From Ashes to Fire
May 23, 2021: Pentecost Sunday
Acts 2:1-21

Opening
Greet one another, agree on confidentiality, and agree to practice sacred listening as everyone shares from their own unique experiences and sacred stories.

Time of Centering
Get comfortable in your seat with your feet flat on the floor with your hands laying on your lap letting go of tension throughout your body. Take a couple of slow, deep, cleansing breaths. Relax your jaw, face, and shoulders. Take a few moments in silence to rest your mind and focus on your breath. It is the breath of God within you.

Bring to mind something you are grateful for and allow that gratitude to flow from your heart throughout your body as a prayer of blessing to God.

Take a few moments to briefly share your gratitude with the group.

Lectio Divina
The practice that moves words or images of the Divine into one’s own heart.

Lectio Divina means divine reading and is a spiritual practice using scriptures, poems, or quotes. Invite someone to read Acts 2.1-11 below out loud. Listen, using sacred / Reflective listening, for a word or phrase that touches your heart or stands out for you.

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. 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 blown away. 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? Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; Visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene; Immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; Even Cretans and Arabs! “They’re speaking our languages, describing God’s mighty works!”

After a few minutes of quiet, invite someone else from the group to read the scripture out loud a second time. Invite a person from the group to read it a third time. Then, if you are comfortable, share with the group what emerged for you through the practice of Lectio Divina.

Discussion based on Sunday’s Church at Home Message

Notes From Pastor Larry’s Sunday Sermon

The focus of Pentecost is aimed directly at us, the community of disciples known as the church. It is the story of how, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is birthed, gifted with identity and is an authority centered in the proclamation of the gospel. Pentecost communicates how important the church is and how inseparable it is from Christ. The Church is a dynamic entity always in process moving ever towards its identity and purpose. Pentecost serves each year to remind us of who we are as a church, what we proclaim, and the source of that proclamation. It is the message from the church to the church, passed down through the ages to each generation. Pentecost is a story infused with energy and enthusiasm. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is given the authority to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. This gospel is intended for everyone, repentance and forgiveness are offered to all. The mighty wind and tongues of flame which fall upon the disciples are continuations of God’s work. In Acts, the work of the Holy Spirit is to call individuals into community as the body
of Christ. The Church given identity and authority at Pentecost is multi-
dimensional and Christ is central to each. The first, and most important,
dimension of the church is its universality. The Holy Spirit gifts the church to
proclaim the Good News to the ends of the earth. Though rooted in a local
context, the church’s identity extends beyond every congregation, denomination,
and cultural tradition. Pentecost celebrates the face of Christ throughout the
world in all its theological, cultural, and liturgical diversity.

Pastor Larry described the church as gifted with identity and an authority
centered in the proclamation of the gospel; that the church is inseparable from
Christ. He refers to the church as a dynamic entity always in process moving ever
towards its identity and purpose. These are words of great hope, trust, and belief
in the spiritual authority of the church and Christ’s purpose for it. **How do you
receive these words? Could this be God’s invitation to you to see the church in
a new way?**

We all know or have heard of communities that see the local church as a sort of
club that you join; a club of people with similar socio-economic status who agree
upon a doctrine of belief, who join together to sing, and hear a good sermon.
Members of this church get married here, bring their babies to be blessed and
expect that in this place, final words will be spoken over them when they die. It’s
easy to imagine that this kind of church brings comfort to those who attend. **How
do you think this church would be affected if the members became active
disciples of Jesus; seeking to be the living Word lived out in their everyday life?
What would remain the same? What would be different?**

**Do you feel that Crossroads is equipping you to be the hands and feet of Jesus,
and that you are supported in faith journey?**

**Do you believe that Crossroads can do more to live into the fullness of the Living
Church?**

**If you would like to discuss this subject with a Crossroads staff member please
reach out by sending an email to Deborah Michel at dmichel@crossroadsnova.org.**
Be not afraid of Love's touch,  
the Fire that consumes all  
dross:  
For Love is the great transformer,  
burning away false ways of the  
past, and  
filling the heart with Light.  
Awaken to the Indwelling Presence of  
The Beloved!  
Envision the beauty that Love  
Brings forth!

Psalms For Praying – An Invitation to Wholeness by Nan C. Merrill

Action Step
We have used the spiritual practice of Lectio Divina and learned of the first Pentecost, the birth of the church by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had poured himself into his followers while he walked among them, and now with the infilling of the Holy Spirit the church was given the authority to move out into all the world and bring the message of the Way of Jesus to all people. The most natural response to God’s empowerment is to extend love to others, and by doing so we change the world, one person, and one family and one community at a time. We are being transformed as we walk in the way of Jesus. As a community of faith, we offer our support to those who are walking through difficult moments. If you need extra support from your faith community, will you reach out to them? We build our faith and our witness of God’s love through our spiritual practices. Does your full heart allow you to lend support by considering your gifts and graces as an offering to your community and your family of faith? You will be lovingly received as you come with your needs or with the offering of your gifts and graces.

Prayer
Lift the requests of the group members, as well as prayers that will assist you as you put your faith into action.
As in the US, this past year has been an incredible challenge for our students and friends in Uganda. Our students in primary, secondary and post-secondary were sent home in March 2020, after less than two months into their school year. Unlike the US virtual learning was simply not possible so it was pretty much a lost year.

We are extremely grateful that none of our students present or past have become ill with COVID. Uganda was on a tight lock down for many months and started with very few cases or deaths. But life at home was a challenge in and of itself. Food can be scarce at home in the village. Like the US many students depend on their meals at school.

I am in continual awe of our partner on the ground, Esther Nabwire, who continues to provide guidance and support for students past and present. With her help Crossroads was able to provide financial assistance to support families with staples like rice, sugar, maize flour, salt, soap and sanitary pads for the girls. She oversaw the distribution twice during this past year.
In the fall, candidate students (those who would be graduating from primary, secondary or post-secondary) were allowed to return to school and have just finished their national exams. Other students are beginning to return to school this spring but their school year is badly out of sync as normally they would be in school from February to December. It will take some time to get it sorted out.

When we were no long able to be part of Humble Primary School our commitment was to support the students who had to leave that school through their primary and secondary education and for most of them a two year certification program at a vocational school. In 2014 that meant support for 89 students. We did not bring on new students, to ensure that these 89 could be supported through school to enter the workforce.

In 2021 we are actively supporting 44 students, with a few more being sponsored individually. More than 45 have completed at least a certificate program to equip them to enter the workforce, with certificates in nursing, engineering, fashion and design, teaching, agribusiness, hotel management, construction, mechanics and accounting.

Our budget is tight this year because most of the funding for our Uganda mission comes from the Annual 10K Thanksgiving Day Race. Although we held a virtual race last year, the participation was 400 registered rather than our usual 2500. We hope this year we will be back on track for our race. We are grateful to those who continue to contribute and support these students in Uganda. Our proposed budget is available to view here. The current roster of students is included. With Madam Esther’s help we will soon have available an update on many of our past students.

Look for monthly Uganda updates in this newsletter. For more information about the Uganda Mission and how you can get involved, contact Jen Score.

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**SERVE Opportunity**

Crossroads is assisting the Round Hill United Methodist Church stock their food pantry. The Round Hill Food Pantry has been serving their Round Hill/Western Loudoun neighbors for 10 years. As many as 31 families (over 100 individuals) visit the Pantry each month.

Items being collected are changed periodically. Currently, we are collecting adult and children’s toothpaste and toothbrushes, shampoo and corn flour. You may drop your donations in the bin outside Crossroads Entrance 1 any time. For ease there is an Amazon Wish List provided here. Purchase online and have the items delivered directly to Crossroads. More information can be found here.
Social Justice & Advocacy

The Crossroads’ SERVE Team is excited to announce a new Crossroads’ Microloan Ministry called SPARK! SPARK stands for: *Start *Propel *Access *Reach *Kindle

These loans are intended to be the SPARK to make a life change or help pursue a dream or purpose. The microloan may be used for but not limited to:

- Purchase equipment or initial startup costs for a small business
- Purchase a computer to work to take coursework from home
- Security deposit for an apartment
- Start an educational training program

For more information about the SPARK Microloan Program, visit our webpage to download an application or contact Kathy MacKrell for next steps.

Interested in supporting the ministry? The SERVE team is looking for volunteers to be Peer Coaches, please contact Kathy MacKrell.

NAACP Scholarship Opportunity - The goal of the 2021 NAACP Loudoun Branch Scholarship is to provide financial assistance and encouragement to high school graduates of color, specifically African American/Black students, in Loudoun County. For more information and an application, click here.

UMC Resources for Anti-Racism
Here are some resources from the United Methodist Church regarding racism:

- Standing in Solidarity with the AAPI Community
- Black Lives Matter
- Racism and Concerned People of Faith
- Anti-Racism: White United Methodists Speak Out
- Praying for Change: Daily Prayers for Anti-Racism

Take Action: Support Free and Fair Elections
As United Methodists, we "hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections" believing that “the form and the leaders of all governments should be determined by exercise of the right to vote guaranteed to all adult citizens.” (2016 Book of Discipline, ¶164A)
Support a Pathway to Citizenship
After decades of organizing and advocacy by immigrants, activists, people of faith, and most importantly the tireless work of Black and Latino organizers, faith leaders, and allies, we have an opportunity to transform this fear into hope.

Read more [here](#).

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Taking Care of the Community

May is Mental Health Awareness Month – Amid the Coronavirus pandemic, our mental health is more fragile than ever. It is important for us to be looking out for higher levels of anxiety and depression in ourselves and our loved ones. Below are some of the resources available in our community to assist us in dealing with mental health issues for adults and youth.

**CDC Mental Health Resources** – The CDC offers resources and believes mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being.

**Loudoun County Mental Health Resources** - The Department of Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Services (MHSADS) provides services to individuals in the Loudoun community with mental health, substance use or developmental/intellectual disabilities.

**Ryan Bartel Foundation** - The Ryan Bartel Foundation offers free, widely available programs designed to increase connectedness and teach coping skills to teens, key protective factors to suicide prevention.

**COVID-19 Updates**
Anyone age 12 and older is eligible to receive a vaccine. If you have health concerns regarding the vaccine, please discuss them with your doctor and make the safest decision for you and your family. A link to schedule your vaccine is [here](#).
As we have done in the past, we will start featuring native plants in bloom in our native garden. The garden has been prepped for spring and is alive and well. If you live in the area, you are encouraged to check it out on your next nature walk or drive by.

Native plants can be purchased online at Watermark Nursery in Hamilton, Virginia. You can also contact Crossroads' Native Plant Specialist, BJ Lecrone.

Featured plant for this week:

Green and Gold

Plant NOVA Natives is an excellent resource for gardeners of all skill levels. You are encouraged to check out their website for upcoming online programs. Their monthly newsletter can be found here.

The newsletter features an article on planting container gardens called Planting in Pots for Easy Butterfly Viewing.

The newsletter features an article on Native Plant Sales - Native Plant Sales Are Booming

Ask the Expert - Rain Gardens
Wednesday, June 23, 9:30am-10:30am
A rain garden is a constructed landscaping element where storm water is captured and filtered by native plants. Maria Harwood from the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District will give some basic background and answer questions that are submitted ahead of time. Register here.

Recordings of previous “Ask the Expert” events can be viewed on this YouTube playlist.
Salvation Army Food Distribution at Crossroads
The Salvation Army will have a truck in the Crossroads parking lot to distribute food.

Distribution is Friday, June 4th at 11am.

You will receive a FREE box of food that should feed a family of 4 for a week. We have 30 boxes to hand out so please come and get one. Please contact Kathy MacKrell if you would like to reserve a box.

Loudoun County Public Schools Meal Service
Delivery of meals will be limited to Mondays only with all meals (breakfast, lunch, snack and supper) for the week (Monday through Sunday) delivered on Mondays. There will not be any deliveries Tuesday through Friday.

Please visit the interactive map to identify the location to get meals.

Some food pantries and other services available in Loudoun County are:
- **Loudoun Hunger Relief**, 750 Miller Drive SE, Leesburg, 703-777-5911
- **Mobile Hope Loudoun**, 31 Sycolin Road Southeast, Leesburg, 703-771-1400
- **Dulles Food Pantry**, 24757 Evergreen Mills Road, Sterling, 703-507-2795
- **The Seven Loaves Food Pantry**, 15 W Washington St, Middleburg
- **Good Shepherd Alliance Inc.**, 20684 Ashburn Road, Ashburn, 703-724-1555
- **Tree of Life Ministries**, 210 N. 21st St., Unit D, Purcellville, 703-554-3595

Assistance Available for Loudoun Residents Impacted by COVID-19
Loudoun County, Virginia, is urging residents to take advantage of programs set up to help with the economic impact of the coronavirus.

**Loudoun Cares**
Through their Information & Referral Helpline, **Loudoun Cares** connects residents in need with local nonprofits and agencies that can assist with a variety of health and human services that include rent/utility assistance, food, clothing, medical/dental, housing, job services and more. If you are in need of assistance, call the helpline at 703-669-4636 or click here for their website.

**Crossroads Jobs** is a non profit experienced in advising candidates who have challenges in securing employment. Counseling is available in English and Spanish. They will also assist those who need help filing for unemployment. All services are free. Click here for their website.
Additional resources:

- Sunday message: Watch here or on the GOTGo app
- GOTGo App - Download from your app store by searching Crossroads GOTGo
- Daily Text - Text crossroads to 81411 to receive an inspirational text each evening
- Daily Scripture, Prayer and Morning Focus - Sign up here
- Online giving: Sign up or submit giving here
- Spiritual Practices: Find them here
- Prayer Requests: Submit them here
- Yoga and Wellness - Find online groups here
- Small Groups: Find online groups here
- Facebook - facebook.com/crossroadsonova
- Instagram - instagram.com/crossroadsonova
- Website - crossroadsonova.org