

“The Gifts of the Spirit”  
Pentecost Sunday  
May 31, 2020  
Presbyterian Church in Leonia

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Reflection on 1 Corinthians 12:3a-13: The Gifts of the Spirit

LEO: The Spirit is alive in me.

REEVE: The Spirit bubbles forth in me.

MARYELLEN: The Spirit is manifest in me for the common good.

VENGE: The Spirit has touched me.

LILY: I am gifted by the Spirit.

DAVID: What the Spirit has put in me, I use for God’s service.

JONATHAN: I may not have the same spiritual gifts you have,

SIBO: But I know that what *I* have to offer of the Spirit,

INGRID: Mixed with what *you* have to offer,

**LEO: Makes the body of Christ come to life.**

### **Ingrid- Wisdom**

The Holy Spirit is alive in me and has touched me with the gift of wisdom. I am enjoying this time of my life when God has granted me the wisdom to make choices that lead me to live a good life. Sometimes I didn’t have courage. I made mistakes, my failures hid the person God called me to be. But when I was willing to follow the Spirit and make changes, I was able to throw off the cloak of denial and failure and adorn myself in the cloak of wisdom. Now, little things don’t bother me much; I am much more at peace and seek serenity with my place in this life. I delight in sharing this peace with others. As nurse and as a deacon, I try to share wisdom in ways that others can receive. This usually means acknowledging people for who they are, connecting them to their own experiences and to openings where God is at work in their own being and becoming. My name is Ingrid and the Spirit is alive in me and I am enjoying it!

### **Jonathan- Knowledge**

The Holy Spirit is upon me, and what the Spirit has given me, I try to use in service to the community. Knowledge is my gift of the Spirit-- or rather, that I get geeked out about knowing things. I work at my day job, but I delight in moonlighting as a seminary student. I just love studying the bible on a deeper level, and what different theologians had to say about the faith we try to practice today. But I don’t just like knowing about churchy stuff. I know LOTS about gaming. I know tricks to winning various games, and I am a champion at Settlers of Catan. I try to use my gift of knowledge to the service of the community. I have taught Sunday School, and participated in Bible Studies at church. If you participated in Trivia on the last 2 Friday nights, you would know that I am the one who crafted the questions-- some people might think they were trivia, as in useless knowledge, but the way I see it is that these silly questions actually

brought a community together for something lighthearted and fun, when our world is a bit too heavy. The Holy Spirit is upon me, and I am happy to use what the Spirit has given me in service to God and to you.

### **Lily-Faith**

The Spirit of God is upon me, sparking the flame of faith in me. I'm just finishing the 6th grade, so you may not think that I-- a child-- have much to teach my elders about faith. But there is a reason Jesus told his followers, "Truly, unless you change and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of God." To me, faith and joy come hand in hand. If you've ever seen me at Camp Johnsonburg, you have seen me living into my fullest extent of both. I like to share my faith with others too, like sharing my favorite songs with the younger children of the church, or reading as a liturgist in worship. The truth is, without your faith, I would not have my faith. It was your promises that were made at my baptism, your support of our Sunday School program, your examples I have been given to follow, that have nurtured my faith today. It won't be long before I am officially a teenager. But I plan to bring my faith with me into these next years. The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as fire... to me, the Spirit is a campfire, and I am sitting right beside it, glowing from its warmth and passing its glow on to others.

### **Maryellen-Healing**

The Spirit bubbles forth in me, and has anointed me with the gift of healing. After my own family health struggles, I felt a calling to go into nursing. It has been challenging but meaningful work. Before the COVID crisis hit, I had developed a program in alternative healing in my hospital. Through touch and aromatherapy, I could make an anxious patient calm, and a restless patient sleep. Since the coronavirus hit, I have been serving those patients. I was literally walking through the valley of the shadow of death. But I knew my gifts could help make patients more comfortable, and at a minimum assure them that they were not alone. And, death does not have the last word. I am happy to share that in my hospital, we have seen these testimonies to healing. At 7 pm, New York City cheers for workers like me. But inside the hospital, we also cheer: over 7,000 of our COVID patients have walked out of the hospital, healed of the virus that once threatened their lives. My name is Maryellen Neu, RN, and I am touched by the Holy Spirit.

### **Sibo-Miracles**

The Spirit is alive in me, and has given me the gift of miracles. You may not expect that I have experienced miracles. Life has not been easy for me, at least not as easy as others around me. Family life has been hard. Getting my education has not been easy. Finding safe and affordable housing is still a struggle. Getting my immigration visa has taken years. But one thing you should realize: when things come easily to you, it is harder to spot a miracle. God has placed miracles in my life each step of the way. Sometimes it has been in the people who have helped me achieve my dreams, and to dream bigger. Sometimes it has been in my own stubborn persistence. The smile on my face is a testimony to the miracles God has shown in my life. I named my daughter Imani Miracle; Imani is from the Swahili language, and it means faith. Her middle name is Miracle, because of the faith in miracles that has brought me to this

point. I hope that her life will be easier, but that she will not forget God's gift of miracles. My name is Sibonike, and the Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

### **David- Prophecy**

You could say that the Spirit has given me the gift of prophecy. The prophets of old were messengers in a sense, proclaiming the will of God as they deliver messages on how to live.

The Bible shows us how the prophets first received their messages. God put a hand on Jeremiah as a boy, touching his mouth, and said, "Now I have put my words in your mouth."

God gave Ezekiel a scroll and told him, "Eat this scroll" so that Ezekiel would know what to say. Isaiah had a coal touched to his lips.

My story as a journalist isn't nearly so dramatic. I don't have coal, I don't eat words, and I'm not speaking the word of God. Rather, I have a laptop and a tape recorder and a notepad.

I use them to tell stories about the times we live in, about the quest for justice, the exercise of power, and the search for truth. It's not holy, but it can help to inform people in times like these. When disease claims both the vulnerable and the heroic, it can be hard to tell what's true and what's not.

Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." I'd like to live out my faith by helping others know what is true. My name is David, and the Spirit of the Lord is upon me.

### **Reeve--Discernment of Spirits**

The Spirit is manifest in me for the common good, and has gifted me with the power to discern spirits. Coming from Evangelical Christianity, I was taught that if someone suffered from depression, anxiety, addiction, or some other mental illness that if they trusted in God and prayed a lot, their problem would go away through the joy and peace of the Lord. It was as if they were possessed by an evil spirit that only God could remove and if they continued to struggle, their faith was not strong enough or they were not trying hard enough. However, God has shown me that there is so much more to the story. As a psychology major, I learned about how genetics, neurochemistry, past trauma, and external pressures are all factors in mental health. If you are experiencing mental illness, it is not your fault and there is hope that with treatment, you can find recovery and wellness. I worked in a child and adolescent mental health unit and learned that mental health issues do not make someone broken or far from God. God is right there with us in times of sadness, fear, and shame and does not judge us for experiencing difficult feelings. It is often in these hard moments that we learn more about ourselves and grow. I am starting a PhD program in clinical psychology in the fall, so that I can become an even better guide in helping people as they work through difficult mental health problems. My name is Reeve, and I am touched by the Spirit.

## **Venge- Tongues**

The Spirit is upon me and has anointed me with the power of tongues.

You may think I mean spiritual language, that kind that takes over a worshipper! Of course, I have seen these tongues send worshippers into a frenzied state which most people do not understand.

But I want you to know that my gift of tongues comes most to life when I'm doing my work with the United Nations. In my work, I must choose language carefully and diplomatically so that it can cut through the obstacles of our differences across nations, and appeal to our common desire to strengthen nations. I am an expert in the language of economics, and I use it for the economic and social empowerment of women and girls.

Of course, different obstacles come up when you bring together so many languages and cultures. But the Spirit has worked in me. In each country and continent I have lived, and with each language I've learned to speak, the Spirit has taught me something new about speaking and writing in ways others can understand.

On the day of Pentecost, we know the Spirit came down and gifted those who gathered with speaking many different tongues, so that all the nations heard and understood. I suppose the Spirit still shows up like that today.

My name is Venge, and the Spirit has gifted me with tongues, and I use them to help others find empowerment.

## **Leo-Interpretation of Tongues**

The Holy Spirit has given me a gift: the Interpretation of tongues. My whole life I have straddled 3 cultures: Korean, Japanese, and the mashup of US culture. So, I understand 3 languages. Right now as a 17-year old, I stand at the boundary between childhood and adulthood, so I can understand the language of either while also finding a voice that is distinctly my own. What is not as obvious from looking at me is that I am an interpreter of the language of music. I play 3 different instruments- the trombone, the piano, and my voice. One genre of music I particularly love is jazz, because it allows for so much interpretation. When I play, I try to convey the mood I want to share with others. What makes jazz unique from other kinds of music is the chance to improvise. In that moment, I get to take the language of the melody, and interpret it in new ways. These are the times in jazz when the musician's personality comes out the most. While you may not see me talking all the time at church, I am often listening, and interpreting not only what you say, but also what is not said. My name is Leo. I am touched by the Spirit, and my gift is to interpret tongues.