

Let us pray... Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove, descend upon our hearts. May we feel your burning presence in our midst, in our bodies, and in our lives. May we be open to your call, brave to step forth on that path, and may we speak your truths and promises in the world you so love... Amen...

When I was in Seminary, I worked for a church start-up that was focused specifically on drawing in millennials. I started not long after they became a church and started worshiping in unique ways.

It was so special to walk alongside them, to listen, and to discern where God was calling them and who they were as a congregation.

And this was an opportunity that does not come along very often... As so many churches have been around for many years, and know quite well what their identity is.

And identity is important, because it helps clarify one's goals, one's mission, and allows people to discover how they fit in that setting.

And yet, identity is always fluid and changing... Because people grow and change, and well, times they are a changing too...

But even in the midst of change and fluidity... Even in the midst of discernment, curiosity, and wonder... Even in the midst of trying something new...

Identity remains crucial to how one interprets the world and how they interact in it...

And this very idea coincides with our reading from First Corinthians...

Where we heard... "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."

Revealing the variety of life, and how there is always space for growth, newness, and change...

While at the same time, it highlights our static unity that is grounded in the identity of the Triune God.

And this passage is very Trinitarian naming all three entities: Spirit, Lord, and God...

And yet, this Trinitarian focus concludes with... "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Shining light on the importance of the Spirit, as it is the Spirit that is given to us...

As we heard in our gospel reading from today... When Jesus breathed on his disciples the Spirit of God...

And we also heard of the Spirit in our reading from Acts... When the Spirit descended upon all people at the Pentecost festival, uniting them in Spirit and in Christ's mission in the world.

Because it is the Spirit that remains with us... Interceding for us when we pray... Guiding us, nudging us, and breathing within us...

For it was the Spirit who, in the beginning, hovered over the face of the deep before creation began...

It was the Spirit who descended upon Jesus at his baptism.

It was the Spirit who was poured out of Christ's body at his death.

And it is the Spirit who breathes peace in us... The Spirit who remains with us always.

And yet the Spirit is also beyond our understanding. As the Spirit doesn't spell things out for us, instead we are left with a ton of mystery, curiosity, discernment, and discovery...

And yet, we have something to ground us, something to give us a framework while we discern the movement of the Spirit...

We have a common identity, our Lutheran faith, and the teachings of Christ.

And it is our faith that helps us interpret our spirituality, guiding us as we live our lives.

So, it should come as no surprise, that most of our lives are lived outside the church, especially on a popular weekend like this one...

Because we need both time together and time away... Time to discern and time to make a choice... Time to be unique and time to be united.

Which are all things that the Spirit allows space for... And listening to the Spirit can be some of the most exhilarating, life-giving, and also very challenging work.

Sometimes the Spirit groans, and it moves slow... But then, before you know it, you are looking back, with your jaw dropped as you are able to see all the work that the Spirit was cultivating in your midst...

Just think where St. John was a year ago...

But it is the looking forward part that is tricky... Which is why this is something that we need to do together...

Together we need to discern the Spirit's movement in our midst... And where the Spirit is calling St. John now...

Because this is an exciting time to be church together...

It is post COVID... The world is different now. And there are new opportunities that were not possible a few years ago.

And so, I need your help... Because I cannot do this work on my own... It starts with all of us...

So, when you have ideas that you feel called to do, ideas that line up with who we are at St. John's... Ideas that coincide with us as a community centered in Christ who is called to serve God, serve our neighbor, and serve the wider church...

Please don't keep those thoughts to yourself... I encourage you to be bold, and share... Because even if the idea flops, something beautiful, fruitful, and loved will come out of it...

Because each of you have been given a variety of gifts... Gifts that are needed in this community, ideas that are worth discussing, and life that is worth living together...

While we allow space for the Spirit to work...

So, as scary as it can be... Let's walk together into paths unknown. May it be a delightful adventure filled with hope... Because we have Christ to ground us, the Spirit to lead us, all the while knowing, God is with us... Amen.