

Sermon Title: **“Pentecost Sunday”**

Bible: **Acts 2:1-21**

When: on Pentecost Sunday, June 5th, 2022

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

### **Opening Prayer**

O Lord, thank you so much for sending us the Holy Spirit. Yes, your Holy Spirit is here in us, with us, and among us. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **1. Pentecost Sunday**

Today is Pentecost Sunday. The word Pentecost comes from a Greek word meaning fiftieth. After the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus appeared to the disciples for forty days, and then he was taken up to heaven. He told the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit. After ten days of Jesus' ascension, after a total of fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came to the disciples as we read in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit was described like a wind or a fire. The disciples spoke in other languages, which were not spiritual languages. The crowd came and heard the words being spoken in their own native different languages. They did not understand what was happening. They thought that the disciples were drunk even as early as 9 a.m. in the morning. But Peter explained what was actually happening. It was not because of wine, but because of the Holy Spirit, based on the prophet Joel. After Peter explained it, about three thousand people became Christians. It was the beginning of our faith

community–church. So, Pentecost is known as the birthday of the Christian church.

## **2. Purpose of The Church**

What is the purpose of the church? Does the church exist for the church itself? When Peter explained the Holy Spirit, he used the prophet Joel, “[God] will pour out God’s Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” To prophesy means to speak up on behalf of God rather than to tell the future. Then, what do we speak up about on behalf of God? What visions do we see? What dreams do we dream? Do we speak up for ourselves? Do we see the visions for ourselves? Do we dream for ourselves? Did God give us the Holy Spirit for ourselves? Yes and no. Of course, God gave us the Holy Spirit for our spiritual life and for our faith journey. But, it is not the only purpose. Our spiritual life, our faith journey is not only for ourselves, but also for others and for the world. To speak up, to see the visions, to dream dreams are for others and for the world. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we, the church, exist. The Holy Spirit wants to work with us. And our ultimate purpose is not for ourselves, but for the world. In other words, the church exists for the world. Probably, that’s why our mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, not for the church.

## **3. May 24th**

Personally, May 24th is one of the most important days to me. It is the day when my only loved one was born. And to the Methodists, it is also an important day. It is called Aldersgate

Day. On May 24th, 1738, John Wesley experienced assurance of his salvation. He attended a group meeting on Aldersgate Street in London. When he studied the book of Romans, he felt his “heart strangely warmed.” It was not a conversion from no faith to faith in Christ. John Wesley was a Christian all his life. But his experience of Aldersgate was like the experience of the disciples on Pentecost day. Jesus’ disciples had lived with Jesus together for about three years. But on Pentecost day, when they received the Holy Spirit, they were not just followers of Jesus. They became the disciples of Jesus Christ. We are Christians, who love God and who love our neighbors. But in our faith journey, don’t we have a moment of Aldersgate Day or a moment of Pentecost Sunday?

To me, May 24th, 2022, is that moment. May 24th, 2022, is the day of mass shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. While celebrating my wife’s birthday, and meditating on Aldersgate Day, my heart and mind were broken. My body still remembers the last day of the Gilroy Garlic Festival in 2019, about three years ago. There was a mass shooting. After I heard the news of the shooting, I was holding a church directory in one hand, and my cell phone in the other hand. That Sunday evening, I tried to reach out to all of our church members and friends in the church directory. When I heard their voices, when I saw their texts, when I received Facebook messages, when I saw their faces, I was so relieved. At that time, I was not crying. Maybe, there was not enough time to look at my emotions. But I am crying these days, when I hear the news about mass shootings again in various places. And my heart and mind, and my body are broken and heavy.

#### 4. Our Call to End Gun Violence

Because I am your pastor and a pastor of the United Methodist Church, I would like to share “Our Call to End Gun Violence.” Before sharing it, I would like to share that I am a Korean. I am not an American citizen yet. This means that I cannot do two things. I cannot serve on jury duty. Have you served on jury duty before? Anyone? Did you like it? The other thing that I cannot do is to vote. I cannot vote on California State ballots, and for the United States. Because I received my green card last year, in about four years, I will be eligible to be a citizen. Then, I will be able to vote. For now, I do not have the right to vote. To be considered for jury duty and to vote are privileges. I will be ready for that privilege in four years. One of my dreams is that there will be no need to call and vote to end gun violence, after four years when I become a citizen.

As a Christian, as a Methodist, and a pastor, I will share one of the resolutions, “Our Call to End Gun Violence.” The 2016 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church has a part of the Social Principles. Its preface says, “The United Methodist Church has a long history of concern for social justice.” We, the United Methodists, do not close our eyes and ears to issues of social justice. We pray every Sunday, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” There is “A Call to End Gun Violence” in The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church. It was adopted in 2016. I will not go through it. But, I made some copies of it, including the preface. If you are interested in them, please take them and read them. Please remember that the social principles are not the church law. But it is our denominational

prayerful and thoughtful effort regarding our contemporary social issues. It is totally okay to disagree. We are Methodists who agree to disagree. Even I do not agree with all of it. But don't we agree with our compassion for social justice? And don't we feel the Holy Spirit urging us to do something, to take actions to end gun violence?

I would like to introduce how Rev. Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection takes action. He sends letters to legislators, especially to reduce school shootings. He also invites his congregation and other churches to do the same, while sharing sample letters. I will read some parts of a sample letter to the state legislators.

“Dear State Legislators,

Thank you for the work you do on my behalf as representatives. Last [month], we all grieved for the lives of 19 children and two teachers killed at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas...

I know you care about our state's children. Please, take action to protect our children.

To that end, I write to encourage bi-partisan efforts to reduce school shootings focused on:

Expanding Mental Health Access:

Responsible Gun Storage:

Licensure and Training:

Background Checks:

You have the power, as legislators, to leave a legacy of safer schools, and better policies to protect the lives of our children. I'm pleading with you to please act.”

I also made copies of the sample letters. If you want to join in sending these letters, this is how to do so:

1. Find your representatives' names and email addresses here: [openstates.org](https://openstates.org)
2. Copy the text of the letter and paste it into an email.
3. Tweak the letter to represent your own views.

4. Address it to your representatives by name, sign your name at the end, & send it.

I believe that one of the privileges that you have is to ask our legislators to work, especially to protect our children and our school campuses. I do not have this privilege yet. As a local church, we can do something for our local community. As a Cal-Nev Annual Conference, we can do something for our states of California and Nevada. As a United Methodist Church, we can do something for this nation. Perhaps, that's why God sent us the same Holy Spirit.

Today, we will have Communion. When we receive the body of Jesus Christ, let us pray together that "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." As we become the body of Jesus Christ, let us take actions to become the hands and feet of Jesus Christ for this broken world. We pray and we take actions. We take actions and we pray. When we join in Communion, may God's love and justice be overflowing through us, through our actions.

### **Closing Prayer**

O Lord, your Holy Spirit is in us. Please help us to listen to the Holy Spirit and to take action for our neighbors, our children, our community, and our nation. In Jesus' name. Amen.