



STEEPLE VIEWS

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF WAKEFIELD

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION

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VOLUME 33, ISSUE 5

MAY 2009

THE PASTOR'S PAGE

A VERY SPECIAL PENTECOST: CONFIRMATION SUNDAY, MAY 31ST

Our church family is blessed with the presence and participation of a growing number of children and youth. Eight of those talented and thoughtful young people will be celebrating their Confirmation (Affirmation of Baptism) on May 31st; two of them will be baptized that day, as well! It has been a great blessing to explore many dimensions of the faith-filled life with these astute theologians-in-making. How very fitting it is that this special worship service will take place on Pentecost— that wonderful Sunday on which we lift up the birth of the Church itself, as well as God's lavish bestowing of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon some of the early followers of Jesus!

This worship service will be written and facilitated by the Confirmands themselves, and I am sure it will be inspiring to all! It has become apparent that there is no more universally cherished goal articulated by our church members than that of growing and cherishing the younger segment of our fellowship. I hope with all my heart that church members and friends will turn out for worship on May 31st to show their love for and support of our Confirmands.

The following youngsters have participated in the Confirmation journey: Sienna Canney, Cameron Cook, Alisa Eaton, Ayla Farley, Seth Fogg, Austin Gehring, Allie Herman and Shannon Mercer. Thanks to the following adults who are serving as their mentors: Jo Szirbik, Penny Ellis, Donna Ackerman, George Ackerman, Dave Schweitzer, Cathy Koukal, Harriet Wilson and John Shaffer. A huge word of thanks goes to Penny Ellis, who has been wonderfully helpful, creative, and active in helping with the Confirmation experience!

Springtime blessings to all! Please be sure to mark your calendars for worship on May 31st. Let's offer our affirmation for those who will make their Confirmation!

Blessings and peace,

Mary

“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” *Matthew 19:14*

SOMETHING NEW FOR ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the New Hampshire Conference of the UCC is happening at a whole new place and time this year. The planning group had received much feedback over the years encouraging of trying a new approach. This year, it will take place on Saturday and Sunday, May 16 and May 17 at lovely Waterville Valley. There will be excellent programming for children and youth, with fun activities and service projects planned for them to take part in at no charge all day Saturday.

If interested, please ask Mary about it, or check the Conference website at www.nhcucc.org. Our pastor will attend the meeting, along with delegate Bob James. Youth Coordinator Jane Ostrye hopes to attend with some members of the youth group. We look forward to bringing back news of the gathered Conference!

GENERAL SYNOD 2009

Once again, our church will be well represented at General Synod, to take place this year at the end of June in Grand Rapids, Michigan. General Synod is the very spirited gathering of the United Church of Christ at the national level that is held every two years. Connie Littlefield and Molly James will go as delegates; Pastor Mary will be going along as a visitor. Margie Galabrun will be in attendance by virtue of her involvement on one of the national level governing bodies of the UCC. We are all looking forward to going, and to returning with inspired tales of the great work of the United Church of Christ in the world.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School will be held at our church this summer from August 3 through 7. Registration information will be forthcoming. Please keep this program in mind if you have young guests visiting with you this summer. *Jan Stanley*

Steeple Views is published monthly by the First Congregational Church of Wakefield, NH and is available by email. To be added to our emailing list, please contact the editors, Carol Jeffery and Lynn Shaffer at steepleviews@gmail.com.

PARISH HELPERS LUNCHEON

On May 14 at 12 noon, we will meet at Granite Steak & Grille in Rochester for the annual luncheon and installation of officers. Everyone may order off the menu, separate checks will be provided, and 18% gratuity will be included. All women are welcome at the Parish Helpers! Please let Janet Carr know if you plan to attend.

ABOUT THAT PLEDGE CARD YOU HAVEN'T SENT

Is your pledge card still sitting in your mail pile? You meant to bring it Pledge Sunday, but forgot. Then you thought you'd mail it instead, but there it sits.

Maybe you're considering not pledging at all and just giving what you can every week. Have you thought about how not pledging impacts our church? Could you run your household properly if you had no idea how much money was coming in? It's the same with the household of the people of God. Our church can't plan a realistic budget if we don't know how much money to expect. Just giving what you can every week sounds okay at first but what about all those weeks you miss church? It's easy to get off track. Remember that pledge card you meant to bring on Pledge Sunday and meant to mail that's still sitting there? Good intentions don't pay the bills.

So why not decide what you can afford to pledge, mail in the card, and keep your commitment to our church. Thanks for being a good steward!

Linda Petkunas/ Stewardship Committee

FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER

This month, we are asked to hold in prayer the people of the Community Church of Milton, and their pastor, Betsy Webber. Each month, our church is also held in prayer by the pastor and congregation of one of our sister churches in the Carroll-Strafford Association of the New Hampshire Conference of the United Church of Christ. It's nice to know we are all thinking of one another.

Rev. Mary James

MARSHA STEVENS TO SING AT OUR CHURCH

To celebrate our 5th Anniversary of becoming An Open and Affirming Church, Marsha Stevens will perform a concert on June 6, 2009 at 7:00 pm. Tickets will be sold for \$10. She will also join us in our worship service on June 7. The following is her biography:



In 1969, Marsha Stevens was a troubled adolescent when she had her first conscious encounter with Christ while participating in a Bible study group. In the vision this encounter evoked, she saw herself walking with Jesus near a deep blue river and this experience both changed and saved her life. Following it, she composed the folk hymn, *For Those Tears I Died* (Come To The Water). The song has now become a standard of Christian Hymnals and it launched her career as a Christian singer/songwriter.

At the age of 18, Stevens sang and toured with the Christian folk group, The Children of the Day. Over the next nine years, the group recorded six albums, with Stevens writing many of the songs. She also sang and provided back-up vocals on several of the *Maranatha* and *Praise* albums and toured extensively in the United States, as well as Canada, Israel and Europe, opening for Pat Boone, Billy Graham, Andrae Crouch and Kris Kristofferson, among others.

She eventually married and began a family. Then, in 1979, after seven years of wedlock, she divorced. She had fallen in love with a woman. "When I came out as a born again lesbian, I didn't anticipate that people would come unglued the way they did," Stevens said. "Once the church found out, people came over and told me to take the 'Jesus Is Lord' sign off my door. People would rip the pages out of their hymnals containing my songs and send them to me with hate mail."

It took Stevens five years to sort out her life and to reconcile herself with her Christianity. She studied nursing through the University of the State of New York and eventually became a Registered Nurse to support herself and her two children. "It was during that time that I found out that I didn't need to *come out to God*," she said. "I found that the Word still burned in my heart and I could not contain it. I began to sing again."

Stevens now focuses her talents on evangelizing the lesbian and gay community through her gospel music. "I hope my music breaks through the religious rhetoric we've come to hate and talks about our longing to see purpose in our existence and healing for our hearts." In 2006 BALM Ministries launched a bridge-building program to churches in mainstream denominations to assist in their efforts to become inclusive of all God's children.

Highly respected throughout the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), she is the first lay recipient of the prestigious Purple Grass Award for excellence as an evangelist. Stevens has recorded 10 solo albums and a concert video on her independent BALM (Born Again Lesbian Music) label and she performs between 150 and 200 concerts a year.

BALM Ministries is an affiliated ministry of King of Peace Metropolitan Community Church of the UFMCC. Marsha has co-written the UFMCC General Conference theme song for every annual conference since 1985. Since 1993 she has toured full-time in ministry to the GLBT community. And since 2003 she and her wife, Cindy, have traveled throughout the US, Canada and Mexico ministering, singing and sharing Christ's hope, healing and reconciliation.

Stevens is listed in the *American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers' (ASCAP)*, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music* and *Who's Who in American Music*. Her recordings are consistently rated among the top 25 of all gay releases and she has been nominated for a GLAMA (Gay and Lesbian American Music Award) and named for a Pioneer Award by GLAMA. She was a headliner at the Millennium March on Washington stage. In 2003 her song "Jesus Wept" was selected as the genre winner by the Stonewall Society and in 2004 she received a Special Recognition award from Out Music for her accomplishments, and her most recent album, "You Called Us Good" received the award for Best Album - Inspirational in 2006.

In 2003 Marsha and Cindy launched the upBeat! Music Ministry Training Program for emerging music artists in ministry to the GLBT community. To date 38 artists have participated in the program. Marsha's website is www.BalmMinistries.com. This site contains information for concert booking, her concert tour schedule, the upBeat! program schedule and links to purchase her CD's.

COMMITTEE UPDATE PAGE

The **Library Committee** along with the Pastoral Relations Committee had a very successful Easter Sunday Breakfast! The food was delicious and we had a great turnout. Thanks to all who volunteered food.

Midge Leonard, Library Committee Chair

The **Outreach Committee** continues to work on ways to promote the idea of “Sharing Our Blessings”. Each month we will focus on one of the ministries our church uses to spread the love of God throughout our community and world. One Great Hour of Sharing was highlighted last month. May’s focus is Blankets + with a special collection taking place on Mother’s Day. To learn more about Blankets + read the article included elsewhere in this issue. *Jan Brejwo, Outreach*

Christian Education—Thank you to everyone that has attended our Free Family Movie Time. It has been a lot of fun. We will be having our next Free Family Movie Time on Saturday, May 23, from 3 to 5 p.m. We will be showing *Hotel for Dogs*. We are also looking for a rocking chair for the nursery. If you have one and would like to donate it, please let Penny know.

Penny Ellis, Church School Coordinator

FROM THE DIACONATE

The celebration of Easter was a joyous occasion! What a wonderful day to connect with those we haven’t seen in some time, those we miss, those we wish to see more of, and those who fill a space in our hearts and our thoughts.

What a wonderful time to re-ignite relationships—with friends, with self, with the great outdoors, and with our Lord and Savior. This re-igniting revs us with energy as we re-vitalize the tried and true and as we move forward to encounter new things.

Many exciting things will be happening in the near future. By the time you receive this a group will have gone to City Reach in Boston; the Z-Team will be traveling to Zimbabwe in July; weddings are being planned; baptisms will be conducted; and perhaps we will even have new members look to join our church—a church which is vital and vibrant, giving and growing.

Our church, however, is not without struggle. As committees finalize their budgets and as we approach our annual meeting, careful consideration must be made to our future. We know that our future is our children! We see more children in church and this is wonderful! We welcome more and more children and their families and support Rev. Mary and the Christian Education Committee that we need a defined program and leader for them. Isn’t it great to hear the babies cooing, see all the children handing out palms, hear the scriptures being read, and watching the confirmation classes move forward? Maybe these children will be sitting in your seat in the next decade or two! As we nurture them, they revitalize us. And we welcome this! *Chris Gatchell*

BLANKETS +

Spring has sprung, but do you remember this winter when the cold was so bitter? How about those of us who might have lost power and with it our heat, remember that? There are people in the world who have so little and many in this country just trying to survive. For over 60 years, Church World Services has worked in partnership with local communities to identify their needs and access the resources they need to build the foundation for a more viable future. Some of those needs are:

- **Blankets, tents, food** and other emergency supplies in the wake of a disaster
- **Tools and seeds** for refugees returning home to replant their fields
- **Wells** for families living in drought prone areas to provide clean, safe water to drink and to irrigate crops and gardens.
- **Literacy training and microcredit** for women struggling to realize their potential.

During the month of May, the Outreach Committee will be providing an opportunity for you to contribute to the Blankets + program. A special collection will be taken on Mother’s Day. You can also use the Outreach envelopes available in the church pews for a monetary donation at any time throughout the month. Every little bit helps others in their time of need. As we pass through these cool evenings of spring, snuggled deep in our warm blankets, let’s use this as a reminder of those who are blanket-less.

YOU ARE THE PLUS IN BLANKETS +!!!

Donna Ackerman, Outreach

May 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<p>10AM—Worship and Sacrament</p> <p>11AM—Confirmation Class</p>		<p>12PM—Bible Study</p>	<p>6PM—All Church Committee Meeting</p>	<p>10AM—Scrabble</p> <p>7PM—Community Folk Band with Seth Austen</p>	<p>5:45PM—Temple Israel Visit for Confirmation Class</p>	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
<p>10AM—Worship Mother's Day and Blanket Sunday</p> <p>11AM—Coffee, hosted by Voice Choir</p>		<p>12PM—Bible Study</p>	<p>6PM Pairs and Spares</p> <p>6:00PM—Church Council Meeting</p>	<p>12PM—Parish Helpers Luncheon at Granite Grille</p> <p>7PM—Community Folk Band with Seth Austen</p>		<p>Pride Day</p> <p>NH Conference Annual Meeting</p>
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
<p>10AM—Worship Service</p> <p>NH Conf. Annual Meeting</p>		<p>10AM—Scrabble</p> <p>12PM—Bible Study</p>	<p>STEEPLE VIEWS DEADLINE</p>	<p>Ascension Day</p> <p>7PM—Community Folk Band with Seth Austen</p>		<p>3PM—Family Movie Time "Hotel for Dogs"</p>
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
<p>10AM—Worship</p> <p>31</p> <p>10AM—Worship Pentecost & Confirmation Sunday</p> <p>11AM—Coffee hosted by Voice Choir</p>	<p>MEMORIAL DAY—CHURCH OFFICES CLOSED</p>	<p>12PM—Bible Study</p>	<p>6PM—Bible Study</p>	<p>7PM—Community Folk Band with Seth Austen</p>	<p>Steeple Views Collation</p>	<p>6:30PM - Z Team Service Auction</p>

June 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 6PM—All Church Committee Meet- ing	4 10AM—Scrabble 7PM—Community Folk Band with Seth Austen	5	6 Ginny Wentworth Service Marsha Stevens Concert
7 9:30AM—Worship -celebrating 5 years of ONA. Luncheon and Panel Discussion	8	9	10 6PM Pairs and Spares 6PM—Bible Study	11 1PM—Parish Help- ers 7PM—Community Folk Band with Seth Austen	12	13
14 9:30AM—Worship Children's Sunday 10:30AM—Coffee, hosted by Officers and Staff 11AM—Annual Meeting	15	16 10AM—Scrabble	17	18	19	20
21 9:30AM—Worship Service	22	23	24 STEEPLE VIEWS DEADLINE	25 <u>General</u>	26 <u>Synod</u>	27 <u>2009</u>
28 9:30AM—Worship Service 10:30AM—Coffee, hosted by Officers and Staff	29	30				

MAY BIRTHDAYS

1 Amy McPherson	9 Maurice Hatch	17 George Ackerman Jr	22 Hope Jahn
3 Sarah Connell	11 Sharon Baldwin	17 Bridgette Gehring	23 Marc Galabrun
3 Jim Perkins	11 Patricia Martin	18 Lance MacLean	23 Lynn Shaffer
4 Kyle Hall	11 Wayne Robinson	19 Dimi Dimitroff	29 Scott Twombly
4 Morrill Vittum	13 Nicholas Gatchell	19 Cindy Eggleston	30 Carolyn Chase
5 Emma Dolbear	13 Dot Roberts	20 Gregory Bolstridge	31 Brittany Frothingham
6 Jeremy Nason	14 Ryan Elliott	20 Frank Petkunas	31 Jan Goslin
7 Jane Ostrye	14 Elizabeth Fogg	21 Mim Sargent	31 Brett Young
8 Scott Mercer	14 Scott Frothingham	22 Susie Goodwin	

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

- 1 Sid & Ginny Silcocks
- 4 Kenneth & Robbin Fifield
- 13 Charlie & Ann Bilodeau
- 18 David & Gisela Haag
- 29 Bill & Sue Denley
- 29 Rob & Kelly Druge
- 31 Dick & Harriet Wilson



The Johannessen Family thanks the congregation for prayers, cards, time, thoughts and foods that were so lovingly given during Leif's last few months. You comforted him and all of the family with your kind words and expressions of love.

With deep appreciation, Berit

FELLOWSHIP OF CONCERN

We ask your continued prayers and support for those members of our church and wider community who are ill, or who suffer in mind, body, or spirit, and for their families.

Remember also . .

Our servicemen and women, especially those deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan
The Darfur region in Africa and our friends in Rufumiso, Zimbabwe
Residents of the Nursing Homes and Retirement Communities in our area



Z TEAM UPDATE

The Z Team is excited about the possibility of meeting members of the Zimbabwe delegation scheduled to be in NH from May 15th through June 1st. Seven Zim visitors were denied visas but the remaining 11 will circulate around NH. We are very excited to be able to see our dear friend Rev. FT Mutsumbei, aka Baba. We have shared Baba's story many times in the past four years as well as excerpts from his emails updating us on the changing conditions in Zimbabwe. Baba is the Eastern Conference superintendent and Ukama chairperson for the UCCZ. He is highly in demand while in NH so he may only be able to spend a very short amount of time in Wakefield. Baba wondered about being able to get an appt to have his eyes checked while here and Chris Gatchell contacted Dr. Herb Clark of Rochester who agreed to donate the exam and the glasses! If you are a patient of Dr. Clark's, please mention how grateful we are. We will also be preparing a special thank you card and any who know Dr. Clark are encouraged to sign it.

Congratulations to Rejoice and Owen Dhliwayo on the birth of their daughter, Dionne Shanell Dhliwayo, on April 5, Palm Sunday, and is the granddaughter of Rev. AJ Mhururu, who visited us three years ago. Rev. Mhururu's wife and mother both passed away in 2008 so this is such a blessing for their family. Owen is the youth coordinator for the UCCZ in Zimbabwe and he and Rejoice are now guardians for Rumbidzai Mkwirimba, the young woman whom the Parish Helpers are sponsoring.

More good news! In April the Zimbabwe government officially suspended the use of Zim currency opening up the foreign currency market and the US has lifted travel warnings. The US dollar and the SA rand, along with currency of other nearby countries, are now being used so goods are more readily available and the prices have dropped. or at least relatively so as the Zim inflation rate was formerly measured in millions. As Bertha Jambaya emailed, "things are getting better but they aren't perfect." You can feel the tentative sense of hope for the future. We need to keep praying that the wind of change with the new unity government keeps blowing!

Connie Littlefield

FAMILY MOVIE TIME



The next family movie time will be held on May 23 from 3 to 5 p.m. *Hotel for Dogs* is about two children who after being placed in a foster home that doesn't allow pets, turn an abandoned hotel into a home for their dog. Soon other strays arrive, and the hotel becomes a haven for every orphaned canine in town. But they have to do some quick thinking to keep the cops off their tails. *Hotel for Dogs* is a funny family film based on Lois Duncan's book of the same name and is appropriate for most ages 5 and older in spite of its PG rating for mild thematic elements, language, and some crude humor. There will be hot dogs, cookies, drinks and fun! Join in and bring a friend!

Penny Ellis, Church School Coordinator

EARTH STEWARDSHIP

Have you seen the booklet, [The 350 Primer: A Manual of First Steps to Lower Your Carbon Footprint and Move toward a More Energy Efficient and Sustainable Lifestyle?](#)

It was compiled by Sue Jones, a member of The Congregational Church of Exeter, UCC, NH, based on articles in their newsletter. A few copies were given to our church delegates at the Carroll-Strafford County Association meeting and they are circulating them among our congregation.

According to this booklet, scientists have agreed that the safe level of carbon content in our atmosphere should be no more than 350 parts of carbon dioxide per million and we are already at 388. They also think we can reverse this trend if all modify our energy consuming lifestyles and engage in gardening and other planting activities. For more specific ideas, read the booklet when it comes your way.

Linda Petkunas/Stewardship Committee

Z TEAM SERVICE AUCTION SATURDAY, MAY 30TH - 6:30 P.M.

Do you make a delicious batch of brownies or cookies? Can you change the oil or fix a faucet? Are you good at offering landscaping advice? A gem with a rototiller? Are you someone who can offer computer set up or troubleshooting advice to the less technological savvy amongst us? Is organizing cabinets or closets your specialty? Do you have an eye for interior design or know how to create a memorable photo album? Are you known for your culinary masterpieces in the kitchen or on the outdoor grill? Whatever your gift, or talent, or specialty, the Z Team is looking for you!

On May 30th, the Service Auction returns. For those new to the Service Auction, this is an opportunity to donate a service and bid on the services of your friends and neighbors. A member of the Z Team will be calling on you in the next few weeks. Some think that they have nothing to give, but everyone has a way to share no matter the size of the service. You can even team up with another person to create a service to be given any time within the next year.

Why are we doing this? Cathy Koukal, Jo Szirbik, Ann Bilodeau and I are traveling to Zimbabwe in July and the goal is to raise money to be used for the following mission projects:

- We want to provide goats and chickens to Dzika and Mwandibay Villages. The income will provide orphaned girls the ability to go to school and gain their education. Currently a polygamous marriage is their only option. We have donations of \$550 toward the goal of \$2,160.
- We hope to bring medical, school supplies and food aid to our dear partners in Rufumiso. We plan to bring some supplies and provide money for the supplies we can't carry.
- We take for granted the ability to buy feminine undergarments and hygiene projects. Not so for the women of Zimbabwe. We will be buying and bringing these much needed items.
- We want to continue our support of Friends of Orphan Trust (FOOT). We look forward to

meeting and spending time with the 23 children we have sponsored but we know there are so many, many more. We will bring your love, your compassion, and a light to children who have experienced so much uncertainty, fear and sadness.

Please say yes when that call or email comes to you asking for a service. (The Z Team unanimously agreed we hate calling or emailing people to ask for something but this very worthwhile mission supersedes our reluctance!) We hope you will attend and bring friends. If you are away that night, we will have a list of donated items available in church on May 24th and will do absentee bidding for anyone who is interested. Thank you so much for your continuing love, encouragement and support.

Connie Littlefield

PRIDE DAY COOKIE WALK



Our church will hold a Cookie Walk on Pride Day, May 16, all day (from 9am – 2pm) to benefit the General Fund.

Donations of cookies are needed.

Bakers are asked to please make at least 1 batch (usually 4-5 dozen) of their favorite variety – but ones that you think will sell. The cookies should be ‘smallish’ (about 2 to 2 1/2 “ in diameter) so they will fit into cans/bags easily – and they should be firm. Goopy doesn’t work – especially outside on a (hopefully) warm day. Please call me and let me know who you are and what you’ll be making. That would be GREAT!!! And will avoid a call from me. My number is 522-0031 – and please leave a message if no answer. You can drop the cookies at my house (I’ll have cooler box on porch) on Thurs and Fri – or at church on Friday before noon.

Please come to Pride Day and INVITE ALL YOUR FRIENDS. The Cookie Walk should be on the lawn in front of Gafney Library. We’ll be there all day on May 16th.

Thank you SO much!
Pam Frazier



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 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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COMING UP IN MAY

MAY 10—MOTHER’S DAY AND
 BLANKET SUNDAY

MAY 16 & 17—NH CONFERENCE
 ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 31—PENTECOST AND CONFIR-
 MATION SUNDAY

MAY LECTIONARY

Sunday, May 3, Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 4:5-12 ~ Psalm 23
 1 John 3:16-24 ~ **John 10:11-18**
Enfolded by Love

Sunday, May 10, Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 8:26-40 ~ Psalm 22:25-31
 1 John 4:7-21 ~ **John 15:1-8**
Abiding in Love

Sunday, May 17, Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 10:44-48 ~ Psalm 98
 1 John 5:1-6 ~ **John 15:9-17**
Friends Together

Sunday, May 24, Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26 ~ Psalm 1
 1 John 5:9-13 ~ **John 17:6-19**
Guided in Prayer

Sunday, May 31, Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21 or Ezekiel 37:1-14 ~ Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
 Romans 8:22-27 or Acts 2:1-21 ~ John 15:26-27;16:4b-15
Spirit for All