

**A Letter to Our Newest Members**  
**The Monroe Congregational Church, UCC**  
**Rev. Jennifer M. Gingras**  
**May 23, 2021**

*Acts 2:1-4*

Dear Hannah, Emma, Aiden, Owen, Julia, Bella, Amy, Julie and Kate,  
I recently read a story about a woman in a church just like the one you joined this morning. She was one of those “saints of the church,” staying up late laying plans for a sister church in Cuba, rising early to bake bread to give out to homeless persons in need. She constantly engaged her life in acts of service that she felt deeply called to do.

At one point her pastor detected a sense of grief she was carrying and asked about it. It was then that the woman described daily visits to her mother who lay dying in a nearby hospital. Angry at God for this perceived injustice in her life, she described the process she invented to survive her mother’s imminent death.

*Does it surprise you that such a faithful, giving person could be angry at God in a moment like this?*

Here’s what the woman did. Day after day, in the same parking space, before entering the hospital, she sat in her car with her hands on the steering wheel, closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Each time she inhaled she said, “God’s presence”; each time she exhaled she said, “God’s peace.” Then, she waited there until “something in me changed.” Some days, it was just a few moments, other days, much longer.

She may not have been able to put it in words but what was happening is she was receiving the presence of the Holy Spirit to guard her breaking heart to guide her practice of faith in a really difficult moment.

She was learning what it meant to let go – not only of her loving mother – but all of those hard, painful feelings which she felt were separating her from God. Inspired by God’s Presence and Peace, she

was able to do the hard work of attending to her mother in her time of need. In the process, she drew ever closer to God.

Pentecost, the church holiday we celebrate today, rarely comes to us in one of those big dramatic moments like we read about in the second chapter of Acts. More typically, God's Spirit is given in moments of resignation with – a simple prayer in a hospital parking space – God's presence – God's peace, as Jesus breathes into us just what we need to take the next step.

Today we prayed for all of you as you took vows professing your faith and commitment to this family of faith and the wider church. You were confirming the promises made to you in your baptism. Prayers were offered for the Holy Spirit to inspire you, to guide you – God's Presence – God's Peace. It's not that you don't already have the Holy Spirit within you. You do. We all do. Each one of us carries the Divine spark within.

But our prayer today is to inspire once more – to breathe life into once again – to remind us all of God's presence and God's peace in this important rite of the church. It's the prayer that is spoken at least once a month as we receive the elements of love given to us in the "Bread of Life" and "Cup of a New Covenant." It's why we each take a vow of promising to participate in the life of the church, our reminder to us that we cannot do this alone.

But there is a deeper purpose for all of this. It is one thing to receive this blessed inspiration – in baptism, in confirmation, in the breaking of the bread – but it's entirely another thing to do something with it. Confirmands - I'd like to share just a few words from your essays about what this moment means for you, as a way of inspiring us all...

I have noticed (this year) that learning about my faith strengthens it!  
(Emma)

I do what I think Jesus would do. For example, I have helped my friends during tough times. (Julia)

We serve our communities by following what Jesus did in his.  
(Hannah)

Church reminds me of my dad, because when he was dying, he felt supported, loved and cared for... he would be proud that I am doing this. (Bella)

I love the community and environment inside and around the church.... When someone is hurt, or something bad has happened, there is a part of the service dedicated to praying for them. (Aiden)

God is really a part of me now. (Owen)

Thank you all for inspiring US in our faith journeys today.

Remember Jesus' last words to his disciples, "As my Father sent me, now I send you." We have been given the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in order to go forth and serve. That may take us in any one of a number of directions.

Confirmands and New Members, you have so much yet to look forward to – so much yet to discover – so much yet to do. I invite you to listen carefully to what God might be calling forth in you. How are you being called to serve? How might your specific talents and gifts be used to make the world a better place? It's a question we must all ask of ourselves – continuously. Can you hear what God is calling forth in you?

May God's Presence – God's Peace inspire each one of us on this Pentecost Sunday and may we rise to serve God in our own brokenness as we bring hope to our world. Amen.