

Head in the Clouds and Feet on the Ground

Acts 2:1-42

Center Church, Hartford - Pentecost

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Alicia Keys sings “Oh, we got our feet on the ground, and we’re burning it down. Oh, got our head in the clouds and we’re not coming down.” (“this girl is on fire...)

That’s how it was on Pentecost and in the days immediately afterward. The disciples, the new believers, feet on the ground organizing what would become First Church of Jerusalem, and heads decidedly in the clouds, feeling strong against opposition and skepticism of all kinds from very powerful people, believing and imagining ridiculously that this band of fisherfolk and tax collectors and hicks from the sticks could change the world.

By God, they did.

We know that because we are here, lo, these 2000 years later, telling the story they lived.

But I gotta say, in many ways the church has become folk with their feet on the ground, but we’ve withdrawn our heads from the clouds. In many ways, in many churches, we have lost what one writer called “that wild courage, that crazy gladness, that shuddering faithfulness even unto the end of the world, though which new things can come to pass.” (Frederick Buechner)

In many ways, the church has become domesticated. The Christians in it have, too. I admit that can be true for me. I get caught up in the details, the spreadsheets, the schedules, and I forget the fire. You, too?

I invite all of us today, new members, old members, guests to reclaim the fire of Pentecost, the connection with the Holy Spirit that moves us to be and do more than we can ask or imagine, that compels us to tell this story and bring hope and love to people who need it. To burn so brightly that we illuminate the city of Hartford, and then scatter to burn in New Britain and Wethersfield and Windsor and Cromwell and Bloomfield and wherever we are.

How might we do this? I have a couple of suggestions. First, intentionally listen and look for God acting for good in the world. Those disciples spoke on

Pentecost of the “mighty acts of God,” Jesus healing, feeding, teaching, speaking truth to power, forgiving. If we think God is still at work, where do we see it? I see it in the people who risked jail to give water to those who crossed over into our country in the desert and would have died without it. I see it here in GHIAA and those who are standing together to bring justice and relief to people living in substandard housing owned by millionaires. I see it every day in what may seem to be random acts of kindness toward me and others, but are really part of the fire seeking to spread a culture of love in what is now a culture of selfishness, exclusion, hate and fear.

Once we recognize God at work, we can't un-see it. Then we conquer our fear and find again that wild courage.

I encourage us to find that crazy gladness. The disciples were full of joy. How much joy do you see in the world today? Here in worship we nurture that gladness and it is wonderful when it goes a little crazy with the Spirit and isn't domesticated. How can we do that better? How can we be a little reckless with our love and our joy that we are not abandoned by God but filled with a Spirit of power and love? How can we become Atomic Fireballs for God?

The “now what” of the days after Pentecost was, let's see! There was no long-range plan, just oceans of love. Things got messy and people quarreled and they sorted it out and kept on believing in and spreading that love.

As we sort out our mission and what the next steps are that we need to take to live it out, we need to keep our feet on the ground, but we desperately need to get our heads in the clouds from time to time to remember that the Spirit blows where it will and we need to be agile, joyful, hopeful, courageous, travel light, and be willing to follow! Amen.