

May 17, 2017

In the Interim . . .

Pentecost

The church across the road from the one I served in the mountains of east Tennessee was the community Church of God. During my first year there, our members told me wonderful stories about that church, about their music and worship services and how they were different from ours.

One day in the spring when I was leaving our church, I saw the Church of God pastor in his parking lot, and I rushed over to meet him. I said, "I'm sorry I have not been over to introduce myself. Things have been so very busy during Lent and Easter season. I am so glad that we are in a slower season of the church year now."

He looked really puzzled when I said that. Then he said, "Oh yes, you Presbyterians do not place as much emphasis on the Holy Spirit as we do." He said, "This Sunday is Pentecost. It's our biggest Sunday of the year."

Every year when I come limping up to Pentecost Sunday, worn out from Easter and spring activities, I think about what that minister said. Do we Presbyterians place less emphasis on the Holy Spirit?

Everyone hears sermons about God as Father, even if only at a wedding or a funeral. It is fairly easy to talk of God as parent. And nearly everyone hears sermons about Jesus the Son, because Jesus translates divine qualities into human experience. But we hear less talk about God the Holy Spirit. We have difficulty describing the Spirit, and the thought that we might be Spirit-filled is a bit frightening.

Do we Presbyterians place too little emphasis on the Holy Spirit? Probably. We do not always live by the Spirit. We do not always use the Spirit's gifts. But do we deny the Spirit?

No. In our church's *Brief Statement of Faith*, we confess:

"We trust in God the Holy Spirit
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.
The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor.
And binds us together with all believers
In the one body of Christ, the church."

June 4 is Pentecost Sunday. **Red** is the liturgical color for the day, symbolizing the power and warmth of the Spirit in our midst. All worshipers are asked to wear **red** on this day.

We are Pentecost people. Lord, send your Spirit upon your church.