

## Born of the Spirit

*God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8, CEB)*

It may be painfully obvious to you by now (or not) but one of the goals I have for our congregation is that we would truly "claim our name" as we live out our faith together in community. Our name, of course, is Trinity UMC. We can come back to the "UMC" part of it later, but for now, I want us to focus on the first part of our name: **Trinity**.

Between the devotion I wrote for last week's "What's Happening" news and the sermon Rhonda Johnston preached this past Pentecost Sunday, I am hoping that you are realizing how much we Christians tend to neglect the third person of the Trinity. In fact, pastor/author Francis Chan refers to the Holy Spirit as the "Forgotten God" because of our neglect in recognizing the power the Holy Spirit offers us. I'm hoping we will realize just how powerful our spiritual lives can be when we encounter the presence of God through the Holy Spirit.

In the above Scripture verse from John 3:8, Jesus explains the spiritual life to Nicodemus, who is a religious leader in the Jewish faith. Does Nicodemus know Scripture (what we know as the Old Testament)? You bet he does! Is his faith part of his regular weekly routine? Of course - he is a religious man. And yet, this concept of the Holy Spirit, which is like the wind, seems to befuddle Nicodemus. And so Jesus uses the opportunity to teach, as he so often does.

Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as being at the center of the spiritual birth that people go through when they receive new life in Christ. We might think of it in the same way as a child who is born into the world. When that child emerges from his or her mother's womb, one of the first signs of life we look for is what? A first breath. A first cry. I remember vividly waiting for what seemed like forever while a team of doctors and nurses cleared meconium out of our son Daniel's air passageways. Until they were clear, they would not allow him to take his first breath. Up until the point of birth, the child has not had to breathe, for oxygen has been provided via the umbilical cord. But, all of a sudden the child has entered a new world. And her or his very life depends upon the lungs filling up with oxygen on a regular basis.

Did you know that the average person breathes about a thousand times per hour? Unless you get me thinking about it, I don't even realize that I'm doing it (although as you read this devotion, I'm sure you're paying more attention to your breathing now!) Since you're probably aware of it at the moment, go ahead and take a deep breath. Don't settle for those shallow breaths that we seem to take most of the day. As you breathe in deeply, connect your breath to prayer. Simply invite the Holy Spirit to come and "fill you up" as air fills your lungs. You might mediate something along the lines of "Holy Spirit, you are welcome here..." As you do so, realize that the Holy Spirit is like the wind, coming and going as she wishes. If we are wise, we will not try and fight or control the movement of the Spirit, but align ourselves with the Spirit's movement, like an expert boater would with a sail in the wind currents.

This week, on Trinity Sunday, I plan to share more with you about the Holy Spirit and then connect the entire Trinity - Father, Son, Holy Spirit - to our call to be Sent People.

Sent with You in the Spirit,

*Pastor David Rittgers*