



40 DAYS OF
PRAYER
PRAYERS AFTER PENTECOST

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New Castle Presbytery's Ignite Team Offers:

40 Days of Prayer Prayers after Pentecost

Introduction

We're accustomed to hearing biblical references to forty days – it's a flare sizzling at the side of the road that urges us to slow down and pay attention. Forty days means significant time. It rained for forty days in the story of Noah. Jesus fasted in the wilderness for forty days. There were forty days between his resurrection and his ascension. In our liturgical year, there are forty days of Lent from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday (not counting Sundays).

Forty days are not usually associated with Pentecost, its whooshing wind, and birthday candle flames as we celebrate the start of the Church and the coming of the Holy Spirit. There's not a clear time period connected to it. The season of Pentecost can last into autumn if we so choose, but most of us Presbyterians quickly settle back into a summer routine and let the wind and flames die down into the liturgical notion of "ordinary time", which actually means ordinal, rather than mundane, but you might not know it from the looks of us.

Pentecost calls us to be anything but mundane. The power of the Holy Spirit to bring new life means that anything can happen. Paltry faith can be blown into full-bodied presence. Frantic gasping can be persuaded to let go in order to receive even more blessings. Systems cluttered with chaff and grit can be swept free of impediments and opened to the vibrant flow of grace and love in action.

You are invited to use these Forty Days of Pentecost Prayer as a kind of runway for taking off and soaring. Let the wind of the Holy Spirit lift you as if on wings and breathe new life into your soul. Consider each day's scripture, meditation, and prayer as inspiration, fuel for the journey, encouragement in the true sense of the word: en-courage-ment.

Day 40 — Matthew 28:18-20

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus has commanded us to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

These words evoke terror in many Presbyterian hearts. Go out and make disciples! We make bread for communion, announcements about mission projects, food for those who are ill, but rarely do we focus on going out and making disciples of Christ. What if you were asked why you love Jesus? Could you share your story as a way to show Jesus reaching out to us? Like the early disciples, we don't have everything all together. We are more a messy, showing-up-for-Jesus-as-we-are, worshipping-but-somethings-still-doubting, often-confused-and-still-figuring-out-our-faith kind of bunch. One way of making disciples is for us to gently and humbly share our stories of our own particular experience of Jesus' love for us. And however we tell our story, Jesus will be right there with us.

Prayer: "Commissioning God, Risen Savior, In-dwelling Spirit, you send us out to be your church, to embody your presence in the world. When we do that poorly, give us grace. When we do it well, may we give you the glory. Be with us, we ask, for we dare not go alone. Be with, now and always, to the very end of the age. Amen."

Day 39 — John 20:21-23

“Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven; if you don’t forgive them, they aren’t forgiven.”

Most Sunday mornings at church, we greet one another with “peace be with you”. While walking in the old city of Jerusalem, I noticed this greeting was exchanged by Jews (Shalom Alechem) and Muslims (Salam Alaikum) throughout the day, every day, as a grace-filled way to say hello and goodbye. When we “pass the peace” we are engaged in a holy act of blessing and prayer. Jesus sent us his very breath, infusing us with his Spirit, to receive peace, give peace and work for peace. But there is no peace without forgiveness, so he gives us the very practical instruction that once we have received the Holy Spirit, forgiveness is expected, even required. Leave it to Jesus to take a common greeting and make it into something holy, full of expectation and possibility. Receiving the Spirit isn’t the end of the story, it’s only the beginning. Now who do I need to forgive?

Breathe on me breath of God, fill me with your Spirit of peace and reconciliation. Help me to forgive.

Forty days means a significant period of time for paying attention, hearing God’s Word, and taking it to heart so that it becomes for you the Living Word. Let Pentecost be your season of re-visioning your call to come fully alive!

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Day 1 — Acts 2:1-4

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

On Pentecost the Holy Spirit enabled the followers of Jesus to speak in different languages, the languages of Jews who had traveled to Jerusalem from different countries. These people were amazed to be hearing the message of Jesus in their native language. Many people today have not been raised in the church and therefore Christian jargon is foreign to them. Words like atonement, redemption, righteousness, and even sin might not be understood. Therefore, we need to be speaking in different tongues, language that can be understood by the unchurched. Try reading a Sunday bulletin or listen to a sermon or pay attention to the words that are sung and pick out words that non-church people might not understand in the Christian context. Think of other words that we might use that better communicate the good news of the gospel.

Holy Spirit, gives us the gifts of tongues that enable us to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ with people who might be outside the church. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Day 38 — John 14:25-26

“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”

On the night of his arrest and the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus made a promise to his disciples. It is a promise of presence, but instead of saying “I will be with you”, Jesus tells the disciples that the Father will send the Holy spirit to be with them. The promise takes new form and marks a second significant shift in the nature of God's presence. The first is the birth of Jesus when the “God with us” promise becomes “God with us” in the person of Emmanuel. The second shift is from Jesus as the embodiment of God's presence, to the Holy Spirit as the embodiment of God's presence. We understand that God dwells with us, and in fact, in us, as the Holy Spirit. God can hardly get more personal or present than that!

Do we struggle to be aware of the presence of God in our lives? Are we so different from the early followers of Jesus? Here were the disciples just having dinner and talking and laughing with Jesus and he sort of pulls the rug out from under them. “I'm going away and you won't be able to follow me. But don't worry, my Father will send an Advocate and Comforter who will live with you to empower you to share the good news I have taught you and you will be able to do even greater works than I have.” No wonder they were anxious and questioned him about what he meant. If Jesus was gone, how could God be present? How could they face opposition and continue to be faithful to the mission and vision of Jesus without him?

Promise-making and promise-keeping God, help us to recognize you standing beside us on our journey. Amen.

Day 37 — John 3:5-8

“Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Jesus tells us that we must be born of the Spirit. Then he compares the Spirit to the wind. We can't see the wind but we can see the tree limbs moving because of the wind. We can hear the wind and we can feel the wind but we cannot control the wind. God's Spirit is like the wind in that we can't see the actual Spirit but we can experience the effects and changes that the Spirit makes in the world and in our lives. Likewise, we cannot control the Spirit but we can hear the voice of the Spirit at times speaking to us and even leading us in the ways we are to go. There are those times that we can actually feel the Holy Spirit present in our lives, offering us words of encouragement, hope, joy and courage. To be born of the Spirit is for the Holy Spirit to be present in our lives shaping, molding us, guiding and leading us, and making God very real in our lives.

God, our loving parent, let us be born of the Spirit. May the Spirit be blowing in our lives taking us to new and exciting places as we seek to be your children. Amen.

Day 2 — Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus, right before he ascended into heaven, told his disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they would be his witnesses out into the world. The Greek word for power is the root word that makes up the word 'dynamite.' When the Holy Spirit comes it will be an explosive power that reaches out into the world. It will ignite a movement that cannot be stopped. Is your church experiencing an explosive work of the Holy Spirit? Does it reach out locally and expands outwardly from there? We are to be witnesses where we currently live and the communities that our churches serve. That is our Jerusalem. But then it needs to spread out from there to other places, regional areas like our cities as a whole. Then to Samaria, those places that might take us out of our comfort zone. Then to the ends of the earth. The good news of Jesus needs to be spread throughout the whole earth. Does your church have an international outreach? Might there be ways that you or your church might support an international outreach? The gospel is ever expanding and sometimes we need to open our eyes to ways that we can participate in that expansion.

O Jesus, fill us with the explosive power of the Holy Spirit that we might be witnesses to the good news of the gospel locally, regionally, place where we might not feel comfortable or even welcomed, and then to the whole world. Ignite in us a passion to be witnesses. Amen.

Day 3 — Acts 2:16-21

“No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘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. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”

What a vision! This image of everyone seeing visions and dreaming dreams as God’s Spirit draws near and the Lord’s great and glorious day arrives! There are no distinctions as to who God’s Spirit will be poured out upon – young and old, male and female, slave and free.

In this time of division, where we hunker down in our trenches and lob counter attacks and judgement at one another, it is a hopeful image, a source of comfort, that one day we will come together and be made whole. One could also read it as a passage which convicts us in these days of division, reminding us just how far removed we are from that day of sharing a Spirit-filled experience of God’s hoped for reign.

Whether it speaks to you, of comfort or conviction, this passage reminds us of that great day to come when all who call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. May this vision of God’s promised great and glorious day prompt each of us to pause for a moment, looking inward to see what visions and dreams God may have poured out upon us.

God of visions and dreams, you comfort and inspire, provoke and provide. Instill in us the courage to attend to the future and hope you old out to us and the courage to move toward it, together. Amen.

Day 36 — 1 John 3:23-24

“And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.”

Believe in Jesus Christ and love one another, these are the commandments we have. When we obey these commandments we are assured that we are abiding in Christ and Christ in us. We know this by the Holy Spirit that Christ has given us.

How often do we not recognize that the Holy Spirit has been given to us? Is it that we ignore it or fail to acknowledge it or perhaps even don’t believe it? The reason we are able to believe in Jesus and able to love others is the work of the Spirit in our lives. Let us make a special effort today to acknowledge the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives and invite the Holy Spirit to help us to believe more fully in the Lord Jesus Christ and to have a greater love for others.

Holy Spirit, thank you for being in our lives and enable us to more fully believe and love. Enable us to abide in Christ as Christ abides in us. Amen.

Day 35 — 2 Peter 1:20-21

“First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

Christians hold to the belief that the Bible is the inspired word of God to guide us in how we are to live. We are told in this passage that those who wrote the holy scriptures were moved by the Holy Spirit. There are various interpretations as to what is meant by this but hopefully we can agree that the Bible is our guidebook to living the Christian life. We should also constantly be inviting the Holy Spirit to enlighten us to the meaning of the holy scriptures. We need the Holy Spirit’s guidance as to how the ancient words of the Bible translate into how we are to live and love today. When you read the Bible recognize the work of the Spirit in the words you are reading and invite that same Spirit to give you understanding in how you are to interpret those words for your everyday life.

Holy Spirit, open our eyes that might see, open our ears that we might hear, and open our hearts that we might receive the messages that you have for us this day.

Day 4 — Acts 4:31

“When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.”

This is not the first, nor will it be the last, time the disciples world was “shaken”; when what seemed true or inevitable would be upended by God. I remember a time an early teenage me, far less streetwise than he thought himself, was walking home through the woods, quite late at night; he got one of the frights of his life. I lived not far from the Raritan Bay, in New Jersey, and so not far from the petroleum tank farms lining the waterways leading to it. On this night, the “Bayonne blast”, the fiery, almost simultaneous explosion and burning of several huge storage tanks, took place. All I knew then was that the loudest explosions I had ever heard kept happening, that the sky turned blazing orange, and that the earth shook. I thought, as any kid growing up in the sixties might have, that nuclear war had started. I didn’t feel the fear the apostles might have felt; mine was the fear of a merciless and complete end, an end with no moral (or any other) sense.

The disciples fear (in the Biblical sense) was far more reverent, more focused; they had seen the “way where there is no way” in Jesus’ resurrection; they had seen the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In God’s economy, endings aren’t final; they’re not even endings. And who can know this, live through this, and be unchanged? The witness of the disciples is more precious than life itself, because it reveals the nature of life itself: that God, the author of life, holds it and us in a cupped hand, lifting us out of, and protecting us from, all the harm that we have done.

Praise God, in every time and place. Amen.

Day 5 — Acts 6:1-4

“Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.”

Here in their early days, the leaders are in John Snow mode (Game of Thrones reference). Like Snow, they dutifully call the people to step up, to show up, to tend the inward concerns themselves so the spiritual leaders can fortify the outer walls of the Church’s new calling with prayer and study. Brilliantly, the twelve enable leaders to develop, highlighting an array of gifts—we don’t all have to study theology to serve the Church. There is also some chastising here to note: the word “table” in this context refers, most probably, to money tables, not eating tables. The Twelve are not saying these new roles are not important but they are stressing that we—the Church—are not here to squabble over who has/deserves more. This is not the old way of doing things (i.e. empires built on power and wealth), but a new way! Let’s feed everyone, let’s take care of all people so that we can give thanks to God!

New Way, lift us up into leadership and paths that help us feed one another no matter what tables at which we once sat. Bring us to your Table so that new life might call us over and over again. Amen.

Day 34 — Acts 11:15-17

“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?”

Peter is explaining to the other Christian leaders in Jerusalem what had happened when he had preached to Cornelius, the gentile, and how the Holy Spirit had come upon the gentiles. His response was, “who was I that I could hinder God?”

Throughout the history of the church there have been occasions when people were being left out or given a lower status in the church. Examples are women, slaves, African Americans, people of different nationalities, sexual orientation. The question then becomes if these people receive the same Holy Spirit that we have received, then who are we to hinder the work of God? Too often we wear blinders so that we don’t see what the Holy Spirit is doing. In truth we don’t want to see because we have already predetermined who we think is in and who is out. God does not hold such standards. God will receive in all those that God desires to have in. God’s standards are most likely different than ours.

So let us be on the lookout for where the Spirit is working and through whom the Spirit is working. Let us embrace with open arms those whom the Spirit is using.

O God, we sometimes forget that it is by grace that we are saved and brought into your kingdom. We haven’t done anything to deserve it but it has been given to us freely. Help us to see that this same grace is given to others that we might not think to be worthy but whom you love and accept. Help us to accept them also. Amen.

Day 33 — 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.”

It is hard to believe that we can quench the Spirit. How might we do this? Perhaps the other verses give us a clue. We might quench the Spirit when we cease to rejoice always, when we cease to pray, or recognize that God is greater than all our circumstances. We might quench the Spirit when we don't listen to the words of the prophets or test to see if these words are actually from God. We can quench the Spirit when we cease to abstain from evil but allow evil to be part of our lives.

We are praying that the Holy Spirit might ignite our hearts with the burning flame of Pentecost. So let us be careful to tender the fire of the Holy Spirit and not douse it with water or allow it to die down from inactivity. There is much that God wants to do in us and through us.

Holy Spirit, ignite your holy fire within us. May it burn so brightly that others might see it and come to you. Amen.

Day 6 — Acts 8:14-17

“When word reached the apostles in Jerusalem that Samaria had accepted God's word, they commissioned Peter and John to go to Samaria. Peter and John went down to Samaria where they prayed that the new believers would receive the Holy Spirit. This was because the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) So Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

The church in Jerusalem was harassed and everyone except the apostles scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Beloved Stephen was now dead.. Saul was wreaking his own personal brand of havoc, dragging believers into prison. But as the harassed and scattered ones headed for the hills, they preached Jesus along the way. We don't see the modern refrain here- where is God in my personal suffering? We don't see questions about whether or not Phillip should have been preaching to the Samaritans, a group in Israel in sharp conflict with most Jews. What we do see is Phillip preaching Jesus as God freed people from their woundedness.

What is the mother church to do with this surprising and unexpected outburst of faithfulness from the despised Samaritans and the Man who called himself Great? Do they write a polite letter inviting them to church? Do they disavow themselves from such disreputable characters? No, they go to the new believers, they touch them and pray for them and love on them, making them part of the family. And the Spirit comes, so full of surprising grace and unexpected gifts, born on the wings of suffering and scattering.

Lord Jesus, forgive us when we are surprised that your Holy Spirit gives birth to outbursts of faithfulness we might find a little shady. Help us never to give up on those you love, both Great and despised, continuing to pray for your healing in their lives, and in our own. Amen.

“The Lord spoke to Moses: See, I have called by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with divine spirit, with ability, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, in every kind of craft. Moreover, I have appointed with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have given skill to all the skillful, so that they may make all that I have commanded you.”

Who are the first individuals in the Bible to be filled with the Holy Spirit for ministry? The answer is Bezalel and Oholiab – two individuals who were filled with “divine spirit” and given skill in every kind of craft in order to create artistic designs for the building of the tabernacle. The second half of the book of Exodus lays out God’s plans for the tabernacle – the place where God would reside with the people – then describes how those plans came to fruition in ornate details through the Spirit-filled work of these craftsmen.

When we think of spiritual gifts, we may think of preaching, teaching, or speaking in tongues. We may not think of the spiritual gifts of working with our hands – building, carving, painting, weaving, etc. These too are spiritual gifts that are necessary for glorifying God and furthering the work of the Kingdom. Our God is a creative God – remember how God’s Spirit roamed over the deep at the creation of the universe. Human beings, who are made in God’s image, reflect God’s creativity by using their hands in all sorts of creative works. Who in your congregation has these creative gifts for working with their hands? How can they be affirmed and empowered to use their gifts for God’s kingdom?

Holy Spirit, reveal to us the creative gifts of building and craftsmanship – working with wood, stone, metal, fabric, or other mediums. Show us how these gifts are just as important as other spiritual gifts for your work, and may these gifts be used for furthering the work of God’s kingdom. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

“We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of persons we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for in spite of persecution you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”

The Thessalonians are applauded by Paul for their faithfulness! In love and hope, they have been living out the faith which Paul and others introduced to them. But all the credit does not go to Paul, nor to the Thessalonians. Much of the credit goes to God in the Holy Spirit. If not for the Spirit, the teachings of Christ would have fallen on deaf ears. If not for the Spirit, the Thessalonians would likely fail to imitate Jesus’ faith and actions.

Paul describes the evidence of the Spirit’s presence through their “work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope.” We don’t have any details as to what this faith and love and hope looked like in action, we can gather that they took seriously the implications of following Christ. When we allow God’s Word to take root, there is no telling what the Holy Spirit can accomplish in us.

For what acts of faith do you give thanks to God? Where do you see evidence of the Spirit’s guiding in your life, in the life of your church, and in the life of your community?

Faithful God, we give thanks for those who have shared your good news with us. We pray that your Spirit would take root in our lives, leading us to practice works of faith and labors of love and steadfast hope. May we become beacons of your light and truth in all that we say and do. Amen.

Day 31 — Ephesians 6:18-20

“Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.”

“Pray in the Spirit at all times.” What does it mean to pray in the Spirit? Is it praying in tongues with words you don’t understand? Or is it like tacking “in the name of Jesus” at the end of our prayers as if these were some magic words that get our prayers answered? Praying in the Spirit is like praying in the name of Jesus. It is when we pray for the things that are from God. It is praying for justice, mercy, and grace. It is praying for the unity of the church and for all the saints (Christian brothers and sisters). It is praying for those who are on the front lines of doing mission and evangelism. It is praying for boldness in proclaiming the good news of Jesus with both our words and actions. Yes, we need to be praying in the Spirit at all times in all our prayers and supplications. For when we pray in the Spirit there is the assurance that our prayers will be answered and God’s will will be done.

O Holy Spirit direct us in our prayers that we might hold up our brothers and sisters in the Lord and ask that their needs might be met and that they will have the boldness and courage to follow you in all that they do. Be with each of us praying this prayer today that we might also have the courage and boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel. Amen.

Day 8 — Ezekiel 36:26-28

“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

The prophet Ezekiel, after pronouncing judgment on God’s people for their wicked ways, gives the people a word of hope from the Lord – a promise of renewal and rejuvenation. Ezekiel prophesied that a time would come when the Lord would deal with the people’s waywardness and sin once and for all. The land that lay desolate would bloom again. The exiles who were banished from the land would return home. New life would spring forth from destruction. In Ezekiel 37, the Lord revealed to the prophet a vision of a valley strewn with dry bones. “Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” At the prophet’s words, the dry bones came to life!

This promise of new life through God’s Spirit came to pass at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Jesus’ followers who were gathered in Jerusalem. The resurrection life of Jesus Christ empowered and emboldened these early disciples.

Sometimes our churches today can look like a valley of dry bones. Yet, the Holy Spirit that was promised so long ago still lives within us and works through us, enlivening us and empowering us for ministry. The Holy Spirit has the power to revitalize us and make us effective in ministry in our communities. How can we become more aware of the Spirit’s power and movement among us? How can we open ourselves up to the new life the Spirit brings us?

Holy Spirit, breathe your life into our dry bones and invigorate us. Let us experience of Christ’s resurrection life in our lives and in our community. In Christ we pray, Amen.

Day 9 — Matthew 3:11

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

The words of John the Baptist point to Jesus and away from himself. Everyone was flocking to John to hear him preach that powerful word that had them shaken up and reconsidering everything, and then being baptized in the river Jordan as a potent way of recognizing a fresh start and a clean slate. But this Jesus for whom he was setting the stage, would be even more powerful. His baptism would blow through their lives and loosen all the distorted and destructive parts of their lives. The fire image called to mind in his listeners the fire of the refiner, making metal purer, more itself, so to speak, without any of the impurities that keep it from its ultimate beauty and usefulness. When we talk about Jesus, we are not inviting people to become as we are, but inviting them to experience that love and grace that can make them more fully who they were created to be.

Holy One, let us dare to point to you and your transformative power in all that we are, all that we say, and all that we do. Amen.

Day 30 — Ephesians 5:15-20

“Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The days are dangerous, writes the Apostle Paul, so it would be best if you would sing? We get the part about not being foolish and not getting drunk, but singing? On the other hand, have you ever found yourself refreshed and reinvigorated through the singing of a joyful song on the radio at the top of your lungs? And just think: when the song you sing is a song of gratitude and confidence in God’s Providence, the very breath you take into your lungs gives strength to your faith. “Singing and making melody to the Lord in your heart” can give you the courage and energy to navigate even dangerous days.

God of grace, let us sing to you songs of thanksgiving and assurance, even in the most difficult of times, allowing your Spirit to fill us with breath and vibrating life. Amen.

Day 29 — I John 3:24

“All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.”

By the Spirit he has given us, we will know that Jesus abides in us.

One sentence full to the brim with grace. To be given the Spirit within, in such a way as to know, really know, that Jesus abides in us. To receive the Spirit and thus to be aware and certain that Jesus himself is with us.

Take a minute and take that in for it is a powerful statement.

For remembering that we are filled with the Spirit enables us to be those who follow Jesus' commandment to love one another. And loving one another, somehow loving one another makes it possible for us to know his presence with us and to perceive the Spirit he has given us.

Our loving one another reveals Jesus' presence with us. Through our love for one another, Jesus is revealed.

And so we receive the gift of Jesus' loving presence with us through the Spirit and we hear the charge to love one another that the Holy presence of Christ may be made manifest in the world.

Beloved, let us love one another.

God, who calls us to love that you may be revealed throughout the world, make us unblemished reflections of your Son, our Christ.

Filled with your Spirit, may we be sincere and sacrificial in our love for all you hold dear. Holy Love, abide in us. Amen.

Day 10 — Mark 1:9-12

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.”

At Jesus' baptism the Holy Spirit descending upon him and then led him out into the wilderness. Forty days in the wilderness being tempted by the devil and preparing himself for the beginning of his work. Has the Holy Spirit ever led you into the wilderness? Perhaps you were led to the wilderness so that you might be better prepared for what lay ahead. Perhaps you were led to the wilderness so that your faith might be tested and in the end you came out stronger. Maybe you need for the Spirit to drive you out into the wilderness so that you are equipped and prepared for whatever the future holds.

Holy Spirit, guide us to the places we need to go, prepare us and equip us so that we might be able to do your work, and empower us to be your people in the church and in the world. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Day 11 — Luke 4:16-21

“When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

As Jesus begins his public ministry, he does not hesitate to get straight to the point of who he is and what God has called him to do. Jesus explains that he fulfills the words of the prophet Isaiah, that he is the one God has sent to address the injustices against God’s people. Not only that, but Jesus will lead the way in showing us how we must do the same.

You and I are called to participate in this healing ministry. We are helping to build God’s kingdom. How has God anointed you, how has God chosen and called you, to share in Jesus’ ministry of addressing injustices in the world? Who are the poor and captives in your midst? Who is blind and oppressed? Whether physically, emotionally, mentally, financially, or spiritually... the need is among us!

Prayer: God who fulfills, we give thanks to you for Jesus Christ, who faithfully lived into your anointing. As Christ spoke your truth to the poor, as he released the captives, as he restored sight to the blind and bestowed freedom on the oppressed, may we follow in his footsteps. Open our eyes to those among us. Open our hearts to do what needs to be done. Amen.

Day 28 — Galatians 5:22-23

“By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.”

You might be familiar with this brief passage, outlining the fruits of the Spirit. These attributes, according to Paul, point to the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. Evidence that we are living lives of faithfulness to God will become apparent when we speak and act in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

These fruits may not come naturally for all of us; some will be more difficult for us than others. Some will be more evident than others in various situations. But the evidence of who and whose we are will be undeniably seen and felt when we exhibit these characteristics.

As you move through your day, notice opportunities to share love, joy, and peace. Pay attention to how others extend patience, kindness, and generosity. Be aware of where it is easy or difficult to practice faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Write them down and at the end of the day, give thanks to God for each instance in which you witnessed the fruit of the Spirit.

Open my heart and mind, O God, to each opportunity I have to share and experience all those things which point to your presence and movement. Encourage me to share the fruit which comes most easily for me. And strengthen me to share the fruit which I struggle with. Amen.

Day 27 — Galatians 5:16-18

“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.”

The good news of Jesus Christ tells us that we are not only forgiven of our sins, but we are also empowered to live a new kind of life - a life guided by the Holy Spirit who transforms us into the kind of people who can live out God’s kingdom purposes. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we are no longer controlled by our flesh. The “flesh” here refers not to our physical bodies, which are good, having been created by God and redeemed in Christ. Instead “flesh” refers to our sinful nature, which operates against God’s will. It is the part of us that is dying that new life in Christ may rise. The works of the “flesh” are things that work against human flourishing - jealousy, quarreling, factions, licentiousness, enmity, idolatry, etc. By contrast, living according to the Spirit leads us to produce the life-giving attributes of God’s intended purposes for humankind. In Christ through the Spirit, God invites us to live a new kind of life - one that leads not to decay and death, but to life and flourishing!

Gracious God, empower us to know our true identity in Jesus Christ and live a life of flourishing in the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 12 — Luke 11:11-13

“Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

How often do you ask your heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit? Usually when we pray we ask for blessings for ourselves or others, healing for someone we know who is sick, guidance for our lives, that God might use our church in some way, etc. But do we ask for the Holy Spirit. Our heavenly Father wants to give us the very best in the way of gifts and certainly listens and answers our other requests. But are we losing out because we aren’t asking for the best God has to offer? Remember that the Holy Spirit provides the power we need to do the work that God calls us to do. The Holy Spirit also gives spiritual gifts to those in the church that enables the church to function as the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit offers us the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) that adds quality to our lives. So take time to pray and ask your heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit.

Our most gracious and loving heavenly Father, we ask that you might give us your Holy Spirit. Let us experience the fruit of the Spirit. Renew us with your Spirit that we might better love you and serve you. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Day 13 — John 14:15-17

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.”

Jesus speaks these words to his disciples the night before his crucifixion. He is reassuring his disciples that they will not be alone. These same words should also be reassuring for us. Do you love Jesus? Then you will keep his commandments. What are Jesus’ commandments? We are to love one another. The result of this is that Jesus will give us an Advocate, one that will be on our side, teaching us, guiding us in the ways of truth. While no one can see this Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit will abide with us and be in us. This should be a great comfort to us as we seek to follow Jesus and to obey his commandments.

Jesus, we do love you and desire to keep your commandments. Send to us the Advocate, the Spirit of truth to abide in us and to guide and enable us to follow you. In your name we pray. Amen.

Day 26 — Galatians 4:4-7

“But when the fulfillment of the time came, God sent his Son, born through a woman, and born under the Law. This was so he could redeem those under the Law so that we could be adopted. Because you are sons and daughters, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!” Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son or daughter, and if you are his child, then you are also an heir through God.”

In these few short verses, Paul repeatedly uses words of inclusion and intimacy- birth, adoption, son, daughter, Spirit, Father, Abba, child, heir. Jesus was sent to redeem us and bring us into a family whose magnitude stretches far beyond the limits of our experience and imagination. God will go to any lengths to bring you in, beloved one. See yourself here, you belong. The Spirit of God has made it so. Our inheritance is freedom, redemption, adoption, forgiveness, unconditional love. Who could you welcome into the family today who may not feel included?

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. I give thanks for my adoption into your family and ask that you open my eyes to see those who feel like they are on the outside looking in. You have called us heirs, now let us share this inheritance of steadfast love and poured out mercy. Amen.

Day 25 — Galatians 3:1-5

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?”

Grace is often a hard concept for us to grasp. We want to feel like we have earned what we have. But we can never earn what Christ has given us in the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul is quite clear in this passage that we find favor with God through the death of Christ on the cross and the Holy Spirit in our midst. It is not by obeying the law or doing good works but by believing what we have heard.

So through God’s grace we have the Holy Spirit working in our churches and in our lives. So how do live as people of grace? We do it with thanksgiving and praise. We do it by following the example of Christ in how we love and serve others. We don’t do this under obligation but freely and joyfully because of what Christ has done for us.

O Holy God, let us fully experience your grace for us. Free us from the thought that we have to prove ourselves to you or that we have to earn our standing with you. Let us be people of grace and by this may others recognize and desire that same grace. Amen.

Day 14 — John 15:26

“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf.”

Beginning at verse 18, Jesus paints a bleak picture of what it takes to be his follower. He describes how those who don’t know him, those who don’t follow him, hate him because they did not understand the things he said and did. Much of what Jesus said and the ways in which he acted came into conflict with their understanding of Scripture. Jesus wants his disciples to know that they will likely face the same hatred because they are his followers and share his teachings.

But then Jesus reassures them that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will come to them. And the Spirit will be with them and will confirm that all that Jesus said and did was of God. No matter how many challenges they face or how many people hate them, there will be no denying God’s truth which was revealed through Christ and will also be revealed through his disciples.

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, can be found within each and every one of us. The Spirit of truth, through us, reveals who God is and how God has called us to live. How will you bear witness to our God? How will the Advocate testify on Christ’s behalf, through you?

God of truth, thanks you for the Advocate, your Holy Spirit, who testifies to who you are. Help me to hear your voice speaking truth to me. Equip me to be an advocate as well, affirming and revealing your grace and truth. Amen.

Day 15 — Romans 5:1-5

“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

When I came out to my parents, it didn’t go all that well. I remember my mother telling me, “not to be proud of it—not to be one of those.” She meant not to march in pride parades, wear rainbows, and not stand tall in my own glittery skin. It would have been easier for her if I had slunk back into the heteronormative enclaves of life, queer on the inside and straight on the outside. And yet, I came to understand, for the first time without my parents’ support, who I was and truly what it was I was proud of. I march, I wear all the rainbows, I’m inside-out queer! And Proud!

My pride is not disdain for others, nor inordinate self-esteem. No—it is the kind of pride and boasting Paul writes about to the Romans. This passage throws us off because earlier Paul chastised early Christians for their arrogant boasting. Yet this pride and boasting he speaks of is one that comes from the kind of pride that allows you to walk as a Christian inside-out, with Word and deed as your garments, with your Christianity being what makes up your very identity and an identity that continues to make you stronger no matter what happens against you. That kind of pride. The kind of pride that is justified not in smugness but in the humility, delight, and perseverance of faith. (I must mention that my faith in God, taught to me by my family, allowed us to all persevere and now my parents are very proud of who I am, inside-out.)

God of the Rainbow, shine upon us in each of our lives that our faith might be strengthened from the inside out and from the outside—the gift of the Holy being poured into us—in. Give us the humility to boast not of ourselves but of the love we give and the love we receive. Amen.

Day 24 — 1 Corinthians 12:13

“For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit does not discriminate according to ethnicity or social status and from other passages gender. We are all part of one body that is the Body of Christ and have all received the same Spirit that is at work within us all.

It the Holy Spirit doesn’t discriminate, then why should we? Are we not all equal in the eyes of God? Does one’s social status make one better than another? Does the color of one’s skin or the language one speaks make that person better than another?

Paul makes it very clear in his letter to the Corinthians that we are to work together to build up the church. That God has made us all unique and given us different gifts and abilities but no one is more important or better than anyone else. Together we are able to do the work God has given to the church.

Jesus, as the head of the body, you call us to work together to accomplish your work. Help us to realize that we are all one in you and that the Holy Spirit bonds us together to do great things in your name. Amen.

Day 23 — 1 Corinthians 12:8-12

“To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”

The Holy Spirit gives out gifts to the church to enable the church to accomplish its mission and calling. These gifts given to the church by the Spirit provide that which is needed to allow the church to strengthen its members but also to reach out to those outside the church. It is good to know that one person doesn't have to do everything alone but because of the variety of gifts and that they are spread out amongst people in the church, the body (church) as a whole has all that it needs to do its work. Not all share the same gift but all are to contribute to the work of the church.

Seek to understand what gifts the Holy Spirit has given you and then use those gifts for the building up of the church and for bringing about the Kingdom of God.

Holy Spirit, you give gifts to people that are to be used for the church. Equip and enable us to do your work. Let us work together with each person contributing their gifts so that much might be accomplished in your name and for your glory. Amen.

Day 16 — Romans 8:1-2, 9-10

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death....But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

In *les Misérables* (Hugo's novel, or the Broadway show!), Inspector Javert cannot let go of his suspicion that Jean ValJean is a wicked person. ValJean is no such thing, rather he responded to his family's poverty and need with the petty crime of stealing bread (and served his time in jail for having done so). Bishop Myriel makes ValJean a gift of silver candlesticks, to get his life going again, because he sees (in the Spirit) that ValJean is a good man – and ValJean makes a great success. Javert believes there is no change of character, because character cannot change.

Thanks be to God, character (or, in Paul's language, flesh), can indeed change, upon opening itself to the Spirit of God – for God knows how we are made, knows where that stubbornness by which we cannot stop putting ourselves and our own interests first, at the cost of others, arises. It arises in fear, which faith, of course, does not know. It is the Spirit of righteousness, which we gain when Christ dwells in us, that helps us to know there is enough, that the God who has provided will provide.

So here in Romans, God as judge says (translating the Greek in order): “ So, NO condemnation” ... and the family and friends cry, and hug, and bless God before the rest can even be read out. There were reasons, and an insightful reading of the law recognized them, and the one in chains will be let go, awake to the love of God – thanks be to God.

Day 17 — Romans 8:26-27

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

There are times when the heart is too heavy to articulate its need. Sometimes our hardships feel as if they are too much for us to bear, and we have no words. We can only sigh, sob, groan, or howl. Even in those senseless sounds, the Spirit is at work, taking the deep grief or anger or fear, and translating it into perfect prayer, speaking both for us and to us. Our brokenness is exquisitely expressed even if we do not fully understand it ourselves, and in that expression it becomes cradled by God’s very grace. We do not have to be perfect at prayer. The Spirit does that for us and with us.

Gracious and tenacious God, you meet us in our deepest and most difficult places as well as in our most faithful following. Thank you for joining us in our vulnerable, wordless expressions and saying what we cannot. Amen.

Day 22 — 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

Once I attended a retreat in which we learned about the significance and creation of icons. We saw the effort that went, first, into the creation of the blankest, whitest canvas possible – because accessibility to God and to the Spirit is primary, if an icon – or a person! – is to be prepared for service toward God. An icon has this in common with a stained glass window; ideally, no matter what scene or person is present in the art, both it and the medium are to be transparent, a window into the presence of God; a window and an encouragement. Thoughtfulness, serenity, stillness before either is necessary to rein in the impulsive, omnidirectional tendency of our thoughts, hurried and harried all the time.

It’s much the same with gifts, Paul tells us. He had already, at the very beginning of his letter, told the Corinthians they already had every spiritual gift they needed. Now he asks them to clear their egos and their pride out of the way of God’s use of their gifts. Those gifts are not for the sake of human striving within human systems, but for the sake of our aspirations – for the sake of others – toward the great shalom of God. Today, for the sake of God’s kingdom, let us practice becoming more and more transparent to the will and purposes of God, ready to sing “I want to live, so God can use me; anywhere, Lord; anyhow”. Amen and amen.

Day 21 — 2 Corinthians 3:2-3

“You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

We are love letters to the world from Jesus Christ, and the message people receive is the grace we demonstrate in the moments of our days. People are reading us, for better or worse, trying to discern our intentions, perhaps judging the quality of our success as Christ’s messengers. Some will misunderstand. Some will refuse to read the letter at all. That is not our concern. Our task is to be aware that how we live sends a message to all who encounter us. When we allow the Spirit of the living God to shine through all that we do, we can be a love letter to the world.

Holy One, help us to let your Spirit shine undimmed through our lives, a message of your grace and love to all we encounter. Amen.

Day 18 — Romans 14:17

“For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Christians in the day of Paul struggled over the issue of food. Do Christians have to eat kosher? What about food that had been sacrificed to a god? This struggle caused divisions in the church. If someone thought the food another person was eating was a sin, then how could they not get upset? Or if someone who thought any food was okay to eat but then flaunted it before someone who didn’t hold that point of view, then how could this be loving to the one who objected? As Paul attempted to address this issue, he reminded his readers that some things are more important than our beliefs about food and drink. We need to be more concerned about righteousness, peace, & joy all found in the Holy Spirit.

So what does this mean for us today? Often we allow theological differences separate us from the more important issues of unity in Christ and loving one another. Perhaps you think someone is too conservative or too liberal. How are you to respond to that person recognizing that we all are citizens of the kingdom of God? May we seek to find the common ground that unites us rather than the less important details that often divide us. This isn’t to say that some of these issues aren’t significant and need to be discussed and worked through, but let’s work on maintaining unity and harmony in the process.

Holy Spirit, enable us to keep our eyes focused on the big picture of the kingdom of God. Let us have love for those we might disagree with and seek to find common ground where together we might work for the kingdom. Let love rule over all that we do. In Jesus Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Day 19 — 1 Corinthians 2:4-5

“My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.”

Paul is comparing himself to the gifted orator Apollos, who apparently was very good at persuasive speech in the Greek rhetorical manner; and Paul says even if he could, he would not do that. God, God’s own self, does not overrule or violate our conscience: even when it costs God tears for our sake, we remain free to choose, right or wrong. That is the costly basis of any real relationship: honesty. If Paul were to resort to verbal tactics, wouldn’t he display a lack of confidence in the Spirit? For the truth is, anything a non-believer can know, even begin to know, about the Holy Spirit is due to the work the Spirit has already been doing in that person’s life. God’s calling, God’s knocking, God’s standing at the door has always been a part of all our lives – a part we have too often and too much ignored. What might provoke some recognition of God’s call? There is some chance an act of preaching or of exhortation begins that process, so we don’t fail to preach and exhort. But far more likely, some act of love, some gift of time or help, has opened our heart, and the character of the person who offered it has made us dream of better. We are to preach the gospel at all times, and to use words when and if they’re necessary.

The grace of God puts all our failure and all our futility behind us, makes us clean and ready for a future that is different, Spirit-charged and Spirit led. In that life, we too must be exemplary, honest, free of gimmicks. In the Spirit, let our yes be yes, and our no be no; in the name and for the sake of Jesus.

Day 20 — 1 Corinthians 2:9-13

“But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him”—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.”

What a promise from God! The great things God has prepared for us have never been seen or heard or even thought of by a human being! We can’t even begin to comprehend the immensity, the wonder, the depth of all the hopes and plans God has for God’s beloved creation.

How does this make you feel? What does this promise stir up in you? Perhaps excitement as you consider the magnitude of God’s promises. Perhaps fear or anxiety as your mind wrestles with the discomfort which comes from not knowing. God invites us to live with hope, hope for all that is possible through God. Consider the things you’ve seen God do in your life and in the life of your church which you never could have imagined. Amazing and unimaginable things have been and will continue to be accomplished through the power and promises of God.

Your promises are good and faithful, O God. I could never fathom all that you can and will do. But I ask that your Spirit would open my eyes and ears and heart to all that you will do today. Fill me with the hope, which only you can give, to believe and trust that your promises are greater than anything I can imagine. Amen.