

Edina Morningside Community Church
United Church of Christ
Rev. Howard K. Bell
Sunday, May 15, 2016
The Mystery of Faith

I love the fact that we are celebrating Confirmation Sunday on Pentecost Sunday. Pentecost Sunday is a favorite celebration for me. As I have regularly shared with the Confirmands, the word that best captures my theological understanding of God, is the word mystery. I believe that God is Mystery. This means that I cannot fully know or understand God. To fully know and understand God would put myself into the place of God. Understanding God as mystery also leads me to understand that faith does not exist without doubt. If I have no doubt, then I have sure and certain knowledge. I choose faith in the face of my doubt.

What better way to explore the mystery of God and the mystery of faith than to read the story of Pentecost from the book of Acts? *“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.”* (Acts 2: 2-4) I invite you to imagine that a rush of wind were to fill this sanctuary, to imagine that we were to witness tongues of fire sitting on the heads of each of us, and to imagine if we were to begin to speak in languages from our ancestors which we have never learned.

UCC Minister, Lillian Daniel wrote the following words in the Still Speaking Devotional from this morning. *“Back in the early church, rich and poor, all genders, all ages, religious and non-religious – in other words, a whole messy mix of people – tried following Jesus together. I t must have felt like a bus full of people who were all singing along to different iPods. The Holy Spirit is the mother of us all, translating constantly, in the hope that her children will learn to love, live and laugh.”*¹

Yet the greatest mystery of that day and for us today, is of that they could understand one another; that we could fully understand one another with every word spoken. I am not certain that we understand one another fully all the time even when we speak the same language. Be open today to the mystery of Pentecost as we celebrate both the five confirmands who are choosing to be confirmed and the three confirmands who have chosen not to be confirmed. Each of them struggled with their decisions and the impact of their decisions on their lives. We rejoice with those who have chosen to be confirmed; but we also honor and hold in deep respect those who decided not to be confirmed at this time.

May God’s love be with each of you no matter what your decision is. May this church also continue to nurture each of you as you move forward in your journey of faith. May it be so. May we all be filled with the Holy Spirit this day. May we all celebrate the mystery of faith. Amen.

¹http://www.ucc.org/daily_devotional_mothers_translate?utm_campaign=dd_may15_16&utm_medium=email&utm_source=unitedchurchofchrist