Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 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.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my 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. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 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.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. And they each heard, each in their own language. As all the people gathered to hear the Word of God, each speaking in their own language, we might have expected a great cacophony, a horrendous babble of incomprehensibility! Instead, the Holy Spirit created a symphony, a symphony of life, in which we all join together, each in our own unique way, contributing to the music that is God. Just as we just heard from members of our own congregation this morning. A symphony of life.

It’s Choir Recognition Sunday, the day each year in which we say “Thank you” to our fabulous choirs and musicians. Here at First UMC, we may be tempted to take this great music for granted. We get to hear it each and every week. Visitors come and say “wow!” and we may be thinking: “oh that? It’s always like that. You know, extraordinarily stupendous. No big deal. It’s what we do here.”

And not only that, we get to participate in it, as listeners and as singers ourselves. Our choirs sing and bells ring beautiful anthems, and our organists do amazing solos, but I think that maybe their greatest gift to us is to make us all sound great when we join together in singing the praise of God. Every week we all get to be part of the symphony of life.

Making music together is part and parcel of being human. Do you know that archaeologists have found, in southwestern Germany, flutes that are at least 35,000 years old? They think these bone and ivory flutes may just be the first flowering of music-making in Stone Age culture. Pretty interesting, when you think about those early homo sapiens who surely had to spend most of their time trying to find enough food and water just to stay alive, and were always worried about some wild beast eager to have them for dinner. Still, evidently, they found time to carve instruments. Still they must have felt a need of music. Their souls must have told them that life is more than food and drink and shelter. It’s music that goes beyond survival and invites us into the symphony of life.
And from the other carvings found in the vicinity of these ancient flutes, they think that music, even then, was *instrumental*—shall we say—*instrumental* in creating social networks, community, little symphonies of the first *homo sapiens*.

I think that’s why we still crave opportunities to sing and make music together to this day. Something in us wants to sing. You know, at Rotary, we sing goofy songs at lunch every Friday. It’s weird. We usually sound terrible. But we love it and just when I fear that visitors might think we’re all nuts, they report that they love our spirit and the great fellowship evident in our club. It’s the music.

It’s why karaoke is so popular.

I think that’s why in restaurants, when we see a waiter appear with a little cupcake with a lighted candle, we turn around to see who it’s for and half the place joins in singing “Happy Birthday” to a perfect stranger. It’s the music, the community, the symphony of life that we create together.

So, thank you, thank you, thank you, choirs, not only for the music you present to us so generously and faithfully, but even more, for inviting us all to join you. No matter if we can carry a tune or not, can read music or don’t have a clue. Know a song by heart or have never heard it. Or maybe we’re the people behind the scenes, who make sure there are hymnals in the pew racks, who open the doors and hand out the orders of worship, and pay to keep the lights on. You make it possible for us all to have a part to play in God’s amazing, beautiful, symphony of life.

For God is still pouring out the Holy Spirit upon us all—young and old, men and women, people of every language and culture, every role and ability, that together our lives might sing out God’s glorious symphony of prophecy, vision, justice, salvation, love, redemption, hope, and dreams for a world hungry for song, for harmony, for beauty, and for joy.

Thanks be to God and thanks be to you.

Amen.

Jan Ellis - Cherub Choir  
Janet Searfoss - Children's Choir  
Patty Eskridge - Youth Choir and Youth Handbell Choir  
Mary Crawford - Amadeus Handbell Choir  
Fang-Ning Lim - Accompanist for Children's and Youth Choruses

Section Leaders/Soloists for Chancel Choir:  
Barbara Smith, soprano  
Erin Wood, alto  
Dennis Parnell, tenor  
William Trabold,

Christoph Bull - principle organist  
Mary Gerlitz - associate organist  
Roger Daggy - assistant organist  
Jim Smith - Director of Music

Notes:  

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