

*It was truly an exciting Pentecost Sunday at church! We saw how it all came to be – with disciples, flames of fire and all! We celebrated our wonderful teachers who bring light and spirit to our children. And we celebrated the church family that we are. Here are Kate’s words written for the day. It is entitled “**What a Family!**”*



This is it, folks. This is where it begins. On Christmas Day we celebrate the birth of a baby into the world who we come to know as **God’s child**. It is a miracle, a wonder. But on this day, this day of Pentecost, we come to know something even more wondrous, more miraculous. **Jesus is not an only child**. Today we find that moving through our lungs and running through our veins is the very **same Spirit**, same lifeblood that is in Christ.

You know what this means, don’t you? We are **all related!** As Paul says, “all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.” It is only by the leading of the Spirit that you are here. So, when I walk down these aisles, there is not a single stranger in the house. All I see are sisters and brothers, children, mothers and fathers, of mine!

And, you know what? When someone **new shows up**, it’s kind of a **celebration**, because then you find out you have relatives you didn’t even know you had! This is **one big family!** Moms, dads, aunts, uncles, kids.... It’s been a while since we’ve had church baby, isn’t it? One that we can pass around the pews! I wish Briana was with us...but I’ve brought a picture of her two week old baby, we can pass Maddox around! That will have to do. We have **lots** of family news to share. Yesterday, Corrine Grant, who grew up in this very church graduated from Medical School! This summer we have four kids going to camp at Pilgrim Lodge . We have a number of family weddings

including Linda and Kathy and Kate and Ryan, and sadly next Saturday two of our longtime mothers are being laid to rest – Ginny Treat and Clara Rumney. We will lift up their lives. And on this day, we are all invited to the Deborah Lincoln House to celebrate the birthday of our oldest elder, Georgia Randall, who is 100 years old today! What an amazing family!

Now, you may wonder (and it is perfectly okay to ask, because there are no bad questions here), **why do I need this family? I already have one!** Why do we have or need this family? What’s important about this family? Well, let me say this...when you were a baby just like little Maddox in that picture, your whole world was very small. It basically consisted of Mom, and then dad, and grandparents, brothers, sisters. And **then**, it expanded to include friends, teachers, neighbors, etc. etc. The older you get, the more experience you have, you realize the world is bigger – bigger than you ever imagined!!!!

But there is another important part of growing up – as you grow in relationships, in understanding, in wisdom – it seems that **God keeps getting bigger too!** You realize that there is more to God, to who God is, than you could ever imagine! The Spirit that runs through all our veins, the gospel writer John tell us is the Spirit of truth. And that Spirit will never settle for anything less than the whole truth – and it is big! This family called church is here to make sure we stay open to that bigger and bigger God,

that we not settle for a god that is small and of our own making, rather than the magnificent and true God that shakes us all up occasionally, especially when we need it!

We need the whole church to encourage our explorations, to add to the store of knowledge. Each one of us has a piece of the truth. We need the whole church to teach us how to ask questions, to celebrate our discoveries, to love and support one another in the most important quest of life – seeking to know God. For you know what – perhaps you haven't thought of this, but knowing and living with God **is an adventure!**

Think about what an adventure they had on that first day of Pentecost! All the disciples were together in one place when the sound of wind shook the rafters and tongues of fire appeared! Then all of a sudden they began to speak in new and different languages. The Spirit of God **breaks us open** to new experiences, deeper understandings, wider relationships, and greater adventures! It happens all the time! This is why writer Annie Dillard warns us that if we really knew who and what we were dealing with when we came to church, we would all come wearing crash helmets. You never know what is going to come down when the power of God breaks loose!

So, my beloved sisters and brothers, this is the day that we are all claimed as children of this spectacular God, all sharing a common Spirit. John writes “This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you and he will be in you.” The world that John writes of here is **not** the beautiful earth, but anything that is opposed to God because it refuses to see the truth, the whole truth. This world would rather keep us living the **illusion** that we are all **separate**, disconnected, and certainly not responsible for one another. The Spirit of God unveils the power of that lie and all the damage it does here on earth. Perhaps the Spirit of Pentecost comes in wind and flame and drama because the illusion of our separateness, our unrelatedness, is so stubborn in us it needs to be shocked out of our systems!

There is one more thing I want to us to see today, and it is in those simple words: “The Spirit abides with you, and will be in you.” We talk a lot around here about inclusion and our responsibility to act out of love and justice for the world. As we should. But on this day of loud sounds and fiery images and tremendous proclamations – don't miss this basic one. The Spirit lives in you. One of the most important things the church family has to teach is that the Spirit of God does not just come down from the outside, but lives and breathes deeps inside of you. Every single one of you. In the words of Theophilus of Antioch, “[God's] breath vibrates in yours, in your voice. It is the breath of God that you breathe – and you are unaware of it.”

It is the breath of God that you breathe...and what we are about in this family is to remind you of this over and over again. Every single one here is a sacred vessel of the Spirit of God. When we forget that, bad things happen, inside ourselves and in the world. When we remember it, we treat ourselves and one another with great respect and tender love. We dare to tell is like it is, the whole truth, that everything and everyone is related. Jesus was not an only child. We are all children of God, breathing the Spirit, growing in wisdom, understanding, daring, and love. What a family we are! Amen

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