

The disciples had been told to wait. To wait. We celebrate today the miraculous events of the second chapter of Acts. But prior to this, in the first chapter, Jesus parted from his disciples with the instruction to wait. To wait for the Father's promised gift to arrive. So they waited, and they did so without their Lord present with them. The future seemed uncertain, but the one whom they trusted -- the one who gave them hope -- instructed them to wait.

You and I can relate to all that waiting they did. The disciples had ten days of it, which is nothing compared to our nearly three months of waiting. In all seriousness, though, we -- like them -- feel the uncertainty of the future. We -- like them -- hope and trust in God to see us through this. And we -- like them -- continue to wait... for a return to some sense of normality, for more testing, for more of a plan, for a vaccine. The waiting continues.

In a thrilling display, the disciples' waiting came to an end when the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit arrived on that first day of Pentecost. "And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. "Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability." The Holy Spirit was given to them -- men and women -- so that they could see visions and dream the dreams of what God intends for this world. Fire and wind descended on the disciples

to empower them and to send them out into the world to continue the work of Jesus Christ.

It is interesting that fire and wind are the two symbols most associated with this day, because so often fire and wind bring with them destruction. We need to look no further than the ruins left by unleashed wildfires and hurricanes. And those ruins figuratively might be exactly where we find ourselves today. Doesn't the world feel like a different place since the pandemic began, like we are walking in the ruins of what the world was? Even though Mt Pleasant has not seen the worst of the infection rates, we have heard the stories and seen the images that remind us that we are no longer living in the same world that existed in February of 2020. Then we see the images of the social unrest in Minneapolis and other cities in this country, and with that we see the ruins left by literal fires.

We are waiting. We are waiting for an end to a pandemic. We are waiting for a just society. We are waiting for the breath of the Holy Spirit to fill us while the haunting last words of George Floyd echo; "I can't breathe." We are waiting. Some communities, like black and indigenous people, have been waiting far longer and with more pain than I could ever understand. Yet in this moment we are all waiting... and hoping against hope... for something to bring an end to our waiting.

We could try to sweep all the news aside and say, "But this is Pentecost! Let's celebrate!" We can celebrate this day, but not at the expense of sweeping all of this week's events to the side. We can celebrate this day, but we must acknowledge that our story includes us living in the same waiting of the disciples found in Acts chapter 1.

The Rev. Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker says, “As we wait in the wreckage of what was, as we wait for the birth of what will be, we are called to see visions and to dream dreams.” Both personally and communally, what in our lives that existed before this pandemic needs to be let go during this time of waiting? During this time of waiting, what does the Holy Spirit wish to renew in our lives -- personally and communally -- in order for those parts of our lives to blossom at the end of our waiting? This requires us to dream dreams, to ask the Holy Spirit to take the lead in our hoping, our praying, and our working to achieve the world that God hopes for us.

So we must ask: What in our lives and in our society needs removal so that all people can live together in God’s justice and peace? What might be in our way of seeing the visions of what God hopes for all people in this world? Is there something telling you that you can’t or you shouldn’t dream of and work toward God’s vision for this world? If so, what is telling you that, and is it something that you should allow the Spirit’s wind to blow away?

We are waiting. But we also are gifted with the same Holy Spirit that came on that first day of Pentecost. That same Holy Spirit who is intent on continuing the work and ministry of Jesus Christ through us. This Spirit empowers us to be Christ’s body in this world now. His ministry, his mission, continues on -- here and now -- through us. Make use of this time in waiting. While we wait, let us ask the Holy Spirit to lead us into seeing God’s vision of what our world can soon be. While we wait, let us dream God’s dream. Then we must commit ourselves to doing the work for God’s vision to take place.

We have time. Let’s pray together this summer and discern what it is that God wants us -- disciples at All Saints -- to work toward coming out of this waiting. Like

those first disciples in that house in Jerusalem, we should devote ourselves to prayer and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us give thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us give thanks for being fed by the body of Christ in order to be the body of Christ. Let us give thanks to God for being active and at work in this world, choosing to bring to life a vision and dream for this world through people like us. Let us go out and be the good and love of Jesus Christ in this world.

Thanks be to God. Amen.