

Seeing Visions, Dreaming Dreams

May 24, 2026

Pentecost

Red

Acts 2:1-21

Someone once said that of all the liturgical holidays, Pentecost was the most frustrating to understand and embrace. After all, what are we supposed to do with the Spirit's arrival that led to the birth of the Church?

On Easter we celebrate new life. There are dyed eggs and fragrant lilies. On Christmas we have the birth of hope. There are lots of lights and festively wrapped presents. On Palm Sunday we remember how fickle we can be in our faith, waving palm branches one minute then shouting crucify him the next. But on Pentecost we never really hit the mark as to how to welcome God's Spirit moving among us.

Pentecost, which is the Greek name for the Jewish harvest festival of Shavuot, which is celebrated 50 days after Passover, was the time when many devout Jews were in Jerusalem to celebrate. God used this festival to usher in a new harvest of believers in the Risen Lord. With great show, God sent the Holy Spirit that was likened to a rush of mighty wind. Jesus' followers, who were in Jerusalem, poured out onto the streets speaking in a multitude of languages, ensuring that those out-of-towners from foreign lands could understand the Good News of Christ Risen. Some accused the followers of being drunk, but Peter set the naysayers straight saying they were in fact full of the Spirit. He then echoed the words of the prophet Joel saying that the young will see visions and the old will dream new dreams.

I can see why Pentecost might be a frustrating liturgical holiday to observe. For if Pentecost is all about receiving the Spirit, who then would really dare to gather around a table and share those Holy Spirit visions, dreams and hopes for the Church today?

We all have our own visions of what church should be. There is a running joke within the United Church of Christ that there is no shortage of opinions and because of the abundance of views, it seems sometimes impossible to move forward.

Maybe this year, we should step away from rushing wind Spirit metaphor of Pentecost and try to see it a little differently. St. John Vianney used gardening to explain the work of the Spirit, viewing it as a gardener who cultivates our souls. He also described Pentecost as the moment when "a heart of stone is shattered, and heart of flesh takes its place."

Perhaps a shattering of stone hearts is what we need this year at Pentecost so that fledgling visions and dreams can take root and grow.

Renewing God, You sent the Spirit so long ago to bring Your church to life. May this Pentecost find ourselves renewed by new visions and dreams for how to be Your children. Soften our hearts to new ways of being Your body here in our communities. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

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