

Sermon Title: The Holy Spirit Work Within You

Text: Acts 2:1-21; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

By: Rev. Terry Carty

Date: 06-12-11

Place: Kingston Springs United Methodist Church

Season: Pentecost; Confirmation

Main Point: It is the Holy Spirit of God that comes to us and inspires us to live Godly lives.

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Read Corinthians 12:3-13 from The Message

We pray "Come, Holy Spirit, Come!"

I live with a constant awareness of God's Holy Spirit moving in my life.

It is kind of like the guidance that I have been given by my mom and my dad: sometimes I listen to it, and sometimes I seek my own direction in spite of it.

I have had three memorable, earthshaking experiences with the Holy Spirit that have brought me to an awareness of that constant presence.

The first was when I repeated Confirmation Class. We didn't call it Confirmation back then in my church. It was just Church Membership class. I completed Church Membership Class at a Methodist church in Chattanooga in the fourth grade, got my little cross pin for my lapel and got a key to the church as a full member. When my family moved to Nashville that summer we found that Church Membership Class was offered for fifth graders there.

Something powerful moved in me, now I know it was the Holy Spirit, and I asked my mom if I could repeat the class at this new church. I did repeat it and this time I was deeply moved by the importance of that commitment to the church and to God. I was so moved that I determined that I wanted a symbol more powerful than just reaffirmation of my faith. By my mom's Southern Baptist reckoning, I had not been baptized as an infant, only 'christened'. So I asked for baptism. I felt 'strangely warmed' by the water that was placed on my head.

The second time, I was a youth group chaperone on a mission trip in North Carolina. On the closing night at a candle lit Communion service, I quietly, joyfully, made a life commitment to follow Jesus.

The third time, I knelt at the altar in front of a packed sanctuary at my ordination service. It was electric when the Bishop, reached out and laid his hand on my head and said: "Lord, pour upon Terry Blaine Carty the Holy Spirit for the office and work of an elder." I felt a tingling and a power that rushed into me that has never failed to inspire me since then.

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Today is a day we celebrate the power of the Holy Spirit to change us. At Pentecost, the Church of Jesus Christ was born. We have before us five young people who are prepared to confirm a lifelong covenant to be faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world. Tonight the members and visitors of the Tennessee Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church will gather to ordain deacons and elders and consecrate other servants of the Church. Candidates will again hear the historic words, "Lord, pour upon [this person] the Holy Spirit" for the office and work of deacons and elders.

At the session of Annual Conference this week we will elect clergy and lay persons as delegates to a General Conference that happens only once every four years to make the big decisions for the United Methodist global denomination. The delegates will face a reality of a United Methodist Church where membership and finances continue to decline. Many are scared, weary and timid about the future. Can we find new life in this decline? Can we be fruitful again?

We at Kingston Springs UMC look at the denominational woes with a sense of separation. We are experiencing a good deal of joy and life. We are holding our own financially but only barely. We are squeezed for space and rely on the graciousness of some of our neighbors. We are blessed with an abundance of young people, but we are challenged to have enough teachers and leaders to be consistent in our ministry to them. Our adults are hungry for small groups studies, but space and leadership are a challenge. Additionally, our commitment to our church must, necessarily, share time with all of our other commitments in our busy lives.

It is time for us to once again call upon the power of the Holy Spirit to guide each of us - and all of us. It is time for us to pray for the denomination that supports our work - may the Holy Spirit move within the delegates to General Conference to make faithful determinations. Pray that denominational staff will look more to transformation of the world than to the maintenance of an institution.

It is time for us to pray for those who we Confirm in membership this morning. May they become constantly aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit guiding their lives. May they grow to serve God in all they say and do - and may they find joy in that way of living.

And it is time for us to pray for ourselves. May the Holy Spirit work with each and every one of us so that we may find our new life in the midst of our changed world. May we trust God's Spirit to work within us to calm our fears about the future. And may we rise to new life in the image of Christ.

Come, Holy Spirit, Come!