

Personal Dedication Meditation

Ezekiel declared about what happened to the dry bones in chapter 37, verse 10, ***“So I prophesied as I had been told. Breath entered the bodies, and they came to life and stood up. There were enough of them to form an army.”*** The bones received life, breath, sinew, and flesh after Ezekiel spoke the word of God. As that occurred, they received the Spirit, which made them part of the Dance of Life! As Resurrection people, we celebrate the Spirit continues giving life and breath to our dry bones. We dare to dance in the face of fear, in the face of cynicism, in the face of despair. We dare to dance in our New Life in Christ – for we, like the early Christians, have received the Spirit of God, Who intercedes even when we think we can’t make it to the dance floor. **Our Faith in that Promise and Truth empowers us to move into the future!**

It was amazing when the Gift of the Holy Spirit came upon the first disciples of Jesus on that Pentecost Day following his Resurrection and Ascension! One of the benefits they received because of the Holy Spirit was the ability to speak to others in their home languages, even though they had not previously been able to speak those languages. **Verse 4 reported, “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”** The crowd of religious pilgrims from many different countries recognized the situation was not normal and became very excited. Many of them were transformed by the experience and became followers of the Crucified and Risen Jesus Christ.

Sean and Kayla, our Confirmands, have shared with us their own experience of the Holy Spirit – how God’s Presence has moved them – enabled them to join in the Dance of the Christian Faith and Life. Their Personal Statements of Belief demonstrated they have joined us and many Christians through history – the many, who have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to receive the Gift of Faith and all of the rest of our Spirit given gifts. Sean and Kayla are in the early stages of recognizing and using their Spiritual Gifts. During the Spring of each year, **Round Grove United Church, United Church of Christ, intentionally focuses on our Spiritual Gifts and how we will commit to use them for our Divine Parent’s Purposes through the ministries of this congregation.** In a few moments, we will each be given the opportunity to prayerfully complete our Personal Dedication Commitment Sheets and bring them up to the Altar for Dedication. This occasion come at a crucial time in our lives.

“In her book, ‘The Great Emergence,’ Phyllis Tickle reflects on what she sees as the regular ‘garage sale’ that the church experiences every five hundred years or so. She, and others, look at the church today and see the possibility that we are in fact in the middle of one of those inspired, cosmic rummage sales: a refocusing of our hearts and minds on what the good news means in our own day, while honoring the contributions of those who have gone before us. ...”

“Tickle and others see this as a time of great renewal for the church and the churches, an opportunity for re-examination of the fundamental questions and a re-commitment to a renewed living of our faith. Is it perhaps a time for our ‘sons and daughters to prophesy,’ for our ‘young to dream dreams’ and our ‘old to see visions,’ for an outpouring of Spirit that calls from tomorrow overwhelming our preconceived notions and neat perceptions in favor of the

expansive and inclusive reign of God?” (“Alive in Love” as told by Mark Suriano on Weekly Seeds)

Kate Matthews has shared, “As we reflect on this story of the birth of the church, certainly we find ourselves in continuity with those earliest of Christians, as they heard the ancient words of the prophet Joel. We also read on this Pentecost Sunday a passage from the prophet Ezekiel (37:1-14), who draws our attention to the experience of looking around at what appears to be struggling, or even lifeless, and then finding – seeing, hearing, feeling – God’s power at work to bring new life in the most unexpected places.”

Matthew’s concluded, “There is so much time and energy spent these days on trying to ‘solve the problem’ of churches shrinking in size (and, we must admit, in resources), even churches ‘dying,’ closing their doors, with deep sadness, many times after long histories of vibrant ministry. And yet” **“Phyllis Tickle’s metaphor offers us that unexpected new understanding of God at work in marvelous ways, bringing life in new manifestations of church.”** (“Alive in Love” by Kate Matthews posted on Weekly Seeds)

This Pentecost Sunday, the last Sunday of our Dare To Dance Worship Series, offers us a **wonderful opportunity to be part of a cosmic transformation – the Dance of the New Life in Christ!** Unfortunately, if we don’t join in the dance, then like unused muscle, we will lose some our ability to dance this New Life and our Spirit given Gifts will begin to fade away. **So, it’s time to Dare To Dance Again because God’s Spirit has been poured out on us too and we have Spirit Given Gifts to share!**

In every breath we take, there is the Spirit;
in every word we speak, there is the Spirit;
in every heart we touch, there is the Spirit;
in every person we welcome, there is the Spirit.

We are given the words to speak;
the courage to reach out to others;
the open heart to offer others,
the breath of life to share with those around us.

The many gifts we have been given are ours to use in God’s ministry through our church.

Today offers the opportunity for each of us to indicate the ways that we will let the Spirit move through us.

Please complete your Personal Dedication Commitment sheet by indicating how you will commit to using your Spirit Given Gifts for God’s use through this congregation during the next 12 months. Please be sure to include your name and other information asked for at the bottom of the second page.

I will invite you to bring it forward to the altar once everyone has completed their sheet. Amen.