

Summer 2018, Issue No. 2

ANASTASIS

ανάσταση - Greek for Resurrection or Rising up

Theme: The Spirit Moves

Blessings,

The theme of this quarterly newsletter is summed up in the message of Pentecost - the Spirit is on the move!

The Spirit shows up in many ways - amazing ways! Do we see the Spirit moving in our lives and in the lives of those around us? It is my hope that the stories in this newsletter will open our eyes and our hearts to see that the Spirit is indeed alive and active today. That the Spirit is in our midst and on the move. That the Spirit shows up in amazing ways!

Pastor Matthew

A quarterly newsletter of
St. Stephen Lutheran Church

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Worship times:
8:00 AM & 10:45 AM
Sundays

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Pentecost in the "Upper Room"

by Greg John

1-4 When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

5-11 There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn't for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, "Aren't these all Galileans? How come we're hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?" ... "They're speaking our languages, describing God's mighty works!"

12 Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: "What's going on here?"

14-21 That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: "Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk—it's only 9:00 in the morning. (The Message, Acts 2:1-12, 14-21)

And at 9:30 in the morning we meet. We gather in what we affectionately call the St. Stephen "Upper Room" and elsewhere around the church for Sunday Church School as but one extension of that first Christian Pentecost celebration. We meet not only on Pentecost Sunday, but on every Sunday as we engage in the learning and fellowship of our SCS program.

On virtually every Sunday we gather amidst quiet (well, not always quiet), but warm and light-hearted discussions of the past week's "goings on". We proceed into an icebreaker and a prayer. We follow that with what is planned to be a semi-orderly presentation and discussion in line with the curriculum outline for the day. But then ...

Without warning, unexpectedly a classmate will start to share a reflection that cuts through the lowkey discussion like wildfire. They speak in a different voice – a different language if you will – that initially prompts the unuttered question, "Where is this coming from?" Gradually this brings a new perspective to the discussion. That sharing prompts an altered, deeper meaning of the text for at least some of the remaining participants. And so it goes.

We may look for gale-force winds accompanied by loud, theological proclamations in languages we do not understand as evidence of Pentecost. In doing so, we downplay the Pentecostal significance of other messages in other (possibly quieter) voices as we listen to each other in our SCS program – and elsewhere. The Spirit of Pentecost is just as active here as God was there when He blessed Peter and the rest on that holy day 2,000 years ago ... if, by grace, we open our ears and hearts to the voices around us.

Acts 2:4 "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability."



Patty Haggerty recounts how she saw the Spirit move through Sybil and the people they encountered by way of emergency bags to the homeless.



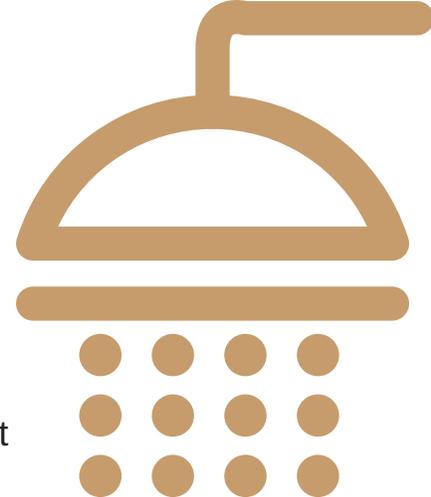
Sybil needed a volunteer activity and knowing that she enjoyed delivering meals to a family previously as well as donating clothing into the Community Aid bin, we decided to do one of the activities that we begun at church - helping the homeless. I explained to her what we were going to do and he helped make the bags and then we got in the car and off we went. We delivered them to the homeless in Carlisle. Sybil made two bags and gave them to two individuals in

Carlisle. Sybil happily gave the bags to these individuals and they were very appreciative. We learned their names and talked with them both. Sybil was happy to do this - to serve and speak the language of the Spirit as the Spirit gave her ability.



The Price of a Shower by Sally John

Quite a few years ago our family went camping at the Outer Banks in North Carolina, where it proceeded to rain the entire time we were there. One night we even “slept” in the car because of severe lightning, and because our suitcases were floating inside the tent. Our 3 year old daughter looked like a homeless, mud-covered ragamuffin. I secretly prayed that someone would steal our soggy camping gear from the roof rack of the car when we stopped at a rest stop. While I was serious about that, God only chuckled. Upon returning home, I remember how wonderful a hot shower felt. I couldn’t get enough of the luxurious water as I savored it washing the dirt away. I felt like, and probably smelled like, a different person when I finally emerged from the bathroom – refreshed, revived, renewed.



According to the website “It Pays To Live Green,” an average 10 minute shower in our area of the country costs approximately 75 cents. Depending upon what kind of showerhead you have, whether you use electricity or natural gas, and where you live that price varies. In Hawaii that same shower runs around \$1.86. I would have paid ten times that amount that day we returned from North Carolina.

Recently, our church has begun a mission of outreach at the Flying J in Middlesex. We are striving to establish a presence twice a month to bring support to homeless folks who tend to congregate at the truck stop. They live in their cars there and come into the lounge area to warm up from the cold winter temperatures. I was astounded to find out the price of a shower at the Flying J is \$12, despite the fact that it includes soap and a clean towel. Obviously that price is prohibitive for anyone on a very limited or nonexistent income, when even buying food is a struggle.

In talking with the management team at the Flying J we found out that the truckers don’t really like the homeless being there because they tend to smell. So, how can we help the situation? In a very simple and basic way. A way that many of us just assume will always be available to us. If we could provide laundry services and a hot shower, it would help both parties co-exist. In addition we could offer some fellowship and food as we walk with them on the nights we are there. Just by initiating the conversation with management they have agreed to donate showers to those in need. We are tapping into some Social Ministry funds to provide laundry services, at a very minimal cost.

Last week during our visit there one fellow we encountered gladly accepted our simple offerings. After his revitalizing shower and a fresh set of clothes he looked and smelled like a new person on the exterior. Everything had been washed clean, just as we all are spiritually cleansed through God’s undeserved grace. And this man had a new spring in his step and a smile on his face. What awesome results for so little effort! And the cost of that shower? Priceless.

Spirit-Led Ministry in El Salvador

by Caroline Sheaffer

Pondering words to describe this young Lutheran Salvadoran pastor we just met on our last trip to El Salvador, these come to mind: passionate, optimistic, perceptive, focused, youth-oriented, but mostly SPIRIT-LED.

Pastor Donal (yes, without the “d”) Monroy in his own gentle way empowers the youth in his community to envision a life beyond the agricultural fields. He utilizes the few professionals within his rural congregation to serve as catalysts to encourage young people to continue their studies to equip them for a better life.

One by one he is seeing this happen. Those youth in turn inspire others to do the same and life is blossoming with possibilities within that community.

We applaud the efforts of Salvadoran pastors like Pastor Donal who are making a difference in lives of young people within their country. Our support in his ministry does not involve a dime in contributions. Accompaniment has a much wider connotation within impoverished communities like his and means a great deal to him.



A Breath of Fresh Air

Rev. Drew Stockstill

Christ Lutheran Church, Harrisburg, PA

Where do we go from here? In this season of Pentecost we can look to the disciples who were likely asking the very same question as the Holy Spirit descended upon them with sounds like rushing wind and tongues as of fire. Here is a church seized by power, the vital Spirit of God. Here is a brand new church which provokes bewilderment and amazement in those who witnessed the moment the Spirit took hold of the gathered disciples. Here is a community filled with vitality, "the vital force of life" from God. The crowd is diverse, with people speaking various languages. This diversity is celebrated as the Spirit pours into them. And all this is for one purpose, for the crowd to hear in their own languages the followers of Jesus speaking about God's deeds of power.

Paul is from West Africa and was sitting on the front steps of Christ Lutheran Church in Harrisburg one hot August afternoon as I was leaving my office. He had just visited the medical clinic in the basement of the church where we also have clinics providing dental, prenatal, and urgent care free to our community in Allison Hill. Allison Hill is the most underserved neighborhood in the region and sits in the shadow of the capital with its prosperous ease.

"You look pretty tired," I said to Paul, "How are you?" "Ah," replied Paul, with a weary smile, "I am tired but God saved me." I joined him on the steps and Paul told me of God's deeds of power. Days earlier he became violently ill and though he had no health insurance he was rushed to the hospital where he had emergency surgery which saved his life. Once he was well enough, he was discharged, but having no money to pay for the services he came to our free clinic for postoperative care.

"God saved me and here I am," beamed Paul, "alive and cared for," and he unbuttoned his shirt to show me the IV line still running into his heart. The nurses had cleaned the port for him, carefully cleaned his wounds and applied fresh, clean bandages. Here was a man who should have still been in the hospital for this level of care, who had every reason to despair but was singing to me about the power of God he witnessed in the care received through our church and the gift of life. In my own language I heard him sharing the good news of God's kingdom.

The glory days for the church lay ahead, as they always have. We must open our hearts to the Spirit so that we might witness that the kingdom of God, not a denomination or a building, is unfolding around us. The book of Acts says, "having received the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear."

The kingdom of God is bursting forth, filled with life, making all things new. For those of us who love the church and her traditions we must only receive the kingdom and seize the opportunity to see and hear what God is already doing. It is with the poor, who Jesus said we always have with us, where we will find him and with him our new vitality, our new life. If the church is truly looking for new, vital life I think we know where to turn; it's not back.

The Spirit of Rejoicing Spirits by Rose Hlavac



The story of Rejoicing Spirits (RS) is a love story. It started with a trip to my daughter's school in Berwyn, PA. It was 2009. Niki was about to graduate and moved into a group home. I wanted her to attend worship services. Knowing nothing about the area, I had to find someone to ask. And as we all know, while CEOs of a company have the important titles, if you really want to know something, ask the real people in charge, the administrative assistants! So, when I asked the receptionist about local worship services in the area. She told me about Rejoicing Spirits.

After attending a service with Niki, where she literally waved her maraca, clapped during the service and frequently let out her Niki cry of joy, I was hooked. These behaviors, not typically encouraged in a traditional worship service, were celebrated in the Rejoicing Spirits "no shush" service. After much prayerful consideration, talking with others within our congregation, a group trip to a Rejoicing Spirits service, over a year of research and preparation, and Council's blessing, in November, 2010, we launched our first Rejoicing Spirits service. That is when it got interesting.

Prior to RS, David Herb would come to service, worship and leave. Through RS, he became a leader, helping with setup, name tags and whatever else needed to be done. That was the confidence he needed and he has since blossomed and integrated himself into every aspect of our church family.

Our RS service served to start 2 other local RS services; one in each Mechanicsburg and Chambersburg. Oh, and by the way, the group home that attended our first RS service now regularly attends in St. Luke's in Chambersburg with Pastor Christopher



Frye who heard about our service and regularly attended with his autistic son until they started their own RS service. And Pastor Caitlin has started an RS service in Jonestown as well. And those RS services continue to thrive in large part due to the fact that many members of their congregation have family members that are differently abled.

We have touched so many lives through this ministry. Here are a few highlights:

- Our RS attendance sheet shows that we have had over 120 individuals at one or more RS service. And that doesn't include the St. Paul's BOLD Youth Group in Carlisle.
- Our youth have always been an integral part of RS. Youth have participated as buddies and run our power point during services including Randy Neidig, Nick Schroeder, Devin Houser, and Lana, Isaac and Levi Kuhn to name a few.
- Laura Lengel Ramsey, who served for many months as our RS pastor after Pastor John left has more RS sermon suggestions on the RS Hosts website to help other RS congregations.
- The fathers of two of our most active RS families are pastors.
- We had one baptism at an RS service.
- Pastor Matthew introduced communion at our RS services which was very well received.

- Patty Haggerty works as an aide in a group home and on her day off, would pick up Sybil and bring her to services while Sybil was able to come.
- We made an RS video which was shown at Synod Assembly in 2014, advocating for other congregations to consider the needs of those who are differently abled.
- At least 4 other churches have visited us to learn more about disability ministries.

And we have learned a lot about compassion and service through those “we served”.

- One of the young men that attended RS was brought by his neighbor and his wife to give his mom a break once a month for a few hours. They were unable to continue after a few years when they moved to Allison Hill to start a ministry there.
- Relationships fostered during RS allowed a young adult to attend Camp Nawakwa. She roomed with Rose during Family Camp.
- A family that attended adopted 5 special needs children, and then, cared for the father’s elderly mom until she passed away a year ago.
- A family that attended with their special needs son, also fostered 2 teens during a difficult period in their lives, one of them had special needs as well.
- Ten group homes have attended RS. Many were regular attendees until a combination of budget cuts, staffing shortages and client behavioral issues have restricted their ability to attend. Some of the staff mentioned that they were grateful to be given the opportunity to worship, and one staff member mentioned she may consider going back to her church after a few months of attending RS services.

And the impact of RS will continue as the seeds planted among the community and within ourselves continue to sprout. “Thank you my good and faithful servants” to all who have served either at the service, behind the scenes or otherwise supported this ministry for the last 7 years.

And don’t forget, please keep all our Rejoicers in your prayers, always!

Come and see how the Spirit is alive

Tapology - 1st Sunday each month at Desperate Time, Carlisle @5pm

VBS @ St. Stephen - July 15-19 - contact us for more info

Interested in how the Spirit is active through ministry at Flying J, contact us

Did you know St. Stephen has a prayer labyrinth? Come check it out.

Come worship God each Sunday
8:00 AM & 10:45 AM
www.ststephenlc.org

