

5.31.20 P1 God's Holy Spirit Assurs & Sends the Body of Christ into this Pandemic World

- Today is the festival of Pentecost, which together with Easter and Christmas rounds out the three great celebrations of the church year
- Today is Pentecost, the remembrance of the biblical event when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples transforming them from mere followers, to both following Christ and proclaiming Jesus Christ crucified and raised... and so Pentecost has been nick-named the *birthday of the church*
- Today is Pentecost, a day when we at Jerusalem often wear the color RED to remind us of the tongues of fire that appeared over the early believers when the Holy Spirit was poured out on them... and today at Jerusalem is normally when confirmands who have intentionally been worshiping and learning and making relationships with adults in the faith, then have come forward, confessed the faith of the church, affirmed the gift of being baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and have had hands placed on them, and prayers and blessings said over them... and today is when normally after the service we have joyfully gathered for photographs, and hugs, and cake with the confirmands
 - And sadly, none of that is not happening today
 - We are not together wearing red
 - We are not together singing and receiving Holy Communion
 - And we are not gathered together to celebrate young people affirming their baptismal faith in confirmation during worship
 - BUT YET, today is STILL so very important
- Today is Pentecost, the day that celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the Church, and we so much and perhaps even so desperately in this time when deaths from the coronavirus in this country alone have now exceeded 100,000 people – we so need to hear the assurance that God loves and sustains us, and that the Holy Spirit of God the Creator and Christ the Redeemer also loves and sustains the church!
- “Churches Reopening!” the headlines declare!
 - But the church has never closed

- The building has closed, but the church the body of Christ has not been shut down
- “Worship resumes!” the broadcasters proclaim
 - But while the church has not gathered together in recent months, most of us have been worshipping at home by video, or by reading a printout of the sermon
 - And not only that, but I know that many of you worship each and every day through nighttime prayers, or by using devotional booklets with daily meditations, or a prayer and thought sent to your email or phone text, or by pulling out your Bible and reading a passage that you choose
 - The church of Jesus Christ has continued to worship throughout this pandemic, just not all in the same place at the same time
- And while worship is central to the life of the church because in worship the Holy Spirit brings us into God’s presence, the worship of the church whether together or scattered throughout our community each day – the worship of the church SENDS us out in mission into the world
 - In our second lesson for today Saint Paul calls the church the Body of Christ
 - The church is the Body of Christ on earth, and not only do we share one baptism into the one and same crucified and risen Christ, God has also gifted the Church, the Body of Christ, through the work of the Spirit with what we – all the parts of the Body of Christ need for the whole church to be witnesses and servants in the world
 - And so, some of you are not only using our online worship resources, I know some of you are also telling others about them and inviting other folks to hear faithful hymns, to hear scripture and a sermon, and to join in the creed of the church and in prayer
 - Others are not only doing that, but are daily servants running errands for their family, their friends, and their neighbors.
 - Some of you are doing incredible daily ministry through your jobs – caring for the sick, comforting the dying, transporting food, stocking shelves with essentials, and

ensuring that at least this corner of creation has food, clothing, and shelter

- Many of us do simple things like keeping our distance in public and wearing masks, not just to be polite, but to give at least some protection to ourselves and others during this pandemic
- And I know that some of you have been dropping off food for the Little Free Pantry, as well as food for the Council of Churches' Food Pantry, and some of you with just a few days-notice dropped off dozens of egg cartons, and some of our members along with people from other churches distributed and sorted over 400 dozen eggs from big cases into those cartons that you brought in... and then you gave the eggs and the other food from the council of churches' pantry to people who need food
- We may not have gathered for Sunday, but the church has NOT been closed – the Body of Christ has been in worship and in mission each day that we have been scattered apart!
- And someday soon, we WILL assemble again to worship together, with the crucified and risen Christ in our midst as Jesus promised, and with the Holy Spirit working to assure us of God's love in the midst of all the changes that the pandemic brings in both our individual and congregational lives, so that we may be known as the Body of Christ, and that by the Body's gifted presence in the world continues to point to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit with its worship, with its witness, and with its service.