

# Stretching Toward Sunday

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

May 15, 2016  
Day of Pentecost Year C

**The readings this week:**  
◦ Acts 2:1-21 ◦ Psalm 104:24-34, 35b  
◦ Romans 8:14-17 ◦ John 14:8-17, (25-27)



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

## Who Was There and Why Do We Care?

Let's play a game. I'm going to write a phrase, and you take a snapshot of the picture that pops up in your mind when you see it. Ready? OK — just highlight the phrase with your mouse:

*Gathered believers at Pentecost*

Got the snapshot locked in?  
Good. Now answer me this —

Who's in the picture?

If you are like most of us, it's probably some sort of Sunday School picture with a bunch of guys in Bible garb and beards. Perhaps they are in a room, and maybe you've got the tongues of fire above their heads.

But here's the important part. Look again at your snapshot in your mind. Have you noticed something? It's all guys.

Yep, most of us unconsciously go there. Perhaps it really is the influence of the picture on the wall in Sunday School. Maybe it's the fact that we just assume it was only the Apostles, which were all men. Or we've just not ever really thought about it.

Today, let's think about it. Because it's important.

The beginning of Acts 2 says "they were all together in one place." Who is the "they" referred to here? If we look back in Acts 1, the last reference to a group is verse 15, where the author says that Peter addressed the believers, a group numbering about 120. When Peter speaks, he begins with "Brothers and sisters." Note that in verse 14, we've already been told that the apostles were gathering with "the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." It seems pretty obvious that the group of believers in Acts 1 included women, and there is no reason to change that makeup for Acts 2.

So when the tongues of fire are distributed, and the speaking in many languages happens, and the wonders of God are declared in public in many languages — the

women were right there alongside the men, receiving the Spirit and speaking the Good News.

Consider this: the crowd that gathered to hear them was made up of "God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven." Don't you think they were shocked to see Jewish women standing right next to Jewish men in public, calling out the praises of God together?

Note, too, how Peter answers them. He quotes Joel, who says that God will pour out God's Spirit on both sons and daughters. Not only that, God will even send the Spirit to both male and female slaves. Gender, age, status — none of these matter.

We are so prone to reflexively fall back into that picture and our assumptions. If we don't try to limit God by gender, we still may use other criteria: education, or financial status, or worship style, or even hair style. Be honest — haven't you been flipping channels and come across someone speaking about God, and thought "there's no way that person has any word from God that I need to hear." I've done it, and I bet you have too.

As we reflect on Pentecost, let's retire that old Sunday School picture from our minds. Let's start by getting women into the picture. Then let's add some people of other races and nationalities. Next, put in some people who are very poor, some who are very rich, some who are very smart, and some who just aren't. Finally, think of someone or some group that you can't stand, and put them in there as well. Now take a snapshot of THAT group.

This is the Upper Room Church that God touched with fire. This is the church that changed the world. This is



the church that is still changing the world. And this is the true snapshot of Pentecost. May it be so in our churches, and may it be so in our hearts.

~ Bruce Writer

# Reflecting on the Word

# Word



## 1st Reading: [Acts 2:1-21](#)

Notice in Acts 2:1 the disciples were “all together in one place.” How do you view the issue of unity when it comes to the giving of the Spirit? Is it important? The gifts of God’s Word and His Spirit are incredible gifts. What would be the result of experiencing just one of them, and not the other? As we ask for a continual filling of the Holy Spirit today, what gifts might we ask to receive? What should be our focus? Does the Holy Spirit still talk to us from the Old Testament today? What Old Testament scriptures have blessed you recently? How can we make room for God’s gifts – the Word and the Spirit – in our everyday lives? [Kensington Church](#)

## Psalm Reading: [Psalm 104:24-34, 35b](#)

According to this passage, what does the Spirit do in the midst of God’s creation – not just at the beginning, but each and every day? How is the Spirit’s presence central to all the beautiful parts of nature we see in this Psalm? How is the Spirit’s work within God’s people similar to his work within God’s world? How is it different? The Spirit renews and refreshes God’s world and God’s people. Have you ever felt renewed by God’s Spirit? Do you think we will always “feel” renewed by the Spirit, or

that we will notice his presence as the disciples did at Pentecost? What kind of renewal do you think you need today – as an individual? As a community of believers? As a nation? As a world?

[Faith Element](#)



## Praying Toward Sunday

*Spirit...  
energy of the dance...  
promise in the water...  
rush in the wind...  
rhythm in the word...  
poetry of the faith...  
silence in the horror...  
patience in the waiting...  
question in the wonder...  
curve on the horizon...  
brightness in the sun...  
speed in the light...  
life in the resurrection...  
Come Spirit...  
be it all...  
and bring us into renewal once more...*

~ Roddy Hamilton, [Mucky Paws](#)

*One night last summer, I stretched flat on my back in the grass of Trail Ridge Camp Sherith in central Wisconsin. "The stars are great at camp," my kids had all said. I was there to find out.*

*They emerged slowly at first, a few in the central heavens, but none near the still-lighted horizon. Could I count them? Almost. Then more and more came out. The first ones glared trumpet like against the inky black, while others danced a gentle harmony. Even the horizon forgot the glow of sun and took on hundreds of thousands of lesser lights. Constellations, those artificial lines connecting stars like so many games of dot-to-dot, followed the patterns of my schoolgirl memory. A shooting star streaked across the sky, as if to connect the dots for me in some new constellation. Should I wish upon it?*

*I prayed instead. But what could I say to a God who had made all this and had somehow created in me the ability to enjoy it? For a long time I lay silent. Perhaps silence was the most sensible part of my prayer.*

## 3rd Reading: [Romans 8:14-17](#)

The Spirit is at work in our lives in many different ways. According to Romans 8:14, what does the Spirit do for us? Fear is a horrible bondage. It is one of the weapons that the enemy uses most often against God’s children because it literally paralyzes them and renders them ineffective for God’s kingdom. How do these scriptures help you overcome your fears? Besides revealing God’s being to us as endless and continuously new love, the Spirit bears witness within each of our spirits. How do you think your prayers of thanksgiving, petition and worship are changed when the Spirit takes them and bears witness with them? We have been chosen as adopted children of God and joint heirs to all the “treasures hidden in Christ.” What are the treasures hidden in Christ? Which do you want the most? Which do you need the most? [Calvary Chapel South Bay, The Center for Liturgy](#)

## 4th Reading: [John 14:8-17, \(25-27\)](#)

Jesus said to Philip: “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?” Do you ever feel like you have been around Jesus for a long time and still do not know him? Jesus promises that the Spirit will remind you of what Jesus said. Have you ever experienced a time in which you have needed a special word from the Lord and you recalled the teaching of Jesus in a way that brought you comfort, counsel, or guidance? Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead the disciples into truth, to teach them the things they need to know. Can you think of illustrations where the spirit has guided the church? Where the spirit has guided you personally? Where we are seeking the discernment of the spirit today? [Newburg First United Methodist](#)