

*“Journey: The Places We Will Go”*

Suzanne Adele Schmidt when preaching on today’s theme said, **“The butterfly which is released from its cocoon, bursts forth to become something new. In its transformed body, the butterfly can soar and journey to new places. On this Pentecost Sunday, may we remember that the Holy Spirit accompanies us as we journey to new places in the world that so desperately needs people who know the power of transformation.”** (“Journey: The Places We Will Go” by Suzanne Adele Schmidt, Ph.D., M.Div. of Trinity UCC, Manchester, MD)

Rev. Emily Heath wrote, “Every year on Pentecost Sunday, I get the feeling that the church misses the point ... I’m all for learning other languages, but this story isn’t about taking Mandarin lessons or immersing ourselves in Finnish. Instead, it is about learning to speak in ways that are relevant to the people around me.”

Heath continued, “Our ways of communicating are changing every day. Facebook and Twitter and all the other online platforms are calling us into a Pentecost moment. Are we [the mainline church] going to wait for the people around us to walk into our doors to learn the language of church?”

**“Or are we going to learn to speak a new language and share our story with others?”** (Emily C. Heath, Learning New Languages)

Like the butterfly, in our transformation into the people God intends us to be, we are called to use our New Gifts – our Spirit Given Gifts to Fly – Live out the New Life in Christ and the New Faith Relationship with God and one another. **We are to Journey to new places both physically and metaphorically to make the best use of our Spiritual Gifts – to share the Message of God’s Good News of Forgiveness, Invitation, and Welcome to all – all, who are in need of the Transformation we share.**

The Pentecost Experience – the Birthday of the Christian Church provides us the historical context for the emergence of our Holy Spirit Given Gifts and the call to use those Gifts to fulfill God’s Purposes in relationship to sacrificially working for the welfare of others. Specifically, Luke wrote in verse 4, ***“They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”***

Our second Reading from Acts revealed that this task of using our Spirit Given Gifts to enable others to experience the Christian Transformation is not limited to just certain beneficiaries. The Apostle Peter came to this broader awareness through the experience summed up in **verses 34 and 35, “Peter began to speak: ‘I now realize that it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. ... You know the message He sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.’”**

Jesus indicated at his Ascension that our Spirit Given Gifts are intended to spread this Good News of God’s Forgiveness, Invitation, and Welcome to all people. **Jesus said in Acts 1:8, “But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

This Emerge Worship Celebration Series has revealed, “the colors, the beauty, the unabashed and exuberant expression of all that we are together! This celebration is like none other — brought to its fullest embodiment as we emerge and dare new heights! In the emerging of the church in the

book of Acts, a series of events in the life of Peter led him to the understanding that **God shows no partiality and all are welcome in this journey of new life in Christ.** Upon this rock, the Spirit builds a church that offers hope to the hopeless, strength for the weary, and new life to those who think theirs is over. Upon these things, this church will continue this mission to a world that so desperately needs a people who know the power of transformation!

One Pentecost Sunday, Rev. David Haley told his congregation, “I firmly believe that now, as then [on the first Pentecost Sunday], God has greater hopes for most congregations, congregations like our own, than to be secret Jesus Commemoration societies.” Haley concluded, **“I believe God is still creating the new community, even among old churches, empowering them by the power of the Holy Spirit, to become inviting, inclusive, worshiping and witnessing communities of faith.”** (“Where are the Spirit Holes in Our Lives?” by Rev. David Haley)

**Our God Is Still Speaking Emphasis** shared with the United Church of Christ denomination aids us in our intentionality and focus of fulfilling our Calling to use our God Given Gifts to be Inviting, Inclusive, and **Welcoming of all people – “no matter where they are on life’s journey”!** As Rev. Suzanne Schmidt told her congregation, “We are surrounded by ministry opportunities, places where the Holy Spirit might come in and energize us.” (“Journey: The Places We Will Go” by Suzanne Adele Schmidt, Ph.D., M.Div. of Trinity UCC, Manchester, MD)

As I said last year on Pentecost as part of our Dare to Dance Worship Celebration Series,

“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.**

In a few minutes, you will be invited to 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 year or so. Please be sure to include your name and other information asked for at the bottom of the second page. **This Pentecost is an important time for us to complete our emergence into our Transformation into the people our Divine Parent intends us to be by committing to and starting to use our Spirit Given Gifts as we reach out to all people with God’s Forgiveness, Invitation, and Welcome. Amen.**