

What a joy to come to this Festival of Pentecost and to celebrate all the ways God's Holy Spirit is at work here in our Family of Faith. Just a year ago Pastor Jim accepted God's call and thankfully became a part of our Family. That is the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. We are here in this almost completed Ministry Center, almost a quarter of a century from when our planning first began, thanks to our CORE Team and KW Janne's leadership and stewardship. That too is the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Vicar Jane also responded to God's call and now a year later has completed a year of Seminary and is in the midst of her Clinical training. That too is the work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. We have seen that Holy Spirit at work in the lives of our young people here in the Family. In the lives of these 8 women who today will affirm their faith. In the lives of our peer leaders who are engaged in so many ministries. And we saw examples of that as three of them returned home from college to lead our Adult Forum this spring. Arlene Douglas who shared her justice work with the Roma, the Gypsies in Europe last summer and who this summer will be heading to Chile to deal with economic development and then Cambodia to address human trafficking. Laurie Delatour who shared her medical mission work in Peru on her J Term. And Alex Ebling who shared his medical mission work in Costa Rica. We are blessed with mission partners in Moshi, Tanzania and Sunset Gap, Tennessee. We are enriched by multiple partners in Newark: Broadway House, our AIDS center; our 25 year long partnership with St. John's Soup Kitchen; and now St. Stephans-Grace church, our Portuguese mission in the Ironbound. This mosaic is the very fabric of

what Pentecost is about. Joining disparate individuals and groups into this Body of Christ where we witness to and care for God's hurting world. It is why I love this day. It is the reminder that we didn't just decide to get together on this hill. It is the reminder that this is no one's private club; rather this is the Servant Body of Jesus Christ called together and empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

That's what our lessons are about today. It is a Spirit that has enabled us to dream dreams and see visions of how God intends this world to be. It is understanding that we are richly blessed with gifts to make that ministry possible.

I want to tell you a Pentecost story. Last month Carol and I traveled to Franconia, Pennsylvania for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly. It was a first. All my years in ministry and this was the first time I ever attended another Synod's Assembly; going to New Jersey's has always been more than enough thank you. We went because brother Tom and his wife Sue were being commissioned as lay missionaries to the Northeast Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. (Not real far away from where our mission in Moshi is). Now to put this in context, Tom had his first heart attack at age 39 with multiple health problems since and he and Sue gave up a life long plan to retire up near our lake in Maine, because there wasn't adequate health care close enough. And now in a few months they will be off to the hills of Tanzania to work at the Irente School for Children. And he wonders why I have grey hair.

It was a beautiful and moving Commissioning as Sue and Tom shared a brief presentation and video about the work they will be doing with blind and autistic children and orphans with AIDS. And then Bishop Burkhardt, a long

time friend, invited our family to come up and gather around Sue and Tom; and then she invited members of their home parish in Philadelphia to gather with us; and then the Synod's African Mission Team around us. All as a reminder, she told us, that they are going to Africa, not alone but with the love and prayers of so many people. That Holy Spirit thing again. As we concluded I assumed we would be heading out of the Assembly room but to my disappointment, Sue and Tom and family went back and sat down. And I'm thinking, how much longer are we going to sit here? And then Claire, Bishop Burkhardt told us. She was sure we were going to enjoy the next speaker and their 45 minute presentation. I don't think I groaned out loud, but I wanted to. So we settled in and am I glad we did. The speaker was Dr. Rodger Nishioka from Columbia Theological Seminary down in Georgia. And he shared an unbelievable presentation, *The Once and Future Church*, that we are going to get a lot of mileage out of. Pastor and I have talked about using it on our Council Retreat next winter. I am hoping to use it on our Seminarian's Retreat in January. You will see part of it in Adult Forum this coming year and the Bishop is exploring possible uses in the Synod. What I want to share with you this morning is a Pentecost story with which Dr. Nishioka concluded.

He told us about two students near him in Georgia at Emory University, Elizabeth Sholtys and Robbie Brown and about their graduation 4 years ago. Each year Emory honors the outstanding member of their senior class with an award called The McMullen Prize. It is awarded at graduation after a secret vote by the faculty. And with the McMullen certificate comes an unrestricted check for \$20,000. And so it was that Robbie was called up on the dais and given the McMullen award and his check.

Robbie had met Elizabeth 6 months before when they traveled to the airport to pick up prospective students for a campus tour. They talked as they traveled and as they waited and he learned more about this fascinating young woman. She did her junior year in Mumbai, India as part of an international studies program. And she was constantly troubled by the street children that lived around the international student dorms. So troubled in fact, that when she came back to the States she raised funds and formed a non profit 501 C 3 corporation and then adopted 6 girls off the streets of Mumbai. She bought a flat and staffed it with three women who rotated around the clock. And she became the girls' legal guardian. She told Robbie she wanted to go to work to raise more money so that she could get a second flat for boys.

Robbie's friends were high fiving him and waving all so happy for him. This award would be a huge help as he headed off to law school in DC. And then he saw Liz crossing the stage to get her diploma. And as the ceremony concluded he sought her out to congratulate her and handed her an envelope which she tucked into her skirt under her gown. Robbie's folks found him, hugged him and told him how proud they were that he had won this prestigious award. Ever practical, his dad, said "Give me the check so you don't lose it." And Robbie just looked at him. "What did you do?" his father asked.

What he did, was sign the back of his check over to Liz and put it back in the envelope, giving it to her after the ceremony. She thought it was a graduation card and didn't discover what Robbie had done till later that night while changing for dinner. And what she did was adopt 6 boys off the streets of Mumbai, hire three more women to care for them; she got another flat and

started a health clinic.

Robbie drives his father's 1988 Volvo Station wagon, not exactly a chick magnet and certainly could have used that money. He asked his folks if they were OK. His mom said yes...his dad was still shaking his head.

Robbie was asked, "Why did you do it?" He said, "I know I can do well in this world. It's more important that we do good."

The Talmud of our partners at Summit Jewish Community Center tells us that to change the world, you change one life. As people of God, we understand that 2000 years ago, one life forever changed this world. And today we celebrate the work of God's Holy Spirit that empowers the church and each of us. (It is what we celebrate with these young women today. God has been at work in their lives so that they come in just a few minutes to affirm their faith and to claim their ministry for the rest of their lives. Today we celebrate the work of God's Holy Spirit that empowers the church and each of us). To be who we are called to be. To do what we are called to do. And at the end of the day that means not doing well, but doing good.