

Another View
When God Gives Ordinary People a Voice
Acts 2:1–21 & Psalm 104:24–34, 35b

Pentecost did not begin as a Christian holiday.

Before Acts 2, Pentecost was already a Jewish festival. People came to Jerusalem from many different lands to celebrate the harvest and remember God's faithfulness. The city would have been full of visitors — different languages, different customs, different stories, all gathered in one place.

And that is when God chose to move. And that matters.

Jesus did not send the Holy Spirit on a quiet afternoon when only a few people were around. God picked a moment when Jerusalem was packed with people who would eventually go back home carrying what they had seen and heard.

In other words, God knew the message needed to travel.

Because the world back then was not all that different from ours. People still carried fears. Communities still struggled with division. People still searched for hope, direction, and something that could bring people together instead of tearing them apart.

In many ways, that sounds a lot like today. There is a weariness in the world right now. People are tired of conflict, division, anger, and constant tension. Many are emotionally exhausted long before the day is even over.

That is the kind of world the Holy Spirit entered at Pentecost.
And maybe it is the kind of world the Spirit still enters today.
Into that kind of world comes the sound of rushing wind.
Not to destroy, but to awaken. Then came fire.

Then came disciples suddenly able to speak in ways people from other places could understand. And the miracle in Acts is not simply that different languages are spoken. The deeper miracle is that people actually hear one another. Parthians, Medes, Egyptians, Romans — all listening in their own language and somehow discovering they belong in the same story.

That may be one of the Holy Spirit's hardest works even now.

Because we live in a world where people talk constantly but rarely listen. We speak past one another. We divide quickly. We assume the worst about people we barely know.

But Pentecost reminds us that the Spirit still works to bring people together. And maybe one of the most important parts of Pentecost is this: The disciples did not wait for life to calm down before sharing the love of God.

Peter stood up right in the middle of confusion, questions, fear, and uncertainty. The crowd was overwhelmed. People were arguing about what was happening. Some were amazed. Others mocked them. Yet that was the very moment the Holy Spirit moved people to speak.

And honestly, that still matters today. Most of us keep waiting for the “right time” to reach out to others. We think we need life to settle down first. Less stress, less uncertainty, less confusion.

But sometimes confusion is exactly where God does His best work. Because when people are hurting, searching, exhausted, or uncertain, they are often listening more closely than we realize. The disciples communicated through different languages. But today, many of us communicate best through shared experiences.

People who have walked through illness can help others facing illness.
People who have survived loss can sit beside someone grieving.
People who have struggled with fear, addiction, anxiety, failure, or uncertainty can often reach people in ways no textbook or sermon ever could.

And when we ask God for strength during our own difficult moments, the Holy Spirit helps us show others something important:
that God can bring calm into confusion, hope into uncertainty, and purpose into moments that make no sense at all.

The Holy Spirit does not remove every storm in our lives. But the Spirit helps us stop facing those storms alone. Sometimes the Spirit even helps us move from confusion toward understanding — helping us hear one another a little more clearly, one conversation at a time.

And maybe that is still the Spirit’s work today. Not just helping us speak... but helping us reach people in ways they can truly understand Christ.

Some people communicate Christ through: words, kindness, and patience.
Some through a meal dropped off at the right time.
Some through sitting beside someone who is hurting.
Some through teaching children or visiting the lonely.
Some through simply showing up when it would be easier not to.

That is ministry.

And every one of us has the ability to do some kind of ministry when we are willing to let the Holy Spirit work through us.

Pentecost reminds us that God has an agenda — not in a controlling or political way, but in a kingdom way. God wants His love, mercy, forgiveness, courage, justice, and compassion to become visible in everyday life.

The Holy Spirit was not given only so people could feel close to God. The Spirit was given so God's people could carry the message of Jesus into the world.

That is why Psalm 104 says, "When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground."

God is still renewing tired places.

God is still breathing life into discouraged people.

God is still giving people the courage to speak hope into tired places.

Maybe that starts with a phone call.

A conversation.

A prayer.

A moment of listening instead of arguing.

A reminder to someone that they are not alone.

And maybe this week, Pentecost asks us a simple question:

Where is God asking me to speak Christ's love in a way someone else can understand?

Not perfectly.

Not dramatically.

Just honestly and faithfully.

Because God does not wait for perfect people in perfect moments.

God works through ordinary people in the middle of real life.

Walking It Out This Week

Listen Before You Respond

This week, try slowing down during at least one difficult conversation.

Instead of preparing your next argument...listen carefully.

Pentecost reminds us that one of the Spirit's greatest works is helping people truly hear one another.

Reach Out During the Messy Moments

Don't wait for life to become perfectly organized before caring for someone else.

Send the text.

Make the phone call, Pray with someone, Check in on a friend.

God often works through people right in the middle of real-life confusion.

Ask God for Help in Your Own Struggles

The disciples did not stand up in their own strength. Neither do we.

When life feels uncertain this week, pause and simply pray:

“Holy Spirit, help me respond with wisdom, patience, and love.”

Use Your Experience to Encourage Someone Else

Your struggles may help you connect with someone who feels alone. A person who has faced illness may understand another person's fear. A person who has experienced loss may know how to sit quietly beside someone grieving.

Sometimes ministry begins simply by saying:

“I understand.” - “You're not alone.” - “We'll get through this together.”

Bring Calm Instead of More Noise

The world already has enough anger and tension.

This week, ask yourself: Am I adding to the noise...

or helping bring peace into someone's life?

The Holy Spirit does not remove every storm.

But God can use us to help others stop facing those storms alone.

Speak Christ's Love in a Way People Can Understand

Not everyone needs a sermon. Sometimes they just need kindness.

Patience, Mercy, Encouragement, Presence.

Ask God to help you communicate His love in a way someone around you can truly hear.

Remember: God Uses Ordinary People

You do not need perfect words, Perfect timing, Or a perfect life.

God has always worked through imperfect people willing to say:

“Here I am Lord... use me.”

Faith Between Sundays

Listening for the Spirit

Monday

“Be quick to listen, slow to speak.” — James 1:19

Before responding in frustration today, pause long enough to truly hear what someone else may be carrying.

Tuesday

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you.” — Isaiah 41:10

Whatever uncertainty you are facing this week, remember: you are not walking through it alone.

Wednesday

“Encourage one another and build each other up.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Reach out to someone today with a simple word of encouragement. Small acts of kindness often carry more power than we realize.

Thursday

“Let your speech always be gracious.” — Colossians 4:6

The Holy Spirit helps us communicate more than information. The Spirit helps us communicate love, patience, mercy, and hope.

Friday

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” — John 14:27

Bring calm into one difficult situation today instead of adding more noise to it.

Saturday

“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” — 2 Corinthians 12:9

God does not wait for perfect people in perfect moments. He works through willing hearts in the middle of real life.

Closing Thought

Pentecost reminds us that the Holy Spirit still moves through ordinary people. Sometimes through words, sometimes through listening, sometimes through compassion. Sometimes simply through showing up. And often, the most important ministry happens quietly... in everyday moments...between Sundays.

Prayers for the Week

Monday — Prayer for Peace in the Noise

Lord, when the world feels loud and overwhelming, help me slow down and listen for Your voice. Bring calm to my heart and wisdom to my thoughts. Amen.

Tuesday — Prayer for Strength

Holy Spirit, when life feels uncertain or exhausting, remind me that I do not walk alone. Give me strength for today and courage for tomorrow. Amen.

Wednesday — Prayer for Compassion

God, help me notice the people around me who may be hurting quietly. Give me eyes to see, ears to listen, and a heart willing to care. Amen.

Thursday — Prayer for My Words

Lord, help my words bring healing instead of division, encouragement instead of anger, and hope instead of fear. Let me reflect Your love in every conversation. Amen.

Friday — Prayer for Guidance

Holy Spirit, guide my steps today. Help me recognize the opportunities You place before me to encourage, serve, or simply be present for someone else. Amen.

Saturday — Prayer for Trust

God, even when life feels confusing or unfinished, help me trust that You are still working. Teach me to follow You faithfully one step at a time. Amen.

Closing Prayer

Lord, thank You for the gift of Your Spirit. When we feel tired, renew us.

When we feel uncertain, guide us.

When we feel overwhelmed, remind us that we are never alone.

Help us bring calm into confusion, hope into difficult moments,
and compassion into a weary world.

Use us this week in ordinary ways to share Your love with others.

Amen.

From the Pew **“All You Had To Do Was Pull the Pin”**

By Mark Widner

Years ago, I taught fire-extinguisher classes.

Most people were surprised at how simple extinguishers really were to use. We taught the PASS method:

Pull the pin.

Aim at the base.

Squeeze the handle.

Sweep side to side.

People would practice a few times and usually walk away saying,
“Well... that’s easier than I thought.”

But then something interesting would happen during actual emergencies.

Many people are still frozen.

Not because the extinguisher wasn’t there.

Not because they had never been taught.

But because fear, panic, confusion, or uncertainty kept them from reaching for the help hanging right in front of them.

And honestly, I think faith sometimes works the same way.

God has already given us tools for difficult moments:

prayer,

grace,

Scripture,

the Holy Spirit,

and people willing to walk beside us.

Sometimes the hardest step is simply “pulling the pin” — admitting we need help and reaching for the things God has already placed nearby.

One thing firefighters learn quickly is this:
extinguishers work best on small fires.

The earlier you respond, the better chance you have of keeping the fire from spreading.

The same can be true spiritually.

A small frustration can become bitterness.

A worry can become fear.

A misunderstanding can become division.

An isolated hurt can quietly grow for months before anyone notices the smoke.

That is why I think Pentecost matters so much.

The Holy Spirit did not arrive after life became calm and organized.

The Spirit entered confusion, noise, uncertainty, and fear.

And maybe the Holy Spirit still meets us there today.

Not always through dramatic miracles.

Sometimes through a prayer whispered in the middle of a hard day.

A conversation with a friend.

A moment of unexpected peace.

A reminder that we are not carrying life by ourselves.

One of the office fires I responded to years ago was actually put out pretty quickly. As we walked back toward the front of the building, a man calmly stepped out of the bathroom carrying a newspaper under his arm and asked,

“What are you guys doing here?”

Everyone thought the building was empty.

But someone was still inside.

As we escorted him outside, the owner looked at the employees and kept saying,

“How could they not know I was still in the building?”

“How could they forget me?”

I often wondered what the next staff meeting must have been like because one of the very first things firefighters are trained to ask is:

“Is everybody out of the building?”

And the employees truly believed everyone was out.

That moment stayed with me.

Because honestly, we do that to each other sometimes.

We ask, “How are you doing?”
without really slowing down long enough to hear the answer.

We say, “Everything’s fine,”
even when we know it isn’t.

We assume everyone made it safely out of the fire...
while somebody nearby is quietly struggling alone.

Maybe that is one reason Pentecost still matters.

The miracle was not only that people spoke.
The miracle was that people were finally heard.

And maybe one of the ways the Holy Spirit still works today
is through people willing to notice,
willing to listen,
and willing to walk beside someone else through the smoke.

The Holy Spirit always points people back toward the love, compassion, and hope we see
in Jesus Christ.

“Come on.
There’s a fire.
Let me walk with you.”

Why the Church Calendar Matters Pentecost: More Than a Story About Fire

When many people hear the word *Pentecost*, they immediately think about wind, flames, and disciples speaking different languages. But Pentecost has a much deeper history and meaning within the life of the Church.

Long before Acts 2, Pentecost was already a major Jewish festival called *Shavuot*, celebrated fifty days after Passover. It was originally connected to the wheat harvest and thanksgiving for God's provision. Over time, it also became associated with God giving the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

That background matters. Because in Acts 2, God again gives guidance and direction — not written on stone tablets this time, but through the Holy Spirit working within people.

Pentecost was also one of the great pilgrimage festivals, meaning Jerusalem would have been filled with visitors from many different lands and cultures. That explains why Acts describes people hearing the message of Christ in their own languages.

God chose a moment when the world had gathered together. And the deeper miracle was not simply that the disciples spoke. The deeper miracle was that people actually understood one another.

For Christians, Pentecost is often called the “birthday of the Church” because it marks the moment the Gospel began moving outward into the world in a powerful new way.

In the Presbyterian Church (USA) tradition, Pentecost reminds us that the Holy Spirit equips all believers for ministry — not just pastors or church leaders, but ordinary people serving faithfully in everyday life. Presbyterians have long emphasized that the Church is meant to be a connected community where people support one another, listen to one another, and work together to reflect Christ's love in the world.

That is one reason Pentecost still matters today.

The Holy Spirit was never meant to stay inside church walls. The Spirit sends people outward:
into homes, schools, hospitals, neighborhoods, workplaces, and everyday life.

And maybe that is the message Pentecost still speaks into our world today: God still brings hope into confusion, peace into division, and courage into weary hearts.

The Holy Spirit still points people back toward the love, compassion, and hope we see in Jesus Christ.



Birdie's Wisdom for the Week

Birdie has noticed something about humans.

All winter long, we complained:

- “It’s freezing.”
- “Too much snow.”
- “I can’t wait for summer.”

Now summer arrives and suddenly everyone says:

- “It’s too hot.”
- “Too humid.”
- “Bring back winter.”

To be fair, Birdie understands both sides.

Nobody enjoys going outside to do their business when:

- snow is blowing sideways,
- the wind hurts your face,
- or it’s so hot you worry about getting your backside sunburned.

But dogs have a funny way of dealing with weather.

On brutally hot days, Birdie will suddenly stop in the middle of a walk, roll over on her back in the blazing sun, and soak up the heat like she’s on vacation in Florida. Other times, walking her feels less like walking a dog and more like dragging a very determined snail down the sidewalk.

And yet somehow, five minutes later, she finds the coolest shady spot on the porch and looks completely content watching the world go by.

Maybe there is a lesson in that.

This week we celebrate Pentecost — a moment filled with wind, fire, movement, and change. The disciples could have spent their time wishing life felt safer, easier, or more predictable.

Instead, they trusted that God was present even in the middle of change.



Maybe faith is not about finally reaching “perfect conditions.”

Maybe faith is learning how to live with gratitude in whatever season we find ourselves in: cold and hot, calm and stormy, easy and difficult.

Birdie’s advice?

Find some shade.

Enjoy the moment you are in.

And if life gets too hot... roll over in the grass for a minute and reset.

Conversation Starter

What is something you once complained about... that later became a blessing?

Birdie’s Prayer for the Week

Lord,

When life feels confusing, changing, too busy, too hot, too cold, or simply overwhelming, help us remember that You are still present in every season.

Teach us to pause long enough to notice Your blessings sitting right in front of us.

Like the disciples at Pentecost, help us remain open to Your Spirit moving in ways we may not expect.

Give us peace when life feels uncertain, courage when life feels difficult, and grateful hearts for each new day. And this week, remind us that we never walk alone.

Amen.

Words of Wisdom from Our Pets

Do you have a pet that has accidentally taught you something about life, patience, joy, faith, or love?

We would love to hear your stories — funny, heartfelt, or somewhere in between.

Dogs, cats, birds, horses, hamsters, goldfish... all are welcome. Photos encouraged!