a face covering for fear they may be thought of by some as committing a crime, some fear that by wearing that same face covering they may be blamed for the pandemic invasion into the United States because of their perceived ancestry. I suspect the 2.1 million people who signed up for unemployment this last week fear how they will pay their bills, eat, provide for family, and fear their meaning and purpose in daily life has slipped away. One elementary age child I know feared what would happen if K-12 schools couldn’t open in the Fall. I’m guessing at least one man feared for his life this week when his neck was being knelt on by an officer of the law when he stated, “I can’t breathe.” We are surrounded by fear.

The answer to combating fear lies in us coming together as a Christian

community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. On that Pentecost day the the Holy Spirit finds a way in so fears can be cast aside.

They didn't expect the Holy Spirit to come in the way it came. There it was...a violent rush of wind out of nowhere! And without warning came tongues of fire near enough to touch them! And it was at that very moment they were empowered with God's unfailing presence in a new way. The Spirit filled them and gave them ability to speak in tongues yet everyone understood what was being said. They came together as one, able to understand different languages, empowered by the Spirit. They were empowered to continue the work that Jesus had started. And we, too are empowered in this way.

This principal feast in our church year is strangely under celebrated. We go all out for Christmas when we celebrate the birth of Jesus and the beginning of his ministry of redemption. And then just weeks ago we celebrated Easter the resurrection of Jesus and Gods ultimate victory over sin and death. But something has still not been revealed and that is the Holy Spirit. Today we have the opportunity to embrace the Spirit who descended on those apostles that day in Jerusalem. This was the revelation of that final piece needed to mark the beginning of the Christian church.

So today, today I invite you to welcome the Holy Spirit to touch you in a new way. Wherever you are, hunkering down, perhaps trying to steer clear of the virus, I invite you to look toward the Spirit descending upon you.

Because the Holy Spirit is not on break. The Spirit is not closed for business. The Spirit is alive and well. I invite you to look at those pictured on your device and remember those calling into this worship service. Those you know, and those you don't. The Spirit is alive and well in each of these people. And we can work today for the movement Jesus started 2000 years ago.

For certain those apostles didn't see the Spirit coming until it was there. And we, too, didn't see the coronavirus until we as a nation were destined to be

overcome by it. Certainly our friends in the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan didn't see the massive rainfall or the collapse and breaches of multiple dams and subsequent catastrophic flooding of homes, businesses, monuments, and cherished items before the water started seeping in. This chain of catastrophic events was simply unpredictable. Meteorologists are saying the initial rainfall that caused the dam at Edenville to collapse was a 1/500 year rainfall event. And we know the last time the world endured a pandemic was just over 100 years ago.

When I think about the followers of Jesus, I think they probably were caught off guard many times. Peter was a fisherman, Matthew a tax collector. They likely thought they were destined to live their entire lives in these roles until Jesus came along and told them to follow. One day a fisherman or tax collector, the next leaving the life they knew to be a follower of Jesus.

And those followers had recently watched Jesus die a torturous death on the cross which caused them to hide in fear. Perhaps they thought this was an ending. Yet it wasn't the end at all. It was an opening for the resurrection to happen and an opening for God to send the Holy Spirit to them on that special day. It's our opportunity today to meet that presence in a new way because the Spirit was sent to be with us for the duration. And as long as we live, the story of the Spirit lives on.

So many times what have observed and endured fearful, tragic, and powerless situations yet those stories weren't finished yet. Jesus endured much and we are enduring some exceptionally difficult and unusual times and circumstances. But the hope God gives us penetrates below our surface if we let it. It is more powerful than what is happening in the here and now. This hope is not that if we believe hard enough or have enough faith our lives will become perfect. No. But it is a hope that we are a people of the resurrection. We know that there is more to life than the suffering and stationary feeling of the here and now.

While each of our situations differ, the Spirit gives us a common message of hope to embody. We can take this message into the world in ways we have

available to us now. We are a sent people. While we can't gather in ways we are accustomed, there is an invitation to carry forth this hope in our time and place and space.

In this time of grief, powerlessness and loss the Holy Spirit gives us this comforting gift of hope. And what we then carry with us is that hope which we can gift to others, as a way that God continues to live in us and through us.

The Holy Spirit doesn't work under *our* scripted parameters of Zoom and Facebook live or solely within the walls of our churches or only on Sunday mornings. The Holy Spirit is a 24/7/365 operation waiting for us to acknowledge, take in, and live out.

We can take in the Spirit. Breathe it in. Here and now. Breathe it in and own it and know it again for your very own. Feel the hope that it brings in these difficult times.

While we've all endured many losses related to the pandemic, one thing we have not lost is the Spirit.

This week Bishop Curry shared a prayer for the power of the Spirit among the people of God, developed by Lutherans and Episcopalians. And I pray:

"God of all power and love,
we give thanks for your unfailing presence
and the hope you provide in times of uncertainty and loss.
Send your Holy Spirit to enkindle in us your holy fire.
Revive us to live as Christ's body in the world:
a people who pray, worship, learn,
break bread, share life, heal neighbors,
bear good news, seek justice, rest and grow in the Spirit.
Wherever and however we gather,
unite us in common prayer and send us in common mission,
that we and the whole creation might be restored and renewed,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”¹

There is so much more work left to do. The events that have happened in the last week don't extend themselves to us sitting idle.

Friends, we are the church at home. The Holy Spirit finds us at home and our common mission endures at home. We work to replace fear with hope, and injustice with righteousness. The church is essential and always open. The Holy Spirit is essential and always open for us to receive, and to live out that gift. We are the body of Christ...empowered...at home, to do the work of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit. May it be so.

~Amen

#HolySpirit #Fear #Hope #CommonMission #Church@Home

5.31.20

Acts 2:1-21

John 20:19-23

Melissa Congleton

¹ https://episcopalchurch.org/concerning-covid19/worship-formation?fbclid=IwAR0aKGqt5ISU9YOn_SpRJKHzq1sABrkoJWds94EH_pjNzZ4jP59cfhv7Gg0