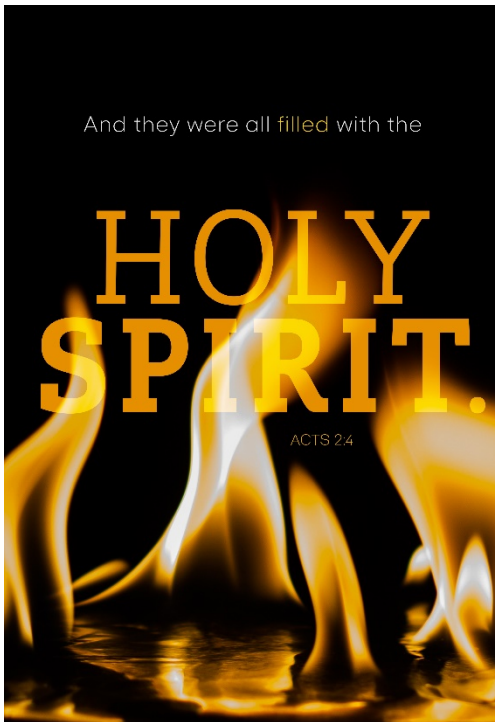


## PENTECOST - A "GALA" OF THE SPIRIT



We have long waited to gather for a celebration. Oh, how things have changed in the last 15 months. Weddings and receptions are now being planned with various restrictions. But they are finally happening. Certain states are opening completely while others are taking a more cautious approach. But things are improving. Therefore, this summer will indeed be a time for reunions at long last, vacations without masks, and yes, celebrations of one kind or another.

But this Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, reveals that our God is a God of celebration! It is a GALA of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is not only the beginning of a new season in the Church year but it notes the beginning of a new way God would draw people to Himself through the means of grace. The Festival of Pentecost is a celebration that we are a people who have as our heritage the unexpected, the limitless, the miraculous - we are Church - a people gathered together in celebration! We are ablaze with the power of God the Holy Spirit!

God-fearing Jews from every nation came together to celebrate the Festival of Pentecost - a harvest of thanksgiving whereby they would offer their firstfruits to God. But as they did, there was always confusion because, as they were dispersed throughout the world, they spoke different languages. But through the working of the Holy Spirit on this Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, all nations under heaven were able to hear and understand the wonders of God in their own language.

Can you imagine the joy of hearing and understanding the work of Christ to forgive their sin, heal their brokenness, and give them the gift of eternal life? It would be like receiving a personal letter, email, or text sharing a truth meant for you individually - and then recognizing that the person next to you is receiving the same incredible news for them personally. What a miracle! What a festive gathering!

But this miracle pales in comparison to the power of the Holy Spirit to create faith in the heart and to change lives for eternity. Scripture teaches the reality that no one can confess that, "Jesus is Lord" apart from the Holy Spirit. This is still true. Therefore, as we worship and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, God continues the work of Pentecost, and we are all personal witnesses of the mighty work of God. Out of many languages, the Spirit made clear one Word - all those who call on the name of Jesus Christ in faith are saved! Yes, Thy Strong Word, Lord is a saving Word worthy of celebration. The upcoming GALA is really a celebration of God's continued work of the Holy Spirit. God works today through people like you and me and through congregations, Districts and District Endowment Funds all working together in mission and ministry.

The Holy Spirit speaks through broken people, like each of us, to a broken world, using a language every broken heart can understand - **love**. The old evil foe seeks to divide us knowing that in the power of the Spirit, nothing is impossible for God's Church. Because we know what it is like to be broken by hatred, we can speak of the healing love of Christ's sacrifice. Because we know what it is like to be broken by despair, we can speak of the healing hope of Christ's forgiveness. Because we know what it is like to be broken by doubt, we can speak of the healing faith in Christ's promises. Because we know what it is like to be broken by illness, we can speak of the healing wholeness of Christ's resurrection. This language of love directs us TOWARD one another, to enjoy gathering in fellowship, to have strong bonds of concern and care, to be quick to settle hurts and struggles,

depending on the grace which flows from the cross of our Savior. The language of love directs us toward a GALA - a festive gathering in celebration of what God has done and promises to continue doing.

Pentecost transformed the first disciples. They spoke as the involved and as one community. The Festival of Pentecost still does the same for us! The whole chapter of Acts 2 reveals the roots for and the actions of a transformed community. Peter speaks as one involved, as one whose life has been shaped by the mighty acts of God. He recognized the whole of Scripture, the whole of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, as being God's plan to make him "Church" and to involve him in ministry. Therefore, on this celebration of Pentecost, we ask again for the Holy Spirit to create faith in our hearts, to teach us how to know Christ aright so that we may abide in Him until we are home with Him for eternity. But also, to boldly share God's Strong Word with the world.

**Therefore, we are called to this involvement as Church** - the work of the Holy Spirit in and through us in every aspect of the world around us - in the sincere concern for the health of others, to take a stand against injustice and prejudice, in the grace of going the second mile for someone in need, in acknowledging dependence upon God for strength, in daring to go against popular opinion to follow God's Strong Word, in the grace to confess when we are wrong, in the sharing of the Gospel in spite of our own inadequacies, in finding joy in unexpected places, in taking on responsibilities that we once thought were beyond us, in refusing to let greed take over our soul, in giving thanks always, even through the hard and impossible times like the last 15 months, in rising above past failures and putting past hurts behind us, in finding in Christ peace in the midst of turmoil, in knowing ourselves to be children of God, His Church.

Pentecost has given to us, the Church, a clear witness. May the Spirit simply, clearly communicate through God's Strong Word in us and through us that Christ lived, died and rose to forgive as He has each of us. That is Pentecost! The Word is at the center of everything. And we have quite a Word to speak: that life is stronger than death, that hope is deeper than despair, that every tear will be dried in the power of Christ's gift of salvation - forever!

So you see - the festival of thanksgiving - a celebration of firstfruits - and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit - what we now call Pentecost - directs us to our upcoming gathering as a District, the THY STRONG WORD VIRTUAL GALA, to celebrate and recognize the work of mission and ministry assisted by the endowment fund. May the Holy Spirit lead every member of every congregation to register for the upcoming GALA. And may He also fill us to overflowing with thanksgiving for what the Holy Spirit has done in directing God's work in and amongst us and also cause an upwelling of our souls to respond with generosity to fund the mission and ministry of the future through the building of the Endowment Fund.

Therefore, celebrate a festival of thanksgiving this weekend. But also look forward to "thanksgiving in June" with the upcoming THY STRONG WORD VIRTUAL GALA on June 13. Register with the link in this Servant to Servant or on the English District website: [www.englishdistrict.org](http://www.englishdistrict.org) Let the Holy Spirit work through you to share the word with the Church, your congregation, and spread God's Strong Word in thanksgiving for His salvation and His continuing work through the Spirit. This sounds like a good Hallmark movie - or better yet a GALA! Hope to see everyone there!!

In Christ Alone,  
Pastor John Diener  
Galatians 2:20

[evangelizationteam@englishdistrict.org](mailto:evangelizationteam@englishdistrict.org)