

# Stretching Toward Sunday

*Thoughts, readings and reflections based on this week's lectionary readings*

June 8, 2014

Day of Pentecost, Year A

**The readings this week:**

- Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-30
- Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
- 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13
- John 20:19-33

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

## Welcome to the zoo!

That's how I sometimes begin the worship service at Wedgewood Baptist. We are indeed a zoo. The diversity in our congregation is incredible: heterosexual males, heterosexual females, bisexual males, bisexual females, gay men, gay women, transgendered, bi-gendered, Republican, Democrat, Independent, organizing freaks, humanoids who prefer less structure, people who love gardening, people who hate gardening, vegetarians, meat and potato folk, Methodist background, Catholic background, Lutheran background, Baptist background, Presbyterian background, atheists, agnostics, English majors, Math majors, geeks, cooks, rich, poor, middle class, beach bums, mountain lovers, homebodies, international travelers, quiet, loud, few words, long-winded, introverted, extroverted, inner journey, outward journey, book worms, remote control controllers, do it yourselfers, have trouble changing a light bulb, young, old, very young, golfers, haters of golf discussions, concentrators, ADD-ers, emotional, stoic, lamenters, praisers, bubbly, boiling, criminal record, lucky hasn't been caught, parents, teenagers, grandparents, children, infants, direct, nudgers, confidants, spread the word, Androiders, Blackberries, Apple crazies, chocoholics, singers, please don't do more than lip syncers, writers, readers, labyrinth walkers, candle lighters, pray-ers, movers, like to shake you-ers, mostly patient, leaning toward impatient, short, tall, momma's boys, daddy's girls, like a detached retina when it comes to our family, white, black, mixed, southerners, northerners, midwest, west, from nowhere near here, early birds, hard to drag out of bedders, partakers, and the don't the extra calories crowd, artists, instrumentalists, ham radio operators, single, married, dating, available, love Ethiopian food, will not even look at Ethiopian food, left lane idiots, speedsters - well, you know who you are.

You are you. I am me. And, by some miracle, by some strange glue we are church. We are woven together in love, or woven together as we try to love.

Acts 2:1-21 is an amazing text.

*They were all together*

*in one place*

*All of them were filled*

*They began to speak in other languages,*

*from every nation under heaven*

*the crowd gathered*

*each one heard them speaking in the native language of each*

*Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs*

*I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh*

It was a zoo. It was a church. It was humanity gathered.

[Rev. Dr. Chris Ayers](#)



This makes me want to list all the members of our own little FCC zoo. We too are diverse and come from so many places and spaces. But we too are blessed...

*“You are you. I am me. And, by some miracle, by some strange glue we are church. We are woven together in love, or woven together as we try to love.”*

FCC Puyallup is indeed a place filled with love.

# Reflecting on the Word



## 1st Reading: Acts 2:1-21

How do the Jews respond to the power of the Spirit which they witness? What is there in Peter's sermon that would reassure Theophilus about his faith and help him "know the certainty of the things" that he'd been taught? Imagine you were there on the day of Pentecost. What do you think it would have been like for you as one of the crowd looking on? How has your life been affected by the gift of the Holy Spirit? How does the life and purpose of your church or Christian fellowship group compare to that of this group? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

### Breathing with the Risen Jesus: Reflections on John 20:19-23

"Jesus breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

These are among the most forgotten words....Jesus breathed, sending his life energy to his disciples and to us. The Holy Spirit can come to us in dramatic ways, as Acts 2 portrays, but it can also come in the simplest, most overlooked manner, in the very act of breathing. Could it be that as you read this, you are breathing some of the molecules that Jesus sent forth into the universe from the room where the disciples met? Could it be that the Holy Spirit is as near as your next breath? Could it be that insight and wisdom, courage and vitality, are as near as your next breath?

Breathing is underrated as a Christian spiritual discipline. But this passage shows us that we can breathe with Jesus. Each breath can be a prayer and an opening to God's Spirit. In locked doors where fear abounds, breath abides. Jesus greets the disciples with the words, "Peace be with you," and then he breathes on and in them. Jesus is breathing peace, and invites us to do likewise.

Have you ever noticed the spiritual energy that emerges, the peace that arises, when you simply stop what you're doing and take a few deep breaths? It is not accidental that the word "inspiration" has to do with drawing air into the lungs. Each breath can be inspiring, taking in the Holy Breath of God and then breathing it forth into the universe. Inspiration embodies omnipresence. Resurrection breath is everywhere—in locked rooms and closed hearts—waiting to liberate us from all that brings anxiety and alienation.

Resurrection means that Jesus is everywhere, inspiring all who breathe, giving life to deadened spirits and inspiring healthy embodiment. Breathe with Jesus' resurrection breath and receive God's ever-living Spirit. [Patheos](#)

### Praying Toward Sunday

Peace is only a breath away. Today, why not practice breathing the resurrection? Take time to read these words, making them your own, "Jesus breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Better yet, why not personalize these words:

*Jesus is breathing in my life and I am receiving the Holy Spirit.*

*Every breath I take opens me to inspiration.*

*Every breath is a prayer.*

## Psalm Reading: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

When have you felt that God's creation helped you to know him? How do these verses show that God not only created but also personally takes care of what he has made? What responses to God are triggered by the psalmist's meditation on creation? When have you enjoyed some aspect of the natural rhythms described here? As you meditate on what God has made, how would you like to respond to God? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

## 3rd Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

What has God shown you about your gifts and how you should use them in the church? What particular problem in the Corinthian church may have led Paul to offer the "test" in verse 3? What clue does Paul's test give us about the ultimate goal of spiritual gifts? What do verses 4-6 reveal about the unity and diversity of spiritual gifts? What might make some members of your church feel useless or envious of other parts of the body? What can you do to help others in your group or church to discover their giftedness? How would you like to develop and exercise your spiritual gifts? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

## 4th Reading: John 20:19-23

*Mission* is a very important word. We sometimes connect this word to working in foreign countries, but that is not all it means. At FCC we recognize that the mission field is also right in our own back yard. An expression often used at the end of church services is, "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord." Loving and serving is what mission, being sent by Jesus, is all about. And we each have a mission in life. We are each sent by Jesus to do loving service right where we are. What is our mission as a congregation? What role do you personally play in fulfilling that mission? What do you believe Jesus has given you for a personal mission in this time of your life? How can you keep this sense of mission alive in you each day?