

## Gifts of the Spirit

Friends and neighbors, when have you discovered and delighted in the spiritual gift of another? This past Wednesday, I asked our Connecting With The Word weekly text study group to consider both that question and one like it: When have you discovered and delighted in a spiritual gift that you possess? In case you are inclined to think ‘hold on, I don’t know that I can identify a spiritual gift,’ I’ll share that my understanding of a spiritual gift is this: an aptitude, capacity, or approach to life through which the love of God is at work.

With eyes open or closed, I invite you me in prayer. Holy Loving Spirit, we are grateful to be freely gathered today for worship – on our live stream and on this land loved by First Nations and others across time and where we are now weaving our way of community. Help us in this hour to move toward discovery and delight in spiritual gifts – our own and those of our neighbors. We pray this in the name of our friend and teacher, Jesus. Amen.

Friends on a shared journey, when have you discovered and delighted in a spiritual gift of your own or of a neighbor? In a few minutes, I will invite us to offer aloud a few examples. But first, I’d like to share the origin of the question.

Every Tuesday at 10am, I begin my work week by Zooming with several colleagues to discuss readings for the upcoming Sunday. Our small group is a generous space. Occasionally, each of us is not on deck to preach the next Sunday. But we typically show up anyway – to encourage each other in our sermon preparation. This past week, a colleague shared this nugget from when they participated many years ago in Youth Encounter (a year-long ministry experience in which a small group of young adults travels the nation, sharing the gospel message through music).

My colleague described how the team agreed from its inception that they would commit to discovering and delighting in each other's gifts. I love that! That is my hope for our congregation and for each of us in any of our communities of two or more people to which we feel some amount of belonging and commitment.

A moment ago, I offered my own working definition of a spiritual gift: an aptitude, capacity, or approach to life through which the love of God is at work. Keeping in mind that we will soon listen as we name aloud specific spiritual gifts we have discovered and delighted in (whether the instrument of the Holy Spirit is ourself or another), let's consider how we might notice **that** an aptitude, capacity or approach to life is powered by the wind or flame of the Holy Spirit.

I receive a daily meditation from the Center for Action and Contemplation, founded by Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest and author. Rohr shared a meditation entitled "Available to All" when reflecting on Pentecost this year. I'll share with you an excerpt. Listen for how he describes the movement of the Holy Spirit. From Father Richard Rohr:

*"In the Gospels there are two clearly distinguished baptisms. There's the baptism with water that most of us are used to, and then there's the baptism 'with the Holy Spirit and fire'... We can recognize people who have had a second baptism in the Holy Spirit. They tend to be **loving and lively**. They want to serve others and not just be served themselves. They forgive life itself for not being everything they once hoped for. They forgive their neighbors, and they forgive themselves for not being as perfect as they would like to be..."*

Rohr continues: *"All the scriptural images of the Spirit are **dynamic**—flowing water, descending dove or fire, and rushing wind."*

*If there's rarely any movement, energy, excitement, deep love, service, forgiveness, or surrender, we can be pretty sure we aren't living out of the Spirit. If we're just going through the motions, we aren't experiencing our connection to the Spirit. We would do well," he writes, "to **fan into flame the gift we already have...***

*God gives the Spirit in this awakened way to those who want it. On this Feast of Pentecost, quite simply, want it!" he writes. "Rely upon it. **Know that it has already been given and live out of that trust.**"*

Words from Father Richard Rohr. I highly recommend free daily emailed meditation from the Center for Action and Reflection.

Let's move into a time of articulating spiritual gifts we have discovered and delighted in. Something you choose to share might resonate with a neighbor here today. It may even land as an affirmation as we seek to affirm gifts in others and in ourselves. If we roll with Rohr, we experience a spiritual gift as an aptitude, capacity, or approach to life that moves with the Spirit's loving and lively energy. Our faith in that loving, lively, dynamic Spirit helps us to recognize and fan these gifts into flame.

I'll get us started with a few examples. I notice that our gifts are often part innate to who we have been since early childhood and part developed out of lived experience. Grandma Liza was always something of a mystic, delighted by the beauty and mystery of the natural world at a very young age. She lived through tragic deaths of two of her children when they were young adults in separate auto accidents. When I once asked her (in my early twenties) about coping with her loss and grief, she responded like this: *"There's a gift that comes to people who have had lots of suffering of tragedies: the ability to rejoice in the ordinariness of life. I frequently rejoice just because I'm o.k."* I would name Grandma Liza's spiritual gift as resilient gratitude.

I'll share a recent experience of someone affirming a spiritual gift in me. I hope this will encourage you toward openly receiving affirmations from others and claiming your own giftedness. Accepting as true what someone tells us about their own experience helps build mutual respect and trust. At first, I was taken by surprise when someone said to me, "I think you're attuned to others." I thanked the person for the kind affirmation and have been pondering it ever since. To be attuned is to be aware and responsive to another's emotions and needs, or to an environment, or to my own emotions and needs. If that is a way that the Holy Spirit is moving through me, I can now, in Richard Rohr's words, hold myself available to "*fan into flame the gift we already have.*"

I'll pass the microphone in a moment, so I hope that a few of you might volunteer to name and describe a gift you've discovered and delighted in – be it in another or in yourself. If another, you can choose whether or not to name the person.

I'll share one more example of a gift I've discovered and in which I've delighted. I once had a supervisor who had a gift for staying current. As we worked together, she offered constructive feedback in a timely way. If my contribution to a project had a positive impact, she named that aloud to me. If my participation or interaction in our work had a negative impact, she did not stew on the effects and let them fester inside her. She gave herself only as much time as was needed for thoughtful reflection, then shared her feedback with me with honesty, grace, and an eye toward growth. I would name her spiritual gift as staying current.

Does anyone feel open to naming a spiritual gift you have appreciated – an aptitude, capacity, or approach to life through which the loving, lively, dynamic Spirit seems to be at work?

*"Listening without judgment – with acceptance and understanding."*

*“Sharri Kinkead’s superpower of providing beautiful bouquets from her garden.”*

*“A gift my spouse has of patience.”*

*“My gift is curiosity. I love to know why – to understand and ask questions.”*

*“The gift of Sharon, who has given us twenty years of music.”*

Such a beautiful scriptures tells of one Spirit with so many beautiful manifestations.

Let’s bring our time of reflection to a close by receiving a lesson from the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Perhaps the story of the first Pentecost is familiar to you. Or, perhaps Mary’s reading of it was your first time hearing it.

Today, as we embrace our newest members within this congregation and as we near the end of Mental Health Awareness Month, I feel that the most important moment in the story comes when we hear neighbors reacting and responding to one another. Have a listen:

*“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**, ‘Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.’”*

Friends: The **“all”** who were amazed and perplexed as they witnessed speaking in tongues (quite possibly not their own spiritual gift) model for us the goodness of wondering aloud, leaning in, inviting more. Let’s be wonderers.

The others who **“sneered”** remind us of our own sin – the harm we do to another when we dismiss or deny their experience as somehow wrong and the harm we do to ourself when we dismiss or deny our own experiences as in need of hiding and forgetting. Sneering is a tool of shame. Let’s not be sneerers.

Peter, who stood, lifted his voice, and directly addressed his neighbors (wonderers and sneerers alike) models for us sharing our own true experiences with brave vulnerability.

May we go into this Pentecost day ever ready to be rebaptized by the One Spirit manifested through each and every one of us. Love is counting on us. Amen.

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May 24, 2026 | Pentecost & New Member Sunday  
Acts 2:1-17, 1 Corinthians 12:4-13