

The Gifts of the Spirit

Day of Pentecost, Confirmation Sunday

May 15, In the Year of Our LORD, 2005

Gates Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Ralph S. English, Pastor

Psalm 104:24-35, Acts 2:1-21 and I Corinthians 12:3b-13

The cover of our worship bulletin reads “Pentecost Offering,” and while that speaks to our special collection for youth and young adult ministries, it also speaks to what we, on this the “birthday” of the church *offer* the world as ambassadors of Christ.

Psalm 104 spoke of how the earth is full of God’s creations. Acts 2 includes not only a list of those many places we mercifully let Billy exclude from his reading – places like Cappadocia, Phrygia, Pamphylia – but reminded us that sons and daughters would prophesy. The reading from I Corinthians suggested a variety of gifts.

What a difference a little “s” makes! We of Gates Presbyterian Church, like the one church, display a variety of gifts. Yesterday’s work day included people who were willing to clean the ovens, go up on the roof and get rid of accumulated leaves, a family of four that tended one of the gardens, others who hoed and dug and pulled weeds, spread topsoil to the north to fill in some big ruts, and the half dozen that washed both the inside and outside of our windows. What a variety of gifts! I wanted to go up and see what was happening on the roof, and even though I have a gift for going up ladders, I am simply not able to step backwards to go back down – there is a psychological block there – so if you want to get rid of me, send me up a ladder with no one to help me back down!

The members of today’s Confirmation Class are a microcosm, albeit younger, of this wonderful congregation. In some instances we see similar behaviors and mannerisms that we embrace among their siblings, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. In the statements of faith, for which there are copies in the narthex, we see affirmations of faith and faithfulness, but most importantly, we see a variety and a diversity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we celebrate this Day of Pentecost and every day of our lives.

There are dichotomies among those gifts of the Spirit, perhaps even one trichotomy:

Intelligence	Imagination	Insight
Energy	Calm	
Humor	Seriousness	
Traditional	Avant-Garde	
Out-Spoken	Quiet	
Spontaneous	Planful	
Quick-witted	Reserved	

Augustine initially wrote what has been repeated by so many: “In essentials unity, in non-essentials freedom, in all things love.” Today we reiterate that we are God’s creations, we are sons and daughters of the most High God, and that there is a variety among the gifts of the Holy Spirit that we celebrate among the members of this Confirmation Class, in Gates Presbyterian Church and in the church at large. Our Scripture tells us that variety is good and beneficial, that it builds up the whole of the church – and so, in a world that would make clones of us in how we behave, dress, even entertain ourselves, we celebrate diversity, we celebrate our differences knowing that together we are God’s church!

Speaking of gifts! After our wonderful choir sings “Be Filled With the Spirit,” we introduce this year’s Confirmation Class. Listen for a variety of gifts and acknowledge the gifts you bring to the mix, to the church and that you offer to God on this Day of Pentecost and all your days. As the members of the Confirmation Class take lit torches from the Sanctuary representing the Light of Christ they would carry out to the world, think of the torches you take with you – with the gifts of the Spirit which invite us to be persons of love, grace, hope and faith. Finally, in receiving these nine as members of Christ’s church, God’s people will be able to say:

Amen.