

We observe Pentecost with events of past week in mind. **George Floyd** murdered by police in Minneapolis. Another unarmed black man gasping for air with a white knee on his neck. This week, video of a white woman calling police to report a black man threatening her, though he simply asked her to leash her dog. This week, in Ypsilanti, video of **Sha'Teina Grady Els**, punched in head by a white officer when she tried to get to her daughter's home thru a police perimeter. What happened last week without the cell cameras rolling?

“And when the day arrived that completed the fifty after Passover, they were all gathered together in one place.” Tension still high 50 days after Passover, Jerusalem's population swells 10-fold. **Shavuout** (50th) celebrates giving of Torah on Sinai. **Most mystical** of 3 major feasts—EX 19: Moses called to Mt. Sinai which has become a thin-spot, **mystical meeting ground**. Robert Alter: **“The Sinai encounter is imagined as the decisive moment in history when the celestial and terrestrial realms are brought into engagement and as God comes down on the mountain, every sort of natural fireworks is let loose.”**

At SINAI: a violent wind that sounds like a Ram's horn getting louder; fire (Lightening-smoke) and a cloud ...the point of it all? A **miracle of communication: “Moses would speak, and God would answer him with a voice”** [greatest cultural divide in Scripture is between the human and the divine—such that any communication is miraculous]

Replicated in Acts 2: ***And suddenly there came a noise like a turbulent wind born out of the sky, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting*** [violent wind outside one thing; inside another] ***And there appeared before them tongues of fire, which parted and came to rest on upon each one of them*** [a suspended cloud of fire inside the house, hovering over them, portions of fire separating to rest over each one] To what end? Another miracle of communication: ***And they were all filled with a Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them to utter.***

Pilgrims from all over the Empire are in Jerusalem; their particular cultural identities carefully noted because they matter: **Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphlia, Egypt and the parts of Libya abutting Cyrene** [note African nations] These pilgrims speak a vast array of different languages, that identify them as “not from around here”

120 gathered in the Upper Room have a shared language. This makes them one group, bonded by a language reflects-shapes their culture, experience, way of

thinking/feeling/dreaming ... their language creates an “in group”—an “us” in relation to “the others” who are “them”

The pilgrims, visitors, outsiders to Jerusalem hear the 120 miraculously speaking their own varied languages: **And how is it that each us of hears our own language, the languages in which we were raised?**

Not one group **imitating** the language of another group ((Beatles ripping off African American blues.) This is one group receiving into the center of their being, their holy of holies, the divine presence, and in that mystical reception receiving, making room for the languages, cultures, of others than themselves. Remember these were the followers of Jesus who said “**Those who have ears let them hear**”

The miraculous gift of speaking an unknown language, is the **miracle of empathy**—of one group **receiving** another as though they were family.

What does this have to do with Minneapolis, CP, and Ypsilanti? Why after all these years is White Supremacy so powerful--prevalent? One who trucks in White Supremacy occupies the Oval Office, threatening violence against those who protest George Floyd’s murder. Why? Why is police violence aimed so disproportionately at black and brown bodies? Benjamin Franklin, for heaven’s sake, let alone Malcolm X or James Baldwin said: “**Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who aren’t.**”

The miracle of Pentecost is a **disruptive** miracle, just as the mystical meeting at Sinai was disruptive. All the signs are signs of disruption—wind, fire, shaking. **To undergo the miracle of Pentecost is to have our lives disrupted by the miracle of empathy.**

The Spirit is a comforter yes. But to bring that comfort to everyone, the Spirit must **disrupt the false comfort of complacency**, of not caring if it doesn’t affect us.

For many of us, Pentecost makes space in our hearts for more anger. Beyond the frustrations of life that affect us personally.

But what’s the **secret power** of Pentecost? It is not the **browbeating** of white liberal guilt that only seems to produce denominational position papers—an elephant giving birth to a pea.

The secret power of Pentecost is divinely infused and humanly embraced empathy. The **taproot** of human action is **feeling** more than analysis & argument. A parent hears the cry of an infant. The tap root of feeling is activated, and they move to address it. Wake up, get out of bed, feed the infant. In fact, parents practically need a support

group not to do so when it's time for the baby to learn to sleep for more than an hour at a time. **Empathy moves us** in ways that effort, guilt and analysis never can. **There's a flow and an ease of action when the taproot of empathy is watered.** Empathy is fundamentally an act of **hearing**, of **receiving** another.

To be Pentecostal in deepest sense is to be **longing for, cognizant of, responsive to** the divine Spirit watering our empathy taproot ... in our holy of holies where divine presence and burning Cherubim reside

The divinely energized taproot of empathy is so much more powerful than liberal guilt with its paper-only impotent progressivism

Pentecost didn't happen in a vacuum. The 120 were gathered to pray on the Feast of Shavout—**receiving** of the Law on Sinai. They all understood it was a mystical moment. Primed to **receive** a divine initiative. What they received was multiples languages of other cultures. Another word for **receiving**—**listening**. They had been primed by Jesus who said over and over: *those who have ears, let them hear.*

Emily and Carla told you about our growing connection to Fellowship of **Affirming Ministries**. What moves me most about TFAM: it is led by People of Color many of whom are also gay lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer...and Pentecostal. What TFAM means by "**inclusion**" is white men are allowed also. Affords us some amazing opportunities to LISTEN—HEAR—RECEIVE

Three important events: **June 3. 8PM Beyond the Gatekeepers:** Black women law enforcement, theologians, preachers, judges—a womanist approach to ending Police Violence. Includes **Bishop Evette Flunders.**

June 20th Virtual Protest led by Wm. Barber (TFAM, Poor People's Campaign)

Sometime this summer our new Bishop TFAM, **Bishop Darrell Goodwin** will join us on a Sunday service to speak.

Let this be a summer for us of deep listening, of receiving divine initiative, to listen, to learn, to be moved the Spirit who met Moses on Mt. Sinai in wind, fire, words, and voice ... and came in wind and fire and words and voice to the followers of Jesus in the Upper Room.

Today let's do a call & response:

*We groan at the rise of White Supremacy at the highest levels in our land.
Those who have ears let them hear!*

God have mercy

Today especially, we feel powerless in the face of the violence against black and brown bodies. Those who have ears let them hear!

Wind of God have mercy

We confess our need for a Pentecost miracle! Those who have ears let them hear!

Fire of God have mercy

Oh God do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Those who have ears let them hear!

Spirit of God have mercy

Blow like a turbulent wind within the walls of our homes and our hearts ... and our courtrooms and our city halls and our police stations, and our schools, our centers of faith, our citadels of corporate power and financial power, and political power. Those who have ears let them hear!

Wind of God have mercy

Send tongues of fires, purifying fire, the fire of Sinai, the fire of the cherubim among the burning ones in the holy of holies, the fire of the Upper Room, the fire of Azusa Street. Those who have ears let them hear!

Fire of God have mercy

Remember your words O Lord, "When the oppressed suffer violence and the poor cry out in misery, I will arise, says the Lord and give them what they long for!" Those who have ears let them hear!

Arise O God and bring us with you!

God have mercy!