

Pastor's Column from the Interim

Greetings to you all in the name of Christ. My heart is full as you have all been so gracious to me in my first month of Interim work here at First Lutheran. You have been most kind and helpful in every way and accepting of my ministry in your presence while Pastor Dan is on his sabbatical journey. You have worked hard to make it as easy as possible for me, which you probably shouldn't do because you will have me spoiled. It is much appreciated, believe me! My wife, Char, and I enjoyed a refreshing week away in the quiet of the hills of Arkansas with some dear friends and now I am back and ready to be at work again. Hopefully, my wife will be at worship with me soon and you will get to meet her.

June 4th is Pentecost Sunday, a major festival in the church year. It is the day we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus. It happened in a most alarming way with the rush of a mighty wind and tongues of fire appearing and resting on each one of them. Sounds like a scary scene from the kinds of movies my grandchildren love to watch! But they are symbolic images meant to remind the listeners of the power of God, whose Word created the earth and whose breath breathed life into the dried up, dead bones of Israel.

They were signs of the Holy Spirit of God coming to rest on the disciples. But, what does this Spirit mean for you and me. We did not receive it in such dramatic fashion, but in the water and Word of Baptism. God filled us with the same breath and marked us with the cross of His Son, Jesus, and sends us to be His voice and hands and feet and caring in a world that is at odds with itself.

The Holy Spirit is the very presence of God within us. The Spirit teaches us the truth about God and His Son, opening hearts to receive Him. The Spirit comforts us with the knowledge that God is with us always, as Jesus had promised. And the Spirit urges us out into the world to love others, to feed the hungry, to care for those in need, to forgive as we have been forgiven, to bring hope where darkness looms, and peace in the midst of conflict.

I have seen the Spirit alive and at work at First Lutheran Church; in the spirit of hospitality and genuine kindness and friendship; in the spirited and prayerful worship; in the reaching out to members with love and care; and in the concern for the community around us. Keep the Spirit alive! As God's breath fills you pray for others and care for one another! Carry the message to others! Be a place of hope and peace in a world that so desperately needs both! God's Spirit be with you!

Pastor Carl Engstrom, Interim