

If I asked you to name your favorite church season what would it be?

Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost! Doesn't that sound like fun? So if I asked about your fondest memories of Pentecost, what images would you conjure up? Do you have fond memories of that Pentecost brunch or the Pentecost dress you bought? We just don't celebrate Pentecost the way we do other Christian holidays. Hallmark doesn't have a Happy Pentecost card—how annoying!

Well if you're stumped have not fear—you are not alone!

The well known author and preacher Fred Craddock tells a rather funny story about a lecture he was giving: A few years ago, when he was on the west coast speaking at a seminary, just before the first lecture, one of the students stood up and said, "Before you speak, I need to know if you are Pentecostal." The room grew silent. Craddock said he looked around for the Dean of the seminary; he was nowhere to be found. The student continued with his quiz right in front of everybody.

Craddock was taken aback, and so he said, "Do you mean do I belong to the Pentecostal Church?" He said, "No, I mean are you Pentecostal?" Craddock said, "Are you asking me if I am charismatic?" the student said, "I am asking you if you are Pentecostal." Craddock said, "Do you want to know if I speak in tongues?" He said, "I want to know if you are Pentecostal." Craddock said, "I don't know what your question is." The student said, "Obviously, you are not Pentecostal." He left.

What are we talking about this morning? Is the church supposed to use the word Pentecost only as a noun or can it be used as an adjective? And so I ask you: Are you Pentecostal?

In spite of the fact that the church doesn't know what the adjective means, the church insists that the word remain in our vocabulary as an adjective. The church is unwilling for the word simply to be a noun, to represent a date, a place, an event in the history of the church, refuses for it to be simply a memory, an item, something back there somewhere. The church insists that the word is an adjective; it describes the church. The word, then, is "Pentecostal."

If the church is *alive* in the world it is Pentecostal. If the church is *vibrant* and *dynamic* it is Pentecostal. If the church is *relevant* to our day and time it is Pentecostal. And you thought we were Episcopal!

How do we keep this aliveness, this fire burning, this spirit moving? What must exist in us, around us, and through us, if we are to be Pentecostal? Simply these three things:

1. We are to be enthusiastically spreading the Good News (assuming we know what the “Good News” actually is)
2. We are to understand our purpose in the community
3. We are to be open to the Holy Spirit’s leading us in the way

Our task is clear—we must prepare by unequivocally knowing how to speak to others about the “Good News”. We have to figure out what our purpose is in this community, how will we answer the question of our role in life here in Walnut Creek and the surrounding communities. And we must ask for God’s presence and guidance in our decision-making.

We’ve taken the initial steps to being “Pentecostal”. First, we are preparing to equip the “Saints”—that’s you, by making Adult Formation a year-round endeavor. We’ll have a regular Wednesday evening class during the academic year and if we move our service time, we’ll also have an Adult Forum between our two morning services. (Y.E.S., Via Media, DOCC, etc.) The topics and format will vary, but the goal will be the same—to equip you to live a life of abundance and service to others.

Second we’ve begun to understand our purpose by creating the proposed vision statement. This is our attempt to figure out our role in this community at this time in our history. (Explain how a vision statement works) What/who should we be focusing on? Where are our strengths? What are the gifts we have that we can offer to others as a congregation?

Third, we must pray about what we decide. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your response when we ask for your feedback on any issue or question. Don’t just decide based on your comfort zone or current level of understanding, but take the time to pray about what God might be asking of you.

This summer, I'm hoping that we'll use the "lazy days" to do some creative sharing and thinking. We're scheduling 4 Cottage Meetings (two in some willing soul's home, and one at Family Camp and one here with child care) so we can have a meal together and sit back and talk about our vision statement—is this the right one for us, or do we need to figure something else out? And, how does our stewardship drive our vision? (Explain stewardship in the broadest sense—"everything we do with everything we have")

I'm also planning the first stages of developing our Honduras Mission team. (Briefly explain the parameters of the mission) So even though this is the laid-back summer time, it will also be a time of unhurried conversation and prayer together. I'd like to spend time listening to your thoughts, concerns, and dreams for our common life.

In a moment we'll be baptizing two new members, Isabelle and Henry, into our community and we'll be renewing our own promises. BUT—are you ready to commit to being Pentecostal?

4. To enthusiastically spread the Good News (and willing to learn what the "Good News" is)
5. To understand our purpose in the community
6. To be open to the Holy Spirit's leading us in the way

We are the Church; we *are* a Pentecostal Church, a spirit-filled, vibrant and dynamic institution of God. But, we're not finished yet—we've come a long way from the quaint chapel across the courtyard—and only God knows where this journey will end, but no way are we done.

There is much to do and although there is a lot we don't yet know, I do know that God has called us together to do God's will, to be Pentecostal in this part of the world. The community needs us, we need this task, and God through God's Holy Spirit will show us how. Let's get ready to have the most creative summer we can! AMEN.