

**Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church**  
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**The Day of Pentecost**

Genesis 11:1-9

1Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

5The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. 6And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." 8So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Acts 2:1-21

1When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

14But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. 21Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"

## **"Gathered and Scattered"**

**The story of Pentecost is the story of God doing something new. It was not that the Holy Spirit was a new invention of God. No, the Spirit always had been. The Spirit brooded over creation. The Spirit is the breath, the wind, the life that made bodies move and bones connect bone to bone and life came into them.**

**This experience of the Spirit was extraordinary. It was unlike anything that had ever been experienced before. Jesus had told the disciples to wait until they received power from on high. He had told them that when they receive the Spirit they would do remarkable things. Great things would be the result of the coming of the Holy Spirit.**

**It was a great festival day. Pentecost came 50 days after Passover. It was the Festival of Weeks. Jerusalem was crowded with people from every corner of the known world in those days. The disciples were gathered together. Jesus told them to wait together.**

**As they gathered there was this palpable presence of God unlike they had experienced before. It was so real and powerful that it was like this great rush of wind blowing in and blowing through. Their bodies became ablaze with the presence of God. The manifestation of that presence was that people from every corner of globe could hear those gathered speaking in their own language.**

**For some it was a wow experience. For others it was unsettling. These actions were not the sort of thing that rational, composed, and dignified people do. Their actions were beyond explanation, so the only possible explanation had to be that they were drunk. What else but being filled with new wine could explain this?**

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**Peter rises and speaks out. He makes it abundantly clear that there has been no drinking going on. He quotes the prophet Joel. “In the last days it will be that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...”**

**This is God’s doing. The eternal and everlasting God is at work here bringing about that which is new and a completely fresh experience of the gathered community. It is this event that is marked as the beginning of the church. A fresh new wind of the Holy Spirit was blowing on that gathered community, and that very same Spirit would scatter them to all corners of the globe. “Gathered and scattered” they would witness to Jesus the Christ as Lord and Savior. They would, in that great commission, baptize all nations in the powerful name of God.**

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**God was doing this...they were the receivers and they were the agents that would carry the witness of that God into all places. Yet, it is clear that this is God’s doing among them. The origin is God and not their own. God was doing this new thing. God had brought about this Holy Spirit movement—God had brought about this new Pentecost.**

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**What about Pentecost now? Is God doing anything new? Or are we in the age of re-telling what God has done? Is our role one of looking back and seeing how God has acted and then telling that story to a new time?**

**Yes, I do think we are called to hear this story again and we are called to share this story anew in our generation and in our time. But I think there is more to the story. I am convinced that God is doing something new in our world.**

**I am convinced that God is doing something new in the Church too. Things have so shifted and we are just on the edge of that. There is a very real way one can look at the world and see these major shifts that occur about every 500 years. We are on the edge of that 500 year shift. That is where all the talk about “postmodern” comes from.**

**We talk in the church about the “emerging” church—we know that in this new age church will be different and live differently than it has in previous generations. That difference is just starting to emerge.**

**Is it by accident? Is it because of the cultural shifts? Is it because our old systems of how things operated are no longer functional? Is it because the role of institutions in general has moved in our culture and in our world too? Is it because of all those factors combined? Yes, yes, yes...**

**But, I do not think that is the whole story. I think there is more going on here. I think it is God. I tell you, I am convinced that God is doing something new here.**

**God is doing something new at Good Shepherd. Yes. And, God is doing something new in the Presbyterian Church USA, and oh, God is doing something new in all of Christendom. It is bigger than just our corner of the globe—the Spirit is blowing through the whole thing, but we are part of it.**

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**So what is that new thing? What is this new thing that God is doing?**

**Well, that is still emerging...I'm not trying to get out of giving you a definite answer. I'm only trying to describe the reality that we are in. It is an already but not yet reality. It is a beginning to taste it but cannot fully comprehend its flavor yet sort of thing.**

**That is not to say that it cannot be described.**

**So, get on with it already! What is this new thing that God is doing?**

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**I think it is best described in the word missional. Missional.**

**It is a word that is not in spell check in your word processor. It is a concept that is emerging. God is doing a new thing.**

**Missional is different from mission. We are familiar with mission. We are a church that does mission. Mission is when you go out and help others. Mission is often giving something of yourself for the benefit of others. Structurally congregations used to have a Mission Committee that determined where the best use of mission funds would go—those committees helped congregations answer the question of “what is the best use of our mission money and giving?”**

**Mission was separate from evangelism. Congregations had evangelism committees too. Not this congregation, mind you, -no evangelism committee for us. When we tried a few years ago to use that term with the Session it frightened off the Session members and there were no takers. Evangelism is that whereby one reaches others for Christ. We Presbyterians have often domesticated that concept by talking about church growth over evangelism.**

**Missional is not mission and it is not evangelism. It is a bringing together of both but with a twist. Missional is that new thing that God is doing. “God is doing” is the key to it. Missional—expresses the idea of our**

**partnering with God in what God is doing. *Missio dei* (God's sending of God's own self to redeem and transform the world in Christ through the Spirit) is what God is all about. It is what God is doing.**

**God has sent God's own self to redeem and transform the world in Christ and through the Spirit and we are to partner with God in that. Such is missional.**

**Missional is about us, as the church and as the people of God, going out there in the world and discovering what God is doing to redeem and transform the world and then jumping in and being a part of that. The point in which we "jump in" and participate in what God is doing is when we are living into becoming the church and the people that God is calling us to be.**

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**What is emerging is this missional reality. No longer does it work for us as individual believers or as Good Shepherd, or as Presbyterians or all of Christendom---no longer does it work for us to just sit back and wait for others to come. It also does not work for us to just wait here as receivers of what God can give us—this is not a matter of being a consumer.**

**It is a matter of being in on this new thing that God is doing. God is doing that new thing—out there—redeeming us and all creation with it—God is doing that. We need to discover the places where it is going to happen by being out there and touching that reality.**

**In the Values that we claim as a congregation there are three of our four values that all express this missional calling—Transformation, Joyful Service, and Openness.**

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**This is a great time to be alive. It is a great time to be part of the church and it is a great time to be a part of this church. God is doing a new thing—this is Pentecost. And we are to be open, we are to be out there looking to see what God is doing in this world, and we are to “jump into” that and participate with God in the redemption and reconciliation that God is bringing about.**

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**What if, on that first Pentecost Day when that expression of the Spirit came to those disciples, they had just hunkered down in that one room and done nothing with it? What if they had just stayed to themselves instead of getting out there and speaking those languages to each and every corner of the globe?**

**What if we hunker down here? What if we hunker down here on this corner and just keep doing what we have always done? What if we just see this missional thing as an idea of the day?**

**What if...oh what if we miss the new thing that God is doing?**

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**Well, I’m not going miss it. I’m going to look harder and more for those places where God is at work out there and I’m going to “jump in.” Will you jump with me?**

**To be missional is to both look and jump in. And along the way if they accuse us of being drunk or crazy we will tell them the truth—it is the Holy Spirit gathering and scattering us—it is the Holy Spirit alive in us. Jump in!! Amen.**