

Most Worship of GOD follows tradition. Christian Worship is always Sunday morning. The Bulletin identifies and we invite you to stand, everyone able stands. We invite you to be comfortable and everyone is seated. We invite you to pray, and most folks bow their heads and close their eyes. The most counter-cultural thing that happens as the Church is that we ask you to write your name and people refuse to pass the pad! But then comes Pentecost, our Celebration of being The Church. The first Christian Pentecost was so bizarre, people called out: "You must be drunk on cheap wine!" Now as a Preacher I have done a great number of things, and while there was feedback, no one ever shouted "You must be drunk!"

The actual origin of Pentecost was a Jewish celebration, almost as old as the first PASSOVER. For the Hebrew enslaved population, Passover was about more than their Emancipation, Passover was declaration of the LOVE OF GOD. That GOD heard their prayers and concerns and ALMIGHTY GOD cared enough to set them free. 50 Days after the Red Sea, with the people wondering who was in charge; with no Master or Pharaoh, how are we supposed to survive? We have come up with all kinds of reasons for the 10 Commandments, but originally, the 10 Commandments were A GIFT from GOD, a COVENANT PROMISE, carved in Stone, that: we need to live Caring for One Another as people, and GOD will be our GOD!

In response to that Covenant Promise, Judaism created a Celebration called "The Festival of Weeks", referring to Seven Weeks literally the 50th Day after PASSOVER. Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16 each name that on this 50th Day every person is to bring a gift to GOD, in representative proportion to the Blessings received from the LORD. Can you envision someone with 5 generations, each with 6 or 7 children, whose entire family had been slaves, now set free, bringing a Ton of Wheat? Someone else 8-10 pieces of hand-woven linens. One person bringing an offering of \$5 and another \$5,000 each based on their own accounting of their blessings. I wonder whether this became the origin for Jesus of the Parable of *the Talents...*, **one was asked to account for being gifted 10 talents, another 3, another 1.**

When I was in South Sudan, I witnessed the most simple and amazing enactment of this. Recognize South Sudan is one of the most impoverished places in our world. When they were settled in the land, this is a people who live in mud huts with a thatched roof. Who had never had a currency, never had technology, not even the wheel. This was a people who since the 1960s had lived in Civil War, with bare subsistence survival. During worship, they called for people's Offerings and one by one the worshippers came forward to place an egg, or a handful of grain in the offering. One young woman with two young children came forward and you heard the sound of her pouring grain, as she had saved a portion of every meal for months to make as her offering.

For the 50th Day Celebration everyone was invited: You, your spouse, sons, daughters, all your relatives, those who work with you, those who work for you, traveling preachers, aliens and strangers, orphans without parents and widows. This was a Festival where there are no longer distinctions of differences, everyone is welcome. All political parties, all theological positions, those who live on the margins, the homeless. If invitations needed to be sent out, it was not so as to exclude, but simply to inform: "Y'all come!" Everyone was included regardless of race, religion, gender, status, age. Could this be the origin of Jesus' Parable of the **Wedding Feast where all were invited and still there was room for more?** Or the origin of **his Changing Water into a super-abundance of the very finest Wine?**

The 50th Day was a MEMORIAL DAY, not to wars or to those who died for our Freedom; a MEMORIAL TO THE LOVE OF GOD. That at least on this day, ALL ARE WELCOME, ALL ARE LOVED BY GOD, because GOD is LORD of All.

The inclusion of everyone, puts me in mind of one of my favorite stories from Presbyterian Church History. We use the words so often, but do you know the origin of the Identifications FUNDAMENTALISTS and PROGRESSIVES? A Century ago in the year 1920, a group of Presbyterians gathered at a Bible Camp in Niagara Falls, NY. They recognized that there are differences between different churches and different people, Theme of Camp, What is the lowest common denominator we can all agree to? What are the FUNDAMENTALS of our Faith we can all agree about. They came up with 5:

1. The first 5 Books of the Bible were written down by Moses from the lips of God.
2. All the Miracles in the Bible are true.
3. The Virgin Birth happened.
4. The Blood of Jesus was Atonement for our sins.
5. The Bodily Resurrection.

They then declared that every Minister, Elder and Deacon had to sign acceptance of these Fundamentals or lose their Ordination. In reaction a different group stated, "We do not disagree with these, but we believe what unites us, is not the

lowest common denominator, as much as the LOVE OF GOD and all that GOD may call us to PROGRESS to do together.”

FUNDAMENTALISTS and PROGRESSIVES.

The Festival of the 50th Day, was basic to Ancient Judaism for Centuries, translated into Greek this became PENTECOST. However, for the last 50 days, we have read that following the Crucifixion, even after the Resurrection, the Disciples locked themselves in the Upper Room for fear. They could not lock out Jesus, and they certainly could not lock out the HOLY SPIRIT. **When suddenly they heard a Sound of wind.** Remember in Genesis, the world was a shapeless, void of darkness and chaotic water, and the Spirit of GOD brooded over the face of the Deep, before calling forth life. **This was NOT just the sound of wind brooding over, this was a mighty wind, a HABOOB, sound like a freight train outside the windows as the Spirit was doing something revolutionary in human history.**

Being in that Upper Room the Spirit of God settled on each, like Fire, and the Disciples were changed from Passive, Fearful, Abandoning Followers, into Impassioned Apostles, who boldly stated the Love of God to others. Suddenly, something miraculous took place! Even though the Disciples had been simple fishermen, without an education, speaking only Aramaic or Common Greek, as they opened their mouths, they were speaking in the languages of all who heard them; not just different dialects, but speaking in ***the Languages of Parthians and Medes, Elamites from across the Jordan, Mesopotamian, Judean, Cappadocian, Pontus, Asian, Phrygian, Pamphylia, Egyptians, Libyans, Cyrene, Speaking the Latin of Gentiles as well as Jewish converts, Cretan and Arabic, each declaring the wonderful works of GOD!***

I would call attention to 4 circumstances that happened this week, PROPHETIC VISIONS & DREAMS in our midst.

As has been reported on Tucson's news, on Monday, there had been fires at St. Stephens Episcopal and the Presbyterian Churches in Douglas. One of our number came forward and suggested, in 2019 when Valley Presbyterian got new hymnals, we ordered too many and still have about 6 boxes unopened. What if we sent these to the Church in Douglas? While they lost their old Hymnals, they could sing out of hymnals that are brand new.

Second, one of the missions our church has long supported is a Childrens' Clinic in Nogales. One day a month, the clinic serves all manner of medical needs, free of charge, but a specialty is Cleft-Palate surgery. A year ago, we received a special offering to help them relocate from where they could be no more, into a new leased building. In April, at our Mission Committee I was told that actually 5 of the churches here in Green Valley all support this Clinic from Mission Budgets. On Wednesday of this week, we got the pastors of several of these churches together, sharing concern for a mission we each already support, and suggesting that in addition to the amount we can each provide quarterly to support their program, perhaps all of our churches and community could work together doing something monumental to change the circumstance of this Clinic, possibly even getting the various different Mission programs in Nogales to all work together.

On Thursday, our Session gathered, and at this meeting the George Pike Endowment for Pastoral Ministry was lifted up. Back in 2013, this Endowment was created, named for Rev. Pike who has been a beloved Interim and Associate Pastor of this Congregation. Initially, there were restrictions on this endowment, that it could not be touched until the principal balance had reached \$1,500,000.00 and that it could then only be used to fund the salary of a minister of pastoral care. After two different committees had studied this, the Session recommended we talk with members in the pew: that we continue to call this the Rev. George H. Pike Endowment for Pastoral Ministry; SECOND while we could push to reach \$1,500,000 insofar as in 10 years what has been raised is \$208,000 that POSSIBLY beginning next year, at the discretion of the Session up to 5% of this could be used to supplement the Operating Budget for all of the Pastoral Ministries like the Deacons, Stephen Ministry, NOCs, believing the premise that many of the pastoral care ministries of the church are carried out programmatically by others, besides ordained pastors. Nothing is decided, we want to hear your feedback.

The Fourth Elder George Curtis came to me, stating that we have 3 persons related to this church, whom the Scholarship Fund Committee have awarded scholarships to. Meagan and Sophia who each were confirmed as members of this Congregation, and Chuck who is our Sound and Video Engineer.

Years ago, I knew a group of Refugees who had come as children sent to other parts of the world. The President of their Nation described they were the SEEDS of their People who would go out to be rooted and educated elsewhere. MEAGAN, SOPHIA AND CHUCK, We hope that you take memories of this Church wherever you go AS SEEDS OF THIS PEOPLE OF GOD.

What new Dreams, Visions and Prophecies may come, as we listen to our faith and practice the love of GOD?!