

- ✘ Blessed be the Name of God
- ✘ As we read through the Book of Acts, the story of Pentecost Day is the fulcrum, the pivot point, on which the entire Book of Acts is balanced
 - ✓ In the 1st Chapter of Acts, we moved from Easter up to the selection of Matthias as the 12th apostle.
 - We see the risen Lord present among the disciples, instructing them and promising the coming of the Holy Spirit.
 - In the 2nd Chapter of Acts we see this promise made by Jesus fulfilled in the dramatic arrival of the Holy Spirit among the disciples in the Upper Room.
 - And as a result of being anointed with the Spirit the disciples are changed—
 - ◆ They are transformed from being only eyewitnesses to the actions of Jesus to being genuine ministers and doers of the word.
 - After Pentecost, the rest of the Book of Acts, starting in Chapter 3 – 28, tells us how certain of the disciples continued in their Spirit-directed mission.
- ✘ In this story of Pentecost, we find the central question in verse 12, where some of the onlookers ask, “What does this all mean?”
 - ✓ That is a fine question that we all consider in various times in our religious life:
 - “What does this all mean?”
 - “How does the Spirit move in my life? How do I live out my baptism?”
 - “The Episcopal Church’s motto, if you will, is “All persons, ministers.”
 - What sort of ministry do I have in this church and the world?
 - ✓ We could sit out on the beach at WA Park and try to figure this out on our own, but we are fortunate here in Christ Church that we don’t have to do this on our own.
 - We have the opportunity to do this together, in two discernment groups

- ✓ One, an ongoing discernment group that will begin in June and will end sometime early in the next century.
 - This is for people who are just trying to generally discern the direction in their life: moved; spouse died, new job, do I want to volunteer for something; what are the gifts I have that I can best use? I've been trained as an accountant; is there a way that I can use that in ministry?
- ✓ The second discernment group will be for those who we all see have the gifts that would equip them to be a part of the Ministry Support Circle.
 - We as a congregation will be asked to think and pray about our members here and consider which gifts they are endowed with,
 - And then in September, we will be given a card upon which we can write the names and the particular gifts of those we think should enter into the second discernment group...the group that will discern if they are called to the Ministry Support Circle, and if so, in what sort of role.
 - This process will be the subject of the meeting that will follow next week's coffee hour, when all will be revealed.
- ✗ I've been reflecting on this process and there has been something missing, but I couldn't put my finger on it
 - ✓ But, as ever in my life, usually God points the way to me *through other people and by my reflecting on the meaning of that.*
 - And the people who are pointing the way on this topic are Laurie, Michael and Curt at the Anacortes Aktion Club
- ✗ Anacortes Aktion Club Talent Show
 - ✓ Aktion Club: Kiwanis Club for disabled adults, sponsored by Noon and Sunrisers; most members have Down's Syndrome or a similar disability. Emotional maturity is stuck somewhere in pre-teen stage. Everyone (parents, guardians, advisors) call them "Aktion Club Kids"
 - ✓ Talent Show: usually singing. Down's syndrome kids like to sing and loudly, but their range is something like three notes)
 - ✓ Last talent show, some of the Aktion Club kids were encouraged by their parents / guardians to share other gifts other than singing.
 - Michael (folds service bulletins for Celebration): woven baskets

- Curt: (seizures & wears a bicycle helmet all the time) brought pictures of the entire city he built in his basement in which he has placed a model railroad (was in the paper a few months ago)
- Laurie brought in an essay she'd written:
 - Laurie: very sweet, (38 yers old) very childlike, sometimes got lost (when she was president of the club) in her agenda (After the third time asking if there was any old business.... to Jeri, "where am I at?"
 - ♦ Laurie asked to read her essay, "Imagination,"...and no one was expecting a lot...

*Laurie
Imagination*

Imagination is a very special gift and the best part is everyone has one.....

If you ask me, imagination is something priceless and no one can take it away from you.

With your imagination, almost anything is possible. Close your eyes and listen to your heart.....that's when you are a part of the magic you feel.

Imagination is a door to places beyond your dreams like Christmas land, and toy land, the world beyond the rainbow and the land of sweets and Oz....

When you stop to think about it, imagination is the stuff that dreams and fantasies are made of. Think about sliding down a rainbow...Sleeping on a cloud and the sky is filled with falling and shooting stars.

Think about floating down a waterfall...Coloring easter eggs in a fountain of easter colors.....picking deserts off of a tree.....sitting on a bubble as it floats up in the sky.....sliding down a sparkling sunbeam.....creating baskets with the Easter bunny's help.....holding a baby bunny or feeding baby birds from your hand.

I like to imagine walking through a paradise filled with bird houses, bird baths, humming birds, butterflies....a quiet garden path with a gazebo tucked into one corner of the garden.

With imagination you can do things that you can only dream about. That's what I love about having an imagination.

Here is a secret.....it doesn't matter how old you are!! Everyone can paint a rainbow with their imagination.

Listen to me when I say that as long as there's imagination in the world, anyone, young or old can follow their dreams. ... Anything is possible.

Remember, you don't see with your eyes but with your heart. You need to have an open mind to everything.

It's the magic that makes our dreams and fantasies come to life...that's what imagination is all about.

As you hear my story, you will start to discover that the magic of our imagination is inside us. The only thing you need to do is to find it and let it out!

- ◆ Silence and then great applause. Everyone asked Laurie's caregiver, Jeri, "Where did that come from? Did you help her write that?" To which Jeri replied, "Laurie writes every day; she has binders on top of binders in the house full of her writing, and it's all just like that."

✕ Lesson:

✓ We are terrible at discerning how to use our own gifts.

- What do Aktion Club kids want to do at the Talent Show? They want to sing because that's what everyone wants to do
- But their parents and guardians know that there are hidden talents there.
 - Priscilla asked Michael to bring his woven baskets
 - Cheryl and Ivar asked Curt to talk about his city with the trains.
 - Jeri asked Laurie to share her gift of writing;

✕ And what does this tell me about discerning our gifts?

✓ Many of us hear the story of Pentecost (big wind, tongues of fire) and we expect that this is the way that the Holy Spirit is supposed to lead us.

- If we want to discern the path God has chosen for us, then God has got to do it with lots of sound effects and displays of fire.
- And failing that, maybe the gifts I have are not such a big deal, or that no one wants to hear about them (everyone else can sing; and all I can do is make baskets)
- But it took someone else to see that potential, to recognize the gifts
 - To push the basket-maker or the train maker or the essayist out from where they thought they ought to be comfortable to where the Spirit was really leading them.

- ✘ We at Christ Episcopal Church in Anacortes, WA are focused (due to the necessity of keeping the Ministry Support Circle viable) on bringing new people into the Circle, and on our identifying the gifts of those future leaders in the congregation.
 - ✓ Its easy to discern the gifts of leaders in the congregation
 - Their gifts shine forth like the flame on the Easter Candle – bright and for all the world to see.
 - ✓ But, in reflecting on Laurie, and Michael, and Curt I begin to understand that there are many who shine more translucently, whose fire burns deep inside the candle’s well, whose gifts may only be seen by a small circle. But what gifts they are!
- ✘ That brings up the missing step that I see in the Ongoing Discernment Process
 - ✓ We ask people to self-select themselves to enter this process in early June, as a process of puzzling through our lives
 - But there is a lot of inertia built into that
 - It’s a lot easier for us (and by us, I mean me) to skip this whole discernment thing and simple rely on what we have done in the past
 - ◆ Because we know that is in the realm of the possible
 - We trust in the past, rather allowing the Spirit (which is within us) to move us in unexpected ways
 - And often, it takes someone else to point out to us that it’s time to use a gift that we had discounted or a gift that we wanted to cover under a bushel basket.
- ✘ At the same time it’s also difficult to point out someone else’s gifts to them and suggest that they might be used for the glory of God.
 - ✓ I have no difficulty with that. Pointed out to a couple of people that they’re doing the work of a deacon already, so perhaps they might consider that
 - ✓ But I don’t know everyone’s skills. I know there are many members of this congregation through whom shines the translucent light of the Holy Spirit, but I never had the opportunity to see that light shining forth. But you might have seen that.
 - You might know that the person sitting next to you has the gift of communication or teaching or creativity.

- But you're hesitant to turn to them and ask them, "You ought to join the discernment group to better understand how you can use those gifts."
- ✗ An easy solution (but one that will muck up the carefully crafted work of the currently crafted discernment process) would be to have, not just one set, but two sets of cards distributed in September
 - ✓ One for those who have those leadership gifts that might indicate a call to the Ministry Support Circle.
 - ✓ And the second card to note those gifts that you see in someone else...gifts that should be better discerned for ministry in the ongoing discernment group.
 - ✓ The ongoing discernment group will, by its very name, go on forever (with a slight pause to celebrate my hundredth birthday in 2047). So why not join it in October? Or January? (Must check with Pastor Sally Balmer...)
- ✗ I don't believe that any us should go into a discernment process on our own or by totally free choice.
 - ✓ If there is anything that the Pentecost story tells us,
 - I believe that it tells us that we are led by the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit, usually in the form of other people have to give us a push in the right direction.
- ✗ Blessed be the name of God.