



**CHURCH
OF WNY**

PENTECOST TOGETHER

50 Day Devotional

Pentecost Together



CHURCH
OF WNY

On Friday, March 29, 2013, more than 13,000 believers from The Church of Western New York gathered at the First Niagara Center to express our love for and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Together, we celebrated the One whose Cross Death and Easter Resurrection brings eternal life to all who place their faith in Him. “Good Friday Together” is forever etched into the hearts and minds of everyone who had the joy of being part of that historic gathering, and certainly, many have longed for another such expression of faith from the broader Church in our region.

This devotional is a humble attempt to respond to these longings, and more so, to be part of the answer to Jesus’ prayer for unity in His Church. It contains the writings of 50 different authors who lead various churches and ministries in our region and who represent a wide spectrum within the Body of Christ. We have sought to highlight our rich diversity as a Church, racially, culturally, and socially, as leaders from the City and the Suburbs, those overseeing established works and church-planters alike, each express the fact that they are a part of what God is doing in our day.

The devotional is set up on a seven-week track, beginning on Resurrection Sunday, April 16th and concluding on Pentecost Sunday, June 4th. The daily walk will bring you forward through a number of inspiring themes including:

- Week 1 - New Life – Resurrection; April 16 – 22
- Week 2 - New Priority – The Kingdom; April 23 – 29
- Week 3 - New Identity – Witnesses; April 30 – May 6
- Week 4 - New Mission – Harvest; May 7 – 13
- Week 5 - New Community – Unity / Reconciliation; May 14 – 20
- Week 6 - New Confidence – Promise; May 21 – 27
- Week 7 - New Power – Holy Spirit; May 28 – June 4

Finally, the limited number of days this devotional covers sadly excludes the hundreds of other leaders who are just as connected to our City and just as important to what God is doing in our day. We are certain each of them would have added even greater insight and value to this effort. We pray this endeavor will give birth to more initiatives of this kind, where the full voice of The Church of Western New York can be even more loudly heard.

*Living Pentecost Together,
The Servant Team
Church of WNY*



More Than an Historical Event

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life."
— John 11:25*

The resurrection isn't just something that happened in history — it is the person of Jesus Christ. As a pastor, it makes sense that I love Easter. It is the celebration of the resurrection of the Savior of the world! However, celebrating Easter only as an historical event is to miss its true significance. Jesus declared this to Martha when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." Luke understood this when he wrote in Acts 1:1, "all that Jesus began to do and teach." He knew that Jesus is more than just a miracle worker from the past; He is alive and at work today. Jesus began to implement resurrection in history and is doing the same today!

Jesus is more than just a miracle worker from the past; He is alive and at work today.

Don't just skim through this concept. Let it soak. Experience tells me that Christians are excellent at celebrating the resurrection from history but are guarded against personally living this resurrection power in this moment. We prefer to

keep Him locked in the tomb of the miraculous past instead of allowing Him to be the architect of our today. We are often afraid to let Him impact our lives. In the tomb, we always know where He is and can visit Him on our terms. The alternative is that our Risen Lord is loose in the world and showing up on His terms through the Holy Spirit (which can often feel frightening). However, it is on His terms where our lives are truly found!

He wants to resurrect our dreams that died at the hands of disappointment. He can't do that in a tomb. Living a resurrected life, with Christ off the cross and out of the tomb, provides us with a strong sense of knowing our identities each and every day. It's fulfilling the creative desires of our hearts and living the abundant life which Jesus died — AND now lives — for.

*Rev. Dr. Ken Nash
Wesleyan Church of Hamburg*

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, thank you for being the God of the Resurrection. May that same Resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead live in me...today!



Experiencing Resurrection

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection, and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" — John 11:25-26

While stricken with grief, Martha, one of the sisters of Lazarus, is engaged in a conversation with Jesus. She is upset for two reasons. First, He did not respond to their cry when the family sent for Him, and therefore, secondly, she feels that Jesus is in some way responsible for the outcome, the death of her brother. Unfortunately, even in the Christian community, many of us question God at the loss of a loved one or friend.

Martha would soon learn a valuable lesson that applies to all believers. God does not operate according to our timetable; therefore, He is never late, but always on time. Another thing she would discover is that God is not restricted by our circumstances or situations. When things seem to be at their lowest point in life, then God is at His best. Paul

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put it this way, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Paul was not saying that everything that happens to us in this life is good, but rather, even when things are not good, God has a way of working them out in our favor. God can breathe new life into the dead situations we are facing.

We should take great encouragement from the fact that whatever temptations, struggles, or disappointments we may be dealing with – especially those that seek to hinder our relationship with God – the same God who spoke life into Lazarus, can also bring the resurrection life of Jesus Christ to any dark, dead place in our lives.

*Pastor William Gillison
Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

O Lord, help me to know You and the power of Your resurrection. Help me, even in my suffering, to strive to be more like You (Phil. 3:10).



The Gift of Pain

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. — John 12:24

One of the oldest and most prevalent genres of ancient literature is the lament. A lament is a song of pain, sadness, death or destruction. Laments are written both personal and communal. They figure prominently in Scripture. They are in the Psalms, and The Book of Lamentations is dedicated to this idea of sadness. It's safe to say, sadness and sorrow are ancient and universal experiences. In fact, the lament is something we are coming out of, in the middle of, or headed into. It's true, just check your news app.

In our pleasure-crazed society, we have elevated happiness to an absolute right; an entitlement to be delivered like some Amazon package. Studies are done to determine how much money a person needs to earn in order to be 'happy.' When exploring the reason behind divorces, it's common to hear, "I just wanted to be happy." There's that word again. The irony is, that while

American society is chasing happiness, mental health experts report the diagnosis of patients with depression is growing by 20% per year.

What if the soul was not designed to bear the weight of the expectation for happiness placed on it?

Our Scripture reads, "if it dies, it bears much fruit." If there is loss, if there is sadness, if there is death, there life is found. The life that God has for us simply cannot be known unless we face death. What if we are living lives, narrowly

avoiding God's greatest blessing, because we keep running from the pain, sadness and sorrow; the death God has for us? God freely gives new life, and the only prerequisite is we die first. Maybe we all need to repent of the pursuit of happiness and instead seek a life of fruitfulness. Grab hold of your lament and live.

*Pastor Michael Nieves
Centerpointe Church, Depew*

*If there is loss, if
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if there is death,
there life is found.*



Newness of Life

We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. — Romans 6:4

Death is the great enemy that stalks every living thing. Seeing all kinds of death over my years has not done anything but deepened my hatred of this great enemy. Our Savior's death was so horrible, so unjust, and yet that tragedy defeats death. Through His death, we find life eternal.

That eternal life is both a present and future gift. This passage in Romans 6 reminds us that the passion week is not only a past event or a future hope but a present reality for us to live in. We are to walk in newness of life. Does that not sound wonderful. You and I are to live a life that is new, a life that counts, a life that need not fear death, a life free from the penalty and the power of sin. A new life that grows and flourishes forever. The word "walk" refers to a

We are to walk in newness now and not only hope for newness.

daily, present reality. We are to walk in newness now and not only hope for newness to come.

Jesus modeled this newness in how He treated Gentiles, tax collectors and prostitutes. He modeled a new attitude toward women and children.

As Paul says, "He included everyone in His death so that everyone could also be included in His life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own. Because of this decision, we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look" (2 Cor. 5:15-16 (MSG)). May we walk today in newness of life, experiencing the power of the risen Jesus every day, until we see Him face to face.

*Pastor Jon Schuerholz
Kenmore Alliance Church*



Thank you Jesus for Your death and resurrection. Thank You for the new life you have given. Empower me, through the Spirit, to walk in this new life today.



Broken and New

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. — 2 Corinthians 5:17

Allow the scene of Calvary to play out before your eyes. If you are paying attention to what is really happening, then you realize the weight of the moment, and you are at a loss for words. How can the most awful act in human history also become the most beautiful in the same? Only God can take feelings motivated by hatred, jealousy, and pride, and use them to tell a story of forgiveness, grace, and love.

Often we lose sight of how our own lives can make sense. We wonder how redemption is possible when we live our days holding on to the lie that we are unredeemable. We lose sight of the fact that there can be beauty in our brokenness, especially

when we are too consumed with our own hurt and the pain it brings.

Here's a simple reality for you today – God never wastes a hurt! If He can accomplish what He did through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, surely, He can do the same for you, no matter what your past. When you surrender your story, your everything over to God, He takes your old and makes it new. It doesn't really matter what you've been a part of, where you've been, what has been done to you, or even what you've done to others. He delights in bringing new life out of broken and barren places.

Here's a simple reality for you today – God never wastes a hurt!

*Pastor Darrick R. Castronova
theWELLbuffalo*

Prayer Focus

Father, remind me that my story of injustice and shame intersected with the cross of Jesus Christ. Help me to see that it was my place on the cross that Jesus took willingly for me. Thank You that all of my injustice and old ways are overshadowed by the beauty of Your grace. Help me to surrender to You.



Arise with New Life

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. — 2 Corinthians 5:17

One of the reasons being born again is so critical to life and life-experiences is that we often look for an external stimulus to bring about internal change. Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, becomes a revelation through the hypostatic union between God and man. Jesus is 100% God and He is 100% man, and therefore, His life and actions become a template for us. You'll recall how Jesus responded when He was being tempted by the devil in Luke 4:3-4. The devil said to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." And Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God!'" Note that Jesus' response was totally "Word-based!" 1 Kings 2:3 instructs us that in order to function as mature believers we too must also operate from a "Word-base."

If a man doesn't have a "Word-base" he will ultimately end up living according to his own appetites.

Notice further, in Luke 4:4, Jesus responds, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God!" "Bread" speaks of "appetite." In other words, if a man doesn't have a "Word-base," he will ultimately end up living according to his own appetites – his appetite for money, for power and for greed. As a result of not having the Word, he ends up living off of his own bread.

Therefore, as a born-again believer, my "Word-base" is far more important than my "bread-base." I have experienced resurrection, having risen from my old life into a brand-new life in Christ. I now overcome habits by renewing my mind (Rom. 12:2), and as I do, I renew my behavior which is critical to expressing the new life I have within.

*Bishop Roderick Hennings
Zion Dominion Global Ministries, Amherst*

Prayer Focus

Lord, help me to bring full expression to my new life in Christ by developing a strong "Word-base" that will enable me to stand against all the works of the enemy.



Behold, The New Has Come

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
— 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

It has been said, “Hurt people, hurt people.” This clever little statement is more profound than the wordplay included in the phrase. It illustrates one of the most dangerous ideas in the Christian faith, namely, forgetting who we are. The Scriptures teach us repeatedly, that because of the death and resurrection of Christ, our old way of being is dead and gone, and the new has come. Yet, so many of us struggle to believe, receive and operate out of our new identity. Even after reading that we are a “new creation,” compelled into service for the cause of Christ, we often regress to “the old.”

Let us operate with a renewed sense of purpose because the power of Christ has raised us from the dead.

Instead, let us cling to the hope that we profess, to live lives worthy of the calling we have received (Eph. 4:1); to live and move and have our being as new creations (Acts 17:28). Let us operate with a renewed sense of purpose because the power of Christ has raised us from the dead. Let us echo the words of the Apostle Paul, “From now on..!” For we do not live as we once did, but having been transformed by the resurrection of Jesus, let us walk in the newness of life.

“Hurt people may hurt people,” but “Healed people, heal people!” We are the children of God, worthy because Jesus says so. New creations; that is who we are!

*Pastor Jeremy Hazelton
Village Church, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

We implore You, Almighty God, to fill us with a sense of our “newness;” to aid us in putting aside our old, fleshly way of living and to embrace the power of the resurrection in our everyday lives, that we might reflect the power of this gift of grace to the world around us.



A Kingdom People

Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
— Matthew 6:10

The Church, by her very nature, consists of a redeemed people, who by God's design are to be a demonstration and manifestation of His Kingdom. Do you think we fall short of this description of our Biblical role in the earth? I for one do not believe we are living up to being that people described in Scripture. At the same time, these short devotionals are a meager attempt to demonstrate the Kingdom. They are the collaborative effort of many leaders in Western New York, and our mutual goal is to express to you a loving and caring Church that overlooks our differences and demonstrates the true oneness of Christ's body.

Jesus told us to pray, "Your Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven." So let me ask: Are we, in every area of our lives, a demonstration of heaven's lifestyle? Are we a people of the Kingdom? Do our marriages, and the way we love

and care for our families, reflect the values of a heavenly family? How about the way we love our neighbors, or the way we care for the poor, or the way we manage God's finances? Not only our tithes, but the recognition that everything we have belongs to God and we are to be responsible stewards

*Are we,
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who increase His finances. Do we manage God's resources in a Kingdom manner? How about the way we obey the law, even the speed limit? Are our lives a demonstration of God's heavenly order?

Since the Scripture tells us, "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19), I want to challenge myself, and everyone who reads these words, to be a living, breathing demonstration of the lifestyle of God's Kingdom.

*Bishop Emeritus Tommy Reid
The Tabernacle, Orchard Park*

**Prayer
Focus**

Lord, enable every member of Your Church to be a demonstration of your Kingdom throughout Western New York.



Prioritizing The Kingdom

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. – Matthew 6:33

One of mankind's greatest challenges is the ability to properly prioritize. This did not begin with our generation, but tracing back to Adam, an inability to properly prioritize was man's first failure. It introduced "the if factor" – Where would I be if Adam hadn't eaten of that tree? Adam's decision to disobey the Lord's command resulted in him having to immediately cover himself. He did so realizing that he had forfeited his capability to produce after his kind. Although he had been created in God's image, he surrendered his authority to reproduce after "His kind" (God's image). It was there that his priorities and entire way of life were altered.

It was also at this turning point where the Father put His plan into action; His plan to restore man back into right relationship with Himself. The first Adam caused man to be expelled from the garden, but the second Adam

(Jesus Christ) brings man back into a new garden. Jesus taught His followers to get their priorities in order. He instructed His disciples, "But seek first!" In other words, "Get your priority in order!" You'll never have your priorities in order unless they start with an unobstructed path to seeking God and His Kingdom. His Kingdom speaks of the seat of His authority, and everything we do should lead us in that direction.

Colossians 1:16 declares, "all things were created through Him and for Him."

Since we were created for Him, let us keep Him as our number one priority. When we keep our priorities in order, we'll keep the Kingdom of God in focus, and by doing so, we'll also be keeping first things first – totally dependent on the Father, whose Kingdom we are helping to build.

*Bishop Stephan Booze
Potter's House Christian Community Church,
Niagara Falls*

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Father, help us to properly prioritize your Kingdom, knowing "the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come" (Rev. 12:10).



Nothing Without Jesus

*Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?”
They answered Him, “No.” – John 21:5*

In this passage, Jesus reveals Himself to His disciples after the Resurrection, but before the Holy Spirit has been poured out at Pentecost. The disciples are confused and uncertain about what they should be doing. Peter suggests they go fishing, the one thing many of them were good at before they had met Jesus. We're told they fished all night and caught nothing. Then, the Risen Jesus, unrecognized by His disciples, appears on the shore and calls out, “Do you have any fish?” They answer Him, “No.”

Perhaps they were thinking, “No, we fished all night, worked our tails off, and we've got nothing to show for it.” Sometimes we feel like that. The Lord's desire is that we would do nothing without Him, for it is then, as we come to the end of our own talents and abilities, that we begin to discover life in the Kingdom, hearing God's voice and being led by His Holy Spirit.

*The Lord's desire
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Jesus then instructs, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some” (Jn. 21:6). The disciples do so, and their nets are filled with so great a catch they can barely bring it into shore. In God's Kingdom, the new priority in life is to do the things Jesus calls us to do by the leading of His Holy Spirit and the Word of God. We admit, “Lord I've got nothing without you.” Yet, as we wait on Him, He speaks to us (Jn. 10:27). The Holy Spirit then leads us to a place where we experience

great fruit through His direction, not ours. In God's Kingdom, the new priority is to hear His voice, to know Jesus, and follow Him, partnering with the Regional / Citywide Church for a great harvest.

*Pastor Jon Hasselbeck
NorthGate, Williamsville*

**Prayer
Focus**

Lord, I don't want to do anything without You. Today, may I hear Your voice, know You better, and follow You.



Passing The Baton

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the father.

Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. — John 14:12

The power of God has clearly been handed off to us, like an Olympian in a relay race. Jesus ran with the Father's baton while He had His miracle ministry here on earth.

Now, He needs believers to understand that He has handed off His baton to us. This can be seen in the ministry of two great miracle workers of the Old Testament. Elijah demonstrated this perfectly when he handed off his baton to Elisha. Elisha's ministry picked up where Elijah's left off. The miracles of Elijah were great and wonderful and continued on through Elisha's ministry. In the same way, Jesus' miracle ministry is still alive and well, when carried on by and through us.

The baton has been passed... will we be brave enough to believe it, accept it, and continue the race set before us?

You see, when Jesus rose from the dead He realized that we, the believers, would be deputized and empowered by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. "And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). Jesus and God the Father clearly expected us to pick up where Jesus left off.

We need to realize that the Lord did not die on the cross only to pay for our sins, but more so, Jesus became You on the cross, so that You could become Him on the earth. The baton has been passed. The question is, will we be brave enough to believe it, accept it, and continue the race set before us?

*Pastor John Tonelli
Resurrection Life, Cheektowaga*

Prayer Focus

Heavenly Father, it's time for me to accept the passing of the baton. You have entrusted me with Your power for this generation. Help me walk in obedience, being faithful to Your calling and Your power in my life, all for Your glory.



Presenting a United Front

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, ... with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. – Philippians 1:27-28

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus said, “If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand” (Mk. 3:25). DIVISION! It is something that has taken center stage in our world today. We are all residents of one house, these United States of America, which has become more divided than ever before. Divided because of race, gender, socio-economic status, and political affiliation, just to name a few. One would expect this type of division in the world we live in, but surely it should not be the norm in our churches. Instead, we should be able to come together and work to ensure that the Kingdom is advanced above everything else. Unfortunately, God’s work is hindered because we have allowed division to creep into the Church, resulting in our being ineffective.

It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that changes our priorities and causes us to put Christ’s agenda above our own.

While acknowledging that our differences are real, we must also ask: In the midst of our differences, is there something that trumps it all and has the power to unify? My emphatic response is, “YES!” It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that changes our priorities and causes us to put Christ’s agenda above our own.

Paul instructed believers in Philippi, “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ... standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.” My friends, it is time for us to take that message and apply it to our churches today. For when the Church begins to operate in unity, our enemies will tremble, and our communities, cities, and country will begin to change.

*Pastor Edward Jackson, Jr.
Friendship Baptist Church, Buffalo*

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, help Your people to stand together and be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.



Light Rising In The Darkness

If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. – Isaiah 58:10

Building God's Kingdom should be our priority. The fact that we have been saved by God's mercy compels us to reach into our community and lift every man, woman and child, so they too may come to know Jesus. Helping others into the Kingdom begins when we become Jesus' hands, reaching to our hurting world. The Kingdom is advanced by our willingness to step into our community by first serving those who struggle – the seemingly marginalized among us who do not have a voice. Surely, Jesus cares for us all.

Isaiah 58:1-7 speaks of a time when God's People, Israel, were performing a host of outward, religious rituals, that gave the appearance of a pious, living faith. Sadly, instead of being God-focused, their efforts were self-centered. Though they fasted and raised their voices before the Lord, their end goal was their own pleasure. As a result,

God rejected their offerings, reminding them, that in order to build God's Kingdom and be heard on high, they must first learn to serve others, especially the very least.

For many in our churches, the challenge also involves how we perform our acts of kindness. We must ask ourselves: Do I exhibit a spirit of compassion to those I serve? Does my life reflect the light of Christ? The Church must move beyond cultural norms and learned behaviors,

and determine to advance God's Kingdom by serving our fellow man. The Prophet Isaiah tells us what we can then expect: "And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in" (Is. 58:12).

*Pastor Terry King
Saving Grace Ministries, Buffalo*

*Do I exhibit
a spirit of
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Does my life
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of Christ?*

**Prayer
Focus**

Lord, teach me to see beyond myself and to serve others with a heart of compassion. Empower me to reach out to my community and meet people right where they are.



The Kingdom; Now and Not Yet

From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." – Matthew 4:17

God's dream is to see the earth express the image and function of heaven. God's chosen process to make His dream a reality included, giving Jesus, His only begotten Son, along with birthing and building the Church, the body of Christ. Jesus carried God's dream upon His heart as He announced the antidote for the lack of order and the decline into disorder in the world. His antidote was the Kingdom of God. When thinking of the Kingdom, we should envision the governing influence of God that brings order and prosperity to the nations. Jesus transported the substance of the Kingdom from the heart of God to the heart of the Church. This Kingdom, this government, this order, reveals God's methodology for the Church to occupy territories and live the truly abundant life.

Jesus administered God's governmental formula as He healed the hurting and empowered the poor.

It is important to understand that the Kingdom is both now and not yet.

In order for the Church to function fully as God's transformational agency, we need a greater revelation of God's governmental agenda and a deeper understanding of Kingdom procedures. It is the Church's mission to continue in the Spirit of Jesus, demonstrating His power and enacting His policies in each of our endeavors.

It is important to understand that the Kingdom is both now and not yet. The Kingdom of Heaven is here, available to all who will receive it. The impact of the Kingdom will be determined by the degree the Church presses through the chaos of this world and expresses Heaven's culture, character, and customs. This is the season for the body of Christ to boldly declare and clearly demonstrate that the powers of the age to come are here presently, and yet, still to come in all their fullness.

*Pastor Demeris Johnson
The Worship Center, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Father, my heart is fixed to press into Your Kingdom. I give myself to know and understand the policies and procedures of Your government, embracing Your culture and customs, so I can represent Your dream to others.



Called To Be A Witness

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,
and you will be My witness... – Acts 1:8*

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a legal witness as, “a person who makes a statement in a court about what he or she knows or has seen.” Where I come from, testifying as a witness is looked upon as a negative thing. I was taught, “Don’t see, don’t tell.”

Although we were promised a change of identity and witness protection if we were willing to come forward, many chose to go to prison and do time instead of agreeing to testify. As believers, through our faith encounter with Christ Jesus, we receive a new identity, and along with this new identity comes a witness protection program better than any agency can offer, because Jesus promises to be with us forever (Mt. 28:19-20).

Jesus warned us that we would be hated for being His witnesses (John 4:18). Yet, this does not excuse us from our responsibility, because

We testify of the things we have learned, received, heard, and seen in Jesus.

the power of the Holy Spirit, which breaks through any barrier, shatters every paradigm, and can enter the coldest of hearts, is promised to us as followers of Jesus. We are called to be witnesses in a world where Christ is not tolerated, where Christians are

persecuted and beheaded, and where the message of the cross is not accepted.

Regardless, we testify of the things we have learned, received, heard, and seen in Jesus (Phil. 4:9), the One who has transformed us into our new identity, and

has commanded that we go and tell the world what has happened to us. Just as Jesus challenged the disciples to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth, we are called to be witnesses for Jesus wherever we are.

*Rev. Dr. Alberto Lanzot
Primera Iglesia United Methodist Church,
Buffalo*

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, show me the places where I need to be a witness for Jesus, and by the power of Your Spirit, give me the boldness to testify through both my words and my actions. Lord, teach me how!



Jesus' Last Words

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. – Acts 1:8

People all over the world place a lot of stock in the importance of a person's last words spoken on earth. We write about them, make decisions by them, and some often cling to the last words spoken by a loved one. Before people are put to death for crimes they've committed, the powers that be usually ask the familiar question, "Any last words?" If we place so much importance on a man or woman's last words, what would stop us from studying and obeying the last words of Jesus Christ, the One who endured the madness of the cross for us to be set free? His words start with a profound and empowering promise – "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."

Jesus knew He was going away physically; and He knew how to take

So, what are we to do with this awesome power? Keep it to ourselves so we increase? No!

care of God's sons and daughters whom He was leaving behind. And as if His sacrifice wasn't enough, He gave a great gift – the power of His Spirit. So, what are we to do with this awesome power? Keep it to ourselves so we increase? No! Jesus declared that the purpose of the power is to enable

us to be His witnesses to the uttermost part of the earth. Jesus gave us an unmatched gift, to empower us to spread His message of a beautiful blood-washed romance, so that none would perish but that we all would have the promise

of eternity with the one true Lover of our souls. How beautiful. His purpose for us, uttered in His last words: "Be my witnesses. Testify to my love. My sacrifice. My power."

*Pastor Donna Naedele
My Father's House, Elma*

Prayer Focus

Precious Jesus, ignite in me the love for You to carry out your last and final command. To further Your kingdom and see that Your will is done, until we are together in eternity.



Witnesses To Every Nation

You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. – Acts 1:8

My wife and I are generational descendants from a strong, pagan religion in Burma/ Myanmar. But God brought us to Christ in 1997, and then, as His ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:9), He sent us as refugees to America in 2000 (Gen. 12:1) to live in Buffalo, NY. Here, against all odds, and with the help of an elderly, Burmese couple, we formed a church in 2004 with just a few Burmese believers (Mt. 16:18).

More than 200 years ago, in 1813, God sent an American missionary, Adoniram Judson, to Burma, just as God sent Paul to witness to the Gentiles (Acts 16:9). Because of Judson's, and then others, obedience and sacrifice, today, 6 - 8% of the Burmese population have come to know Christ. In recent years, tens of thousands of Burmese have come to America, mostly as refugees. In fact, there are 8,000 – 9,000 Burmese

living in Buffalo alone. We believe God wants to use the Burmese believers to be witnesses to the non-Christian Burmese immigrants, as well as to the many, long-time Americans who do not know Christ or have turned their backs on Him.

We are grateful for believers who can worship, break bread and partner together.

We praise God that today the Burmese Church in Buffalo is growing stronger and stronger, in part as we partner with some long-standing churches here that honor Christ and warmly receive us. We are grateful for believers who can worship, break bread and partner together, regardless of different backgrounds, nations, languages and cultures, in order to fellowship together in our common Lord (Jn. 13:34-35), and shine together for Him as lights in the darkness (Mt. 5:14-16).

*Han and Lay Lay Moe
The Buffalo Myanmar Indigenous
Christian Fellowship*

Prayer Focus

Our Father, help us to follow You obediently, even over thousands of miles, and to be unified witnesses as we focus on the great physical, social and spiritual needs of the lost, and as we help everyone see and accept Jesus Christ as Savior of all.



The Sent-ness of Following Jesus

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. – Acts 1:8

As we look at the Scriptures, it is clear Jesus did not intend for His disciples to return to their former lives as if He'd never come. Instead, we see Jesus placing special emphasis on sending or commissioning the disciples to a greater work after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. For instance, we hear him pray in John 17:18, "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." Next, we have one final gathering on the mountainside that includes this last instruction, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." (Mt. 28:19). Finally, in Acts 1:8 quoted above, as Jesus is about to ascend back to the Father in heaven, there is no doubt that He is sending the disciples on a mission. They are no longer to go about simply living their old lives, but He has given them a

purpose and a message to share with the world.

It is not only the disciples of Jesus' day who were sent, but His prayer and instruction is for all of us. The questions remain: Do we embrace the mission? Do we embrace the call?

It is not only the disciples of Jesus' day who were sent, but His prayer and instruction is for all of us.

Do we embrace being the hands and feet of Jesus wherever we go? Do we embrace the sent-ness of following Jesus? When we become followers of Jesus we are exchanging rather mundane lives to join Him on the greatest adventure of all time. We now live

as witnesses to the greatest event of history and are given the message of the life-changing Gospel that is to be shared with every man, woman, and child. We are His witnesses!

*Rev. Dr. Christopher Baldwin
The Vine Wesleyan Church, Lancaster / Depew*

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, help us to embrace the sent-ness of what it means to follow You and join You on the adventure of a lifetime.



Praying From Our New Position In Christ

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. – 2 Corinthians 3:18

From the fall of humanity through John the Baptist's ministry, the people of God would feel, see, and respond to the glory of God in dreams and visions, in miracles, signs and wonders, and in the Presence residing in the Tabernacle and Temple. During these times, there was a clear reminder of the unholy identity the people, as the veil separated between God and His image bearers. When Jesus became our sacrificial lamb, the veil was torn in two, signifying our new, intimate relationship with Papa God; one that forever declares our new identity in Christ as sons and daughters of the Most High.

So now, as daughters and sons, where do you pray from? Do you pray

in response to what you see happening in the natural, or do you pray from the perspective of the spiritual battle that is taking place? As you witness and encounter Jesus, the living and active God, you will be able to feel, see, and respond to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is from there, as co-heirs with Christ,

you will be able to pray for God's Shekinah Glory to dwell with the people on earth as it is in heaven. We continue to pray, until one day, the whole earth – every creature and every tribe and every tongue – will be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

*Krystena M. Nightingale
National Day of Prayer Director,
Erie County*

**TODAY IS THE
NATIONAL DAY OF
PRAYER!**

*Join us at 12:00pm
at Buffalo Niagara
Square (Erie County)
and 6:00pm at
Hyde Park
(Niagara County).*

**Prayer
Focus**

Abba Daddy, as we come together today as sons and daughters for the "National Day of Prayer," help us encounter Your unveiled face to reveal our new identity by the Spirit of God. As the Kingdom of God transforms our image from glory to glory, let our hands and feet be a witness to all the nations of the world.



Our Identity As Witnesses

*For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
– Colossians 3:3*

The most important relationship in life is the one you have with yourself. If you have that, any other relationship is a plus and not a must. Identity is what gives you self-confidence, purpose in life and affinity with other people. We live in a day when it is harder to develop identity because we are living in a very dynamic world. The manifestation of not being comfortable with self is to try to bring others down so one can feel good. Many have not been validated by their parents or their significant other. Some think they are what they do rather than who they are. Like King Saul who was “image conscious,” they too suffer from an identity crisis, trying to please the people rather than God. It is important to know that the first motion of value, eternity and image, is planted by God within us at our creation. In order to know and preach the Gospel, and to have an awareness of the wit-

We live in a day when it is harder to develop identity because we are living in a very dynamic world.

ness we are called to be, we must get the who right. What is the self we are working with?

The great illusion that we must all overcome is the illusion of separateness. It is almost the only task of religion, to communicate, not worthiness, but union; to reconnect people to their original identity. The Bible calls the state of separateness “sin.” Disconnected people will do stupid things. We cannot ever “get worthy,” but we can get reconnected to our Source. Bible revelation is about awakening, not accomplishing; realization, not performance principle; you can’t get there, you can only be there. “But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” that is, the word of faith that we proclaim” (Rom. 10:8).

*Bishop William A. Dockery
Memorial Temple Christian Ministries, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Lord Jesus, I thank you I am becoming increasingly aware of my new identity with Christ in God. I pray this will cause me to spring forth as a bold witness, bringing many into Your Kingdom.



Witnessing With Our Lives

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.” – Revelation 12:10-11

“**P**ut your money where your mouth is!” My Dad used this phrase to encourage me whenever there was a challenge in my life. Whether he was challenging me to outdo him in a simple task or if I was facing a huge, life-changing event, he’d tell me, “Put your money where your mouth is!”

As Christians, our testimony isn’t just a retelling of the moment we came to know Jesus, but more so, it is lived out with every breath of our lives, with each breath being given for the sake of the eternal glory of our King, Jesus. Our testimony is, “putting our money where our mouth is,” with our lives.

Revelation, Chapter 12 gives us a picture of a war in heaven, one in

which God’s enemy is defeated and cast out. This is accomplished by Michael and the angels, together with the saints who faithfully believed Jesus to the very end. These saints laid down their very lives for the cause of Christ, “putting their money where their mouth was,” even unto death. To lay down one’s life to benefit others with the message

of the Gospel is to conquer in the same way that Jesus did – not just with words, but with action. For Christ and for us, life comes through death. Jesus didn’t just say He would defeat sin, death and the grave; He did it! He put His money where His mouth is. Now is the time for us to do the same.

*Pastor Chad Rieselman
Lumber City Church, North Tonawanda*

Our testimony is “putting our money where our mouth is” with our lives.

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, help us to be faithful witnesses, not only with our words, but with our lives.



Laborers in His Harvest

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

– Luke 10:2

Our response is seldom to pray for more laborers, but more often that the existing laborers would work harder. We often live vicariously through pastoral staff or the spiritually elite to carry the responsibility of Gospel-witness, while the majority of the Body remains inactive and immobile. Jesus teaches us what a right response to a plentiful harvest should be: Pray! Yet, before we even pray for the souls of the lost, we are to pray for those who will go to the lost. And one small but critical use of a pronoun tells us everything we need to know about our mission; it is His harvest.

The harvest belongs to God Himself, and what we reap is for Him, not us. This harvest isn't for us to grow our empires, but to expand His

kingdom. We want every man, woman, and child to have repeated opportunities to say "Yes" to Jesus. But we must want that for His glory, not our credit, or else we have misunderstood whose harvest this really is.

Do you believe that God has strategically placed you in this region to participate in the harvest, or do you think someone else will do it? I believe that whatever God is going to do in Western New York, He is going to do through all of Christ's people. All of us. This is

His harvest, and by His grace, God invites us to join Him on His mission. So the real question is this: If you have prayed for God to send more laborers, will you be the answer to your own prayer?

*Pastor Jerry Gillis
The Chapel, Getzville*

If you have prayed for God to send more laborers, will you be the answer to your own prayer?

Prayer Focus

Father, as the Lord of the harvest, may you mobilize thousands of ambassadors into our region, so that men, women, boys, and girls might see and hear the Gospel through us. Give me eyes to see the harvest in front of me, and give me the grace and strength to labor for it.



Same Mission, New Power

...Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. – Genesis 1:28

Men and woman are created for mission. The command to multiply, subdue, and have dominion is more than procreation alone – it is a call to mission. Paul tells the Corinthian believers, “God has put all things in subjection under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:27). All of creation throughout time is to praise, celebrate and enjoy the merciful rule and reign of Christ. And God in His kindness allows men and women to join Him in declaring this message – from Eden to the present day.

God in His kindness allows men and women to join Him in declaring this message – from Eden to the present day.

But why give this assignment to humans? Scripture tells us that myriads of angels are at His disposal. Angels are often sent to declare the message of God. Why commission humans when wantonness will come to dominate their hearts? Perhaps here we find the glorious riches of God’s love revealed anew. Men and women are set apart to be the recipients of God’s gracious love and forgiveness, for no redemption

plan was made for angels. Angels experience the justice of God never knowing the sweet taste of forgiveness. For Christ would die, not for fallen angels, but for men, women and children. No wonder Ephesians 3:10 tells us, “...through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places.”

The resurrection of Jesus and the empowering of the Holy Spirit bring mission full circle. Christ’s resurrection secures the reconciliation of all creation (Col. 1:20). And the Holy Spirit transforms believers to proclaim the fullness of His Glory – justice, mercy, forgiveness and grace! No angel, no demon, no other creature can fully declare what it feels like to know justice and forgiveness – only the believer! The mission has always been the same – proclaim the glorious reign of Christ and the power of His Gospel.

*Pastor Dan Trippie
Restoration Church, Amherst*

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, may the power of Your forgiveness compel my proclamation of Your goodness.



Much Joy In That City

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

So there was much joy in that city. – Acts 8:5-8

This passage gives us a great example of Kingdom expansion and a beautiful picture of what harvest looks like. Phillip is dispatched by the Holy Spirit to go into the city of Samaria and proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom. His message is clear and concise – he preached or proclaimed Christ! Because he was moved with compassion, he engaged the entire City. It didn't matter if the people were rich, poor, broken, destitute, lonely or confused, all were invited to be healed, delivered and set free.

As a result, the atmosphere of the City was transformed because signs, wonders and miracles were accompanying the preaching of the Word (Mk. 16:17). The evidence was undeniable.

*We cannot wait
for others to
answer the call,
but we each must
do our part in
reaching
the harvest.*

Recognizing our part in the Gospel-mission, we find in Acts 8 a template we can follow. Notice first,

Phillip went. In the same way, we are commanded to go into all the world, especially our world, and tell people about Jesus. We cannot wait for others to answer the call, but we each must do our part in reaching the harvest. Next, Phillip stayed on message. Like Phillip, who didn't allow himself to become sidetracked, we must understand that our witness for Jesus is what matters most. Finally, Phillip preached Christ. As each of us determine to share the life-giving message of the Gospel, it will also result in bringing "much joy" in our City.

*Rev. Dr. Robert J. Lowe
New Beginnings Church of God In Christ,
Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Lord, help us to release Your Word throughout our world by the preaching of the Gospel. You are Lord of the harvest and we are Your servants. Empower us, as one plants, another waters, and You give the increase.



To Assimilate or Incarnate

And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?” – Acts 2:5-8

At the outset of Pentecost, we see something really important about God’s plan to reach the world. God was not looking for us to assimilate the world into one voice or one subculture. His plan was for us to do what His Son Jesus Christ did for us, which was to live an incarnated life. Jesus, as He prepared to ascend, gave His disciples a new mission, and that was for them to Go!... not to ask for everyone to come. It was this new mission that Jesus had modelled during His time on earth. His disciples were to go and incarnate themselves into every culture and town and city along the way – to bring the Good News to the least and to

His disciples were to go and incarnate themselves into every culture and town and city along the way.

the greatest, in order to ensure that every man, woman and child would have repeated opportunities to hear and see the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ.

An incarnated life is an “all in” life, and not just something we add to our to-do list. It’s listening, learning, reflecting and responding to what we hear and see, and then letting that guide our steps and our words. From this point forward, may our prayer, our approach, and our posture, be to see our neighborhoods not only as places to live, play and shop, but also as places to incarnate the Gospel in real and tangible ways.

*Pastor Brek Cockrell
Renovation Church, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Father, thank you for the gift of an incarnated Savior who came and put on flesh to move into the hood of humanity... and as He did, He put all people in His sights – not just a few or one type of people. Help us with this new mission to reach a great harvest.



A New Relationship

Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’” – John 20:17

On the day of the Resurrection, Jesus didn't allow Mary to touch Him. By forbidding her to cling to Him, Jesus was letting this precious disciple know, “Things are not going to be the way they have been. You can't hold on to Me in the old way. We have entered a New Covenant.” Following this, Jesus made a radical statement: “Go to My brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God’” (Jn. 20:17). For Jesus to call God His Father was one thing, but He declared, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father...” In other words, “God is now your Father too!”

Do you know God as your Father or does He seem like some distant

idea? The Scriptures make it clear that God is not a mere idea or a distant power somewhere out in the universe. He is a real person who loves you, and cares for you, and wants to be a Father to you. If you came from a home without a father, God will be the Father you never had. This is all possible because Jesus opened a new

If you came from a home without a father, God will be the Father you never had.

way and a new relationship for us. Because of His death on the cross and His resurrection from among the dead, we no longer have to go through a high priest to seek forgiveness for our sins. Jesus became the final sacrifice for our sins, and through Him, we have free access to God the Father in heaven.

*Pastor Daniel Nieves
Destiny International Church, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Father, I purpose in my heart today to know You as my Father and the Lover of my soul. Let me display that I have an inheritance and better promises in this New Covenant given by Your Son.



The Rhythm: Follow & Go

When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

– Matthew 9:36

Life is all about rhythm. Whether it's activity and rest, home and work, friends and family, feasting or fasting, a wholistic and healthy life has balance and rhythm. These patterns of living keep us from unhealthy extremes. It is no surprise then that Jesus gave His followers a similar rhythm: Follow & Go.

At the end of Matthew 9 we see that Jesus traveled through every town and village, healing the sick, and caring for those in need. It says Jesus saw the crowds and had compassion on them. His heart was broken for the lostness of the people around Him. Jesus knew the mission of taking hope, healing, and reconciliation into the world would require more than Himself. He called those who had been following him,

Christ continued to love and lead them, and then He sent them out again!

the ones He had shown compassion to, and sent them out into the world to extend that same compassion to others.

We see this shift in rhythm when the writer moves from calling the twelve “disciples” (those who follow), to “apostles” (those who are sent).

But they didn't just go out on mission for Jesus, they came back and followed Jesus some more. And Christ continued to love and lead them, and then He sent them out again! That rhythm of ‘Follow & Go’ still exists today. Every week

we gather as a community to receive compassion. Then we are instructed to go. To go out, sent by Jesus, to minister to a hurt and broken world.

*Pastor Steve Johnson
Anchor Church, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Father, thank You for showing me compassion and mercy in my time of need. May Your love and compassion move me to extend that compassion to others today. Through my actions and words, may they know there is a God in heaven who loves them.



Ordinary people – Harvesters

Doing Greater Works

Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. – John 4:35

Jesus told His disciples to look and see how ripe the harvest is. Man is in desperate need for the Savior. Searching and indulging, wandering and pondering, grieving and suffering, man has found no lasting peace or remedy. Jesus laid down His life as the ultimate sacrifice and displayed His great love and remedy for man's dilemma.

In Jesus' earthly ministry, He was always moved with compassion and healed the sick; restoring hope and purpose to man. He told His disciples, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father" (Jn. 14:12). What an amazing truth. Whoever believes in the Lord will do the same works He did, and even greater works. I ask myself, how could I possibly do the same

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are alive within us and He will use us as His instruments for harvest.

works Jesus did; I am just an ordinary person? As ordinary believers, we have been endowed with the miracle working power of the Holy Spirit. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are alive within us and He will use us as His instruments for harvest. Mark 16:20 declares that as we go forth and speak His words, the Lord will work with us, confirming the words with signs following.

With expectation, we must apprehend the revelation that God wants to use each one of us to be demonstrators of His awesome power. We are anointed by God to do the same miracles Jesus did. It's time to put the sickle of His Word and supernatural power in to reap an end-time harvest for the Kingdom of God!

*Pastors John and Barbara Burkholder
Sword of the Spirit Ministries, Buffalo*

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, here I am. Fill me with compassion. Activate Your awesome power in me. Use me as a reaper in Your harvest field with the demonstration of signs, wonders and miracles. I purpose to press into "Your Greater Works" for Your glory.



Better Together

The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us. — Nehemiah 4:19-20

In our world, we witness the power in numbers. For good or bad, masses of people coming together impact the destiny of nations. This pattern began in antiquity. Crowds gathered to construct the Tower of Babel — God judged the purpose for their coming together as bad. Crowds gathered together “in one accord” at Pentecost — God released the Holy Spirit.

Greater than the power of numbers is the power of unity. God reduced Gideon’s army from 32,000 to 300. These 300 were committed to God and each other, defeating the overwhelming Midianite army. In the movie *Gladiator*, Maximus declares, “Whatever comes out of these gates, we’ve got a better chance of survival if we work together. Do you understand? If we stay together, we survive.”

*“Do you understand?
If we stay together, we survive.”*

Nehemiah accentuates the theme in our Scripture today. There is distance between our towns and cities, our churches and neighborhoods in WNY. But when we come together at the Lord’s trumpet call, “Our God will fight for us!” Our unity draws His attention and presence. Warring angel armies are released. God wins and so do we.

A final thought... Nehemiah 3 uses the phrase “next to him” 43 times. No lone rangers here. To rebuild the walls of Jerusalem that had been down 142 years required a team united in purpose. Each resident had to trust the work of his or her neighbor. In WNY, what church is building next to you? What Christian are you building next to? Link arms, lock shields. We are Better Together!

*Rev. Al and Rev. Deb Warner
Set Free, Inc., Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Lord Jesus, You promised to build Your church and declared, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). We stand together on Your Word. May Your Spirit lead us to true and lasting unity. Help us to discover those who are ready to build or already building next to us.



Killing Hostility

And might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. – Ephesians 2:16

As Jesus walked in the area of the Temple in His day, He would have seen a sign that was posted in Latin and Greek with letters that stood an inch and a half high, painted in red against the white marble. Its purpose was to keep the Gentiles (non-Jews) from going any closer to the Presence of God. It read:

NO FOREIGNER IS TO
GO BEYOND THE
BALUSTRADE
AND THE PLAZA OF
THE TEMPLE ZONE

WHOEVER IS CAUGHT DOING SO
WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME
FOR HIS DEATH WHICH WILL
FOLLOW

Men build walls that divide; Jesus died to break them down. In Jesus, God put to death the hostility and hatred that formed these walls by showing men that we are all on equal footing at the cross. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Yet in Christ, no matter our background, race, social

standing, or location, we are one. He has created one new person, the Christian. And together, we show others a glimpse of the world as God created it, in harmony with Him and one another. No more walls.

That is what I love about living and doing ministry in Western New York. The Spirit is doing a new work here where the Church is functioning as one. At a recent prayer event, I stood in a circle with three young men. One of them was Pentecostal, one was

Baptist, one was the pastor of an independent church, and I pastor a Wesleyan church. Yet we were one. No walls. We were just brothers pouring out our hearts for and with each other. Let us pray to see the Holy Spirit continue His powerful work of breaking down walls and reconcile our community to God the Father through the cross of Jesus Christ.

*Pastor Pat Jones
Eastern Hills Wesleyan Church, Williamsville*

*In Christ,
no matter our
background, race,
social standing,
or location,
we are one.*

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, we pray that the Spirit will break down any residual walls in us so that Jesus will clearly be lifted up before people in our community.



Reconciled in Christ

For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross. – Colossians 1:19-20

Let's consider four ways in which Christ relates to reconciliation:

First, "In Him" dwells all of God's fullness – He is absolutely worthy to be the universe's unifying center. The early church was often tempted to search for something else greater than Christ to base their church upon – angels, morality, pleasures, you name it. Christ is better. No doctrine, polity, or style is greater than Him. He is worthy to be the center.

Next, "Through Him" will all things be reconciled – There is no other lasting common ground between diverse nations, genders, cultures, generations, giftedness, socio-economic strata, etc. Only Christ can bring them all together. "All things" includes everything that He has created, which means Christ will be the peace-maker between angels, oceans, summer heat, mosquitos, and everything else God once called "very good" (Gen. 1:31). He is the means of reconciliation.

We too are entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation!

Also, "To Him" will all things be reconciled – Christ is not only the means of our reconciliation, He's the primary party of our reconciliation. The fastest, strongest, and most permanent way to build deep connections with others is to move closer to Christ in reconciliation, worship, and obedience. He is the focus of reconciliation.

Finally, "By His blood" will He make peace – It is not Christ's personality or character that ultimately draws the universe together, it's His death. Neither Christ's teaching nor His mission bond His people together the way His death does. Christ's death for us is the power of our reconciliation.

We too are entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-19). Let us rejoice, however, that our witness may sometimes cost us blood from the world's wrath, but it shall never cost us the blood of God's wrath.

*Pastor Chris Jhu
Christ Central, Buffalo*

**Prayer
Focus**

Lord, we pray as one unified Church in Western New York, that You might reconcile us, our churches, our City, and our world unto Jesus Christ.



Uniting In The House Of Prayer

*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.
– Isaiah 56:7b*

God's house, the spiritual center for city transformation and global impact, is a house of prayer. If we are to see a culture of spiritual renewal flourish in the Church, we must align our vision of God's house with His vision of His house. In its full expression, God's house is not self-referential, but rather, centered on God's presence, it is designed to be a source of life, blessing, and change for every city and nation on earth. Today, wherever God's Presence is not prioritized, we see prayer dying out and the spiritual vitality of the people dying with it. After the spiritual life dissipates, people eventually stop going through the motions. First the pews become vacant, then the buildings crumble or are shut down.

One strategy that is gaining understanding in our day is the power of the Psalm 133 blessing in God's house — the unity of the elders in the city: "Behold, how good and pleasant it is

when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). This is not merely cooperation or participation, but true unity — the same quality of unity that God the Father and Jesus share. It is the kind of unity Jesus prayed we would have. It is a unity that prefers others above ourselves, considers the cause of the

Kingdom over our own needs, and is free from selfish ambition and impure motives. As this quality of unity rises in the Body of Christ, we will see a release of authority in God's house. Imagine the authority we

will possess when we speak with a united voice. As representatives of God's house, the Church must live by God's priorities of worship, prayer, and unity, moving together as the house of prayer that will release transformation to the world around us. May we see the expansion of His Kingdom in our City in our day!

*Bishop Robert Stearns
Founder / Director Eagles' Wings, Clarence
Senior Leader, The Tabernacle, Orchard Park*

*May we see the
expansion of His
Kingdom in our
City in our day!*



Working Together

Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication or all the saints. – Ephesians 6:18

If we want unity among our churches and in Buffalo and Western New York we need to take the advice of the Apostle Paul and pray for all the believers in all the churches. When I first became a pastor in Buffalo, I heard God say, “Let’s work together to win Buffalo to Christ.” I knew this was not just an opportunity for me and our local church to cooperate with God, but it was a mandate to work together with all churches, pastors and believers in our region. Paul understood that winning a region for Christ required a lot of prayer and work. Let’s all pray and work together to win Buffalo to Christ.

The greatest source of disunity in the region is our enemy. Please note that our enemy is singular and not plural. Craig Groeschel wrote, “The

church down the road is not our enemy. That denomination that does things differently from us is not our enemy... We have one enemy, and his mission is the same as it always has been: to steal, kill, and destroy. To steal our unity, kill the power of our local gatherings, and destroy our credibility and influence with the world we’re called to reach.” I believe we are in the beginning of a fresh move of God. “I hear the sound of the abundance of rain” (1 Kings 18:41). We received the physical rain that ended our short drought last summer, but now we need the rain of the Spirit, the supernatural activity of God in our churches and in our lives, to end a long spiritual drought.

Paul understood that winning a region for Christ required a lot of prayer and work.

*Rev. Dr. Ron Burgio
Love Joy Church, Lancaster*

Prayer Focus

Father, we pray for all the churches, pastors and believers in Buffalo, that You would pour out Your Spirit on all of us (Joel 2:28). We pray that many new people would be saved, healed and disciplined for Your glory.



Focus On What Unites, Not On What Divides

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. — John 17:20-21

A preacher's young son asked to accompany his father to a revival service one night. After the call to worship, one of the deacons approached the lectern and read a Scripture, followed by another deacon who, while sitting in the front row, led the congregation in a time of prayer. This order of service stunned the young man because of the worship flow he was accustomed to at his home church. He couldn't wait for the service to end so he could address his concerns with his father. After hearing his son explain how he couldn't get into the service because of what he considered to be an unorthodox service order, his dad taught him a valuable lesson. The father began to tell him about everything he missed because he was focused on the differences. "You missed the sermon on unity tonight," the father told him.

How many of us are guilty of focusing on what makes us different instead of what makes us one?

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). The young boy responded, "Dad, I missed what God was doing because I focused on the wrong thing."

How many of us are guilty of focusing on what makes us different instead of what makes us one? Jesus' prayer was that we would be one even as Christ and the Father are one. What a compelling text, especially when you realize that it would be read by both Jews and Gentiles. Our unity with other brothers, from different cultures, occupations, geographic locations and skin color will show forth the Glory of the unity in heaven. By God's grace, and in Christ's love, we can maintain both diversity and unity at the same time.

*Pastor Andre Clark
New Direction Christian Fellowship, Buffalo*



Be Reconciled, Enriched, and Unified!

...who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility. – Ephesians 2:14

Our world and America are diversifying and dividing as never before! Globalization is rapidly bringing various nations, cultures, races, religions and worldviews “together” in some positive ways, but also in some stressful and sometimes violent ways. Yet, our God loves both unity and diversity as He Himself is a divine Trinity (One-God-in-Three-Persons), who designed creation with a beautiful array of diversity in mind (Gen. 1:24-28; 10:1f), and yet to be united in common praise of its Creator.

But since the Fall, our human nature tends to pull these two things apart, either in the direction of Babel (Gen. 11) as a diversity-denying unity that suppresses all differences, or in the direction of a unity-denying stance that breaks apart into thousands of competing pieces, as post-modernism does, denying there is any one ultimate, unifying truth. Yet, it is just here that

We can celebrate our differences, and be enriched by each other's various gifts.

the Church has one of its greatest callings – bearing witness to the reconciling work of Christ who unites us in Him without denying our rich diversity racially, culturally, or socially (Col. 3:11). Since Pentecost, with the coming of the Holy Spirit – who longs to fall on “all” flesh, high and low, peoples and nations (Acts 2:1-18) – we can celebrate our differences, and be enriched by each other's various gifts in the Body of Christ, as we unite in our common worship of Him.

And this loving unity-in-diversity can be a powerful witness to our fractured world. It prophetically points the way forward to that glorious future when some from every nation, people and tribe join in common praise to our one Lord, but in our various languages and ways (Rev. 7:9).

*Rev. Dr. Bob Tice
RiverRock Church, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Lord, please help our churches begin to live out this diversity-in-unity. Help us reach out to those different from us, whether racially, culturally, socio-economically or politically, and truly listen, learn and understand them. And even if they reject You, help us to still love, practically care, and earnestly pray for them.



Pressure To Make You Proud

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon I have given you, just as I promised to Moses. – Joshua 1:3

The Book of Joshua begins shortly after Joshua and the Israelites were in mourning over Moses' death. Moses had led them safely from Egypt to the border and safety of the Promised Land. He had rebuilt their faith and confidence in the God of their fathers – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses was the Israelites hero and he was Joshua's spiritual father. Joshua had spent so much time serving Moses that his grief was personal, painful, and had the potential to become paralyzing. Losing positions, losing property, and even the loss of privilege can cause pain. But Joshua's loss was deeper than losing a job or property, he had lost his leader, his mentor, and the person he had placed his confidence in. Joshua had lost hope.

So arise from your mourning, go forward, and make Moses proud that he chose you as his successor.

Have you ever lost hope after suffering loss? The loss was so detrimental that it left you paralyzed, unable to see through the grief and the sorrow until you found yourself without confidence and hopeless. God recognized Joshua's state and said to him, "I know Moses is dead, but every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon I have given you, just as I promised to Moses." In essence, God told Joshua, "Be confident again in the promise I made to your leader, your mentor and your spiritual father. Place your hope in the promise that I will be with you, just as I was with him. So arise from your mourning, go forward, and make Moses proud that he chose you as his successor."

*Bishop T. Anthony Bronner
Elim Christian Fellowship, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Father God, thank You for giving me the time I needed to mourn my losses, but more than that, thank You for not allowing me to stay stuck at the point of my pain. I will arise knowing You are with me as You were with Moses. I will arise not only to make Moses proud, but to hear You say, "Well done!"



The Value of a Promise

*Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.
— Galatians 3:16*

Promises are cheap these days. Easily made. Quickly broken. Throw-aways that suit the moment but have no lasting value. But promises are important to God. The plan of God for you is built on a sequence of powerful promises. His desire is to restore us to Himself. He offers to do that through a cascade of spectacular promises.

They began with Adam and Eve. They continued with Noah. But the flood-gates of God's promises open wide as He chooses a man named Abraham. "Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring" (Gal. 3:16). God promised Abraham that he would father His people and inhabit His land, but most of all that He would be his God. God's promises made Abraham and his children special people, favored above all others. But God wanted to share the blessings, so He made more promises — not just to one man's family, but to

*Wise is the person
who chooses
to know and to
believe God's
promises.*

all of us. Paul wrote, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who hangs on a tree' — that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. 3:13-14). By sending His Son into the world, God shared the promises He made to Abraham with all of us. And through Him offered us even more promises, including the promise of His Spirit.

Wise is the person who chooses to know and to believe God's promises. Blessed is the person who receives and enjoys the promises that God has already fulfilled. How precious to you are God's promises? Open your heart to God this week to marvel at the greatness and beauty of God's promises to you.

Pastor Greg McClain

Prayer Focus

God, thank You for extending Yourself to us through Your promises — promises to give us Yourself, through Your Spirit. Thank You that we can know that You will keep every promise You made.



New Confidence, Because He Promises!

And ... afterwards... I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. – Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17

Fire, famine, war, earthquakes, tsunamis and more have all furiously shaken our world in these last days. Every nation has been striving for true peace and prosperity, or looking for it in the wrong ways, but not experiencing it. Yet true peace and power has already graciously been given with Christ's first coming, His atoning death, His glorious resurrection and with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit – all because God is the God of Promise!

Indeed, none of God's promises in all of Scripture ever fail (see Josh. 23:14; Lk. 24:44-49), and all have come to pass or will because of Him. So, when the disciples were waiting and praying on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit fell on them to remain within them. And then Peter

declared that Joel's prophetic word was suddenly fulfilled, and as a result, about 3,000 people were added to Christ's Kingdom that day.

Therefore, be confident! Christ has surely promised to strengthen us with the Holy Spirit even while the world is striving in vain and racked by conflicts and trauma – both personal and social, local and world-wide. But for those who turn to His loving invitation, even the lowly – by worldly standards – and the younger ones can see heavenly visions and prophesy, and the elderly can dream Kingdom-dreams – all because the Promised One is residing within them!

Every promise of Yours has been, or is being, or will be fulfilled!

*Pastor John Purna Tamang
Saransthan International Fellowship, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

We thank You, Heavenly Father, that every promise of Yours has been, or is being, or will be fulfilled, for You are the Lord of the promise who strengthens us with new confidence. As the world is seeking true peace and purpose, fill those who don't know You with eternal hope and new confidence from You, the Lord of promise!



The Promised Holy Spirit

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. – John 14:15-18

Loving God means loving the purposes and practices of God. The promise we have in John 14 is that, as we love Him and obey His commands and leading, a way would be made for us to participate intimately with those things. This way is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in us. Promised by Jesus, announced by the apostles, and received by believers from that time forth and all over the world, the Spirit is the mark that God is with us still. He has not left us orphaned or abandoned. It is just the opposite. We are adopted sons and daughters of the King, who imparts both His mission and means to accomplish what He wants for our lives, our neighborhoods, our cities, and our world.

*God has given us
God so that, we
and all, might see
and know God!*

The confidence that comes with this is unshakable, unstoppable, and irresistible, when you quiet yourself to hear it. God has given us God so that, we and all, might see and know

God! Peter, John, and the others who experienced the promise of the Spirit in the Upper Room, had no idea the world was about to shake and the Spirit who hovered over the waters at the creation of all existence was going to be released. Jesus spoke, and a surge of spiritual confidence came upon them – confidence that would grow exponentially as the promise was fulfilled at Pentecost.

*Pastor Matt Haberman
Knox Evangelical Presbyterian Church,
Kenmore*

**Prayer
Focus**

Holy Spirit, we trust that You are still promised to the lovers of God. We ask that You would again imbue us with Your Presence. Unleash Your Kingdom and shake our region for Your glory.



Life in the Storm

... when evening had come, He said to them,
“Let us go across to the other side.” —Mark 4:35-41

Life unravels quickly in midst of a storm. The disciples had already witnessed Jesus healing a leper, restoring a withered hand, and a paralytic walking — but storms have a way of revealing the anchor of our soul.

These were professional fishermen navigating these waters, but when fierce gales send waves crashing overboard, even professionals fear for their lives. Matthew describes the event in terms of a quake at sea! In complete contrast to a disciple's panic, is the Lord's sound-asleep calm in midst of the storm. The fear of the disciple accuses, “Teacher, do you not care that we're perishing?” To our tiny, finite minds, it seems that God is sleeping on the job. But in His incarnation, the great Creator entered our storm; the Lord Jesus got into the boat with us. “Peace! Be still!” With a word, power over creation reduces storms to

*In His incarnation,
the great Creator
entered our storm;
the Lord Jesus got
into the boat with us.*

instant silence! And at the cross, Christ has reduced the greatest storm of sin and death to instant silence!

The disciples feared greatly, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” This is God our Savior, and the promise is for every disciple. If you are a believer, trusting in Christ, let me ask, why should you not fear the storms of life? Because the promise of the Lord Jesus from the beginning was, “Let us go across to the other side.” Since Jesus has removed the sting of death at the cross, when Christ says, “We're going over to the other side,” then we are going over to the other side. And no storm of life or death will keep those in Christ from going over to the other side.

*Pastor Jim Furey
Christ Church, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Lord Jesus, we rejoice because of Your victory at the cross over our greatest storm. We are confident that nothing in life, not death itself will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.



Forward From Fear

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.” – Acts 2:14-16

Here we find Peter rising to address a bewildered and ridiculing crowd, wondering what it means to hear the praise of God in their own language. This same Peter was not long ago hiding with the other disciples behind closed doors after the crucifixion, fearful they too might be arrested and punished for being associated with Jesus who was executed as a criminal. They were frozen in fear because of the real threat of being found guilty by association. Then something happened – something that enabled them to move forward from their fears. They had an encounter with the risen Christ! And here we find Peter and the disciples rising to speak boldly. There has been a transformation and now

Then something happened – something that enabled them to move forward from their fears.

they are standing tall, no longer afraid of what repercussions their witness might bring. Through their encounter with the risen Christ they have been released to move forward from their fear.

What about you? Have you allowed your encounter with the risen Christ and His commissioning love to propel you forward, or is your life still framed by fear? Fear of what others may think, say, or do can also paralyze you from bold action for Christ. Be strengthened by your encounter with the risen Christ and let your fears go, then you too can be mobilized for a more effective witness.

*Rev. Kimberly Gladden
ZionQuest Christian Fellowship,
Cheektowaga/Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Lord, help me to acknowledge that in Your strength I can be confident and live victoriously. Even when everything around me is challenging my faith, let my spirit be emboldened by Your promise to always be with me. And let me live in such a way that the world bears witness to Your transforming power operating in my life.



Rolling Back the Reproach

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father! So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.” – Galatians 4:6-7

As God led the Israelites into the Promised Land (Joshua 1), they didn’t immediately begin taking possession of the land. First, God had to establish a new identity for His people; an identity that was no longer branded by slavery. And so, the first place He brought them to was Gilgal which means, “to roll away” – a place where God would roll away the reproach of their slavery; a place where they would now see a new reality of God – that God is the God of Promise. And just as He brought this people to the Land He promised, now they would have to go in and possess what He said was theirs (Joshua 5:2-9).

Recently, archeologists found this ancient site of Gilgal. It is marked by stones made into a gigantic shape of a foot because wherever Israel’s foot would tread was to be their inheri-

tance (Joshua 1:3). However, in order for them to receive their inheritance, they could not walk in their previous identity of reproach... and neither can we!

As Jesus Christ sacrificed His life for us on Calvary, He too rolled away the reproach of our slavery to sin. But He didn’t stop there. He gave us His Spirit to dwell within us, completely changing our identities from slaves to heirs. He rolls away slavery and replaces it with significance. Significance marked by sonship. If the Father has already given you His greatest promise – the Holy Spirit inside of you, the Holy Spirit leading you – then what is holding you back? Are you ready to move forward into all the God of Promise has called you to?

Are you ready to move forward into all the God of Promise has called you to?

*Pastor Craig Campbell
Faith Tabernacle, Lockport*

**Prayer
Focus**

Lord, what reproach is keeping me from entering into the promises You have called me to?



The Tested Power of the Holy Spirit

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness – Luke 4:1

There is a misconception as it relates to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Some have been taught that the Holy Spirit is merely a feeling that overwhelms you with great joy that will make you dance, cry, sing or run! Yes, the Holy Spirit can evoke a vast array of emotion, but He is not an emotion, He is God.

As God, He promises to guide us, and in many cases, He will guide us into undesired destinations.

Jesus teaches us the importance of following the Holy Spirit, even if it is in the wilderness. Up to this point, Jesus had lived a quiet and somewhat normal life with His family. He is then, “led by the Spirit in the wilderness.” Isn’t that just like God? Your life is good, normal, quiet and without drama, and then you find yourself “being led.” Wouldn’t it be great if in January the Spirit led you from Buffalo to a beach in Jamaica and paid for everything?

Testing provides confirmation. Are you a confirmed believer or an untested impostor?

We know that is hardly ever the case. Jesus was led from comfort into the wilderness.

Next, Jesus finds Himself joined by the presence of Satan, who tempted and tested Him from food to suicide. The testing occurs after He is, “full of the Holy Spirit.” Because Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, He was able to retort after every attempt, “It is written!” After the successful completion of His test, “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about Him

went out through all the surrounding country” (Lu. 4:14). His test not only gave Him power, but it afforded Him respect. Testing provides confirmation. Are you a confirmed believer or an untested impostor? After your test you will know a new power!

*Pastor Craig D. Pridgen
True Bethel Baptist Church, Niagara Falls*

**Prayer
Focus**

Heavenly Father, we pray your guidance through the Holy Spirit even in undesired areas that will grant us access to power unseen.



The Holy Spirit – Our Key to Victory

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.
– Acts 1:8*

A homeless man lived under a bridge and every day he would push around a shopping cart in search of food and handouts. His skin looked like leather stretched over bones. He walked with a heavy limp, and whenever he passed by, people complained about his odor. One day, he was found dead under the bridge he called home. The police discovered a key around his neck that led them to safety deposit box filled with millions of dollars.

Many of us live like that homeless man. We are gaunt on the inside as we carry the key to unlimited resources, but never use it. The key is the Holy Spirit. He is certainly more than a key, He is the third person of the Trinity. The Spirit was present at creation, hovering over the chaos in

Even now, the Spirit helps us hear God's voice, overcome sin, battle discouragement, and find victory in places of confinement.

anticipation of the coming world (Gen. 1:2), and He stands with the bride in the Book of Revelation, inviting the thirsty to come and drink (Rev. 22:17). In between Genesis and Revelation, we see the Spirit comforting, convicting and counseling people, empowering them to live for God. Even now, the Spirit helps us hear God's voice, overcome sin, battle discouragement, and find victory in places of confinement. It was from a dark prison that Paul spoke of the Holy Spirit as "the supply of the Spirit" (Philippians 1:19). The same Spirit who was present at creation, hovers over your circumstance at this very moment, waiting to bring life, hope, and refreshing.

*Pastor Lou Perez
Destiny Christian Church, Niagara Falls*

Prayer Focus

Holy Spirit, come and awaken us, reform us, and conform us to Your will in our lives. Teach us what it means to "walk in the Spirit" so that we will not fall prey to our flesh. Empower us to not only live for You, but also to become Your hands, Your feet and Your voice calling to the thirsty, "The Spirit and the bride say come" (Rev. 22:17; John 4:13-14).



The Expectation of Waiting

And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. – Luke 24:49

Have you ever been told to go and wait to receive something, with a promise that if you will follow the person's instructions you'll receive something in return? Often the person making the promise ends up disappointing us because they didn't have the ability or desire to fulfill what they said. In Luke 24:49, Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection to fulfill the Scriptures that promised He would return. Jesus finds that the disciples have reverted back to their former occupation. They had quickly abandoned Jesus' teachings. As with our current culture, the disciples lacked the patience, discipline, and seemingly, the faith to persevere through times of difficulty in order to become recipients of Jesus' promises.

Jesus declares an imperative statement: "I'm sending the promise of my Father upon you." The Master

was not speaking empty words, but validating them through His presence. He then adds a conjunctive command, "But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." The disciples could now wait in Jerusalem with great assurance that Jesus would fulfill His word. Expectation is the anticipation for something that not only has been promised, but includes the confident hope that He who has given the promise is faithful to stand by His Word. Waiting challenges our will to yield, surrender, and cultivates patience.

Waiting builds our faith, knowing Jesus cannot lie. Waiting does not mean idleness, but is a posture of communing with the Redeemer. It is serving in the Most Holy Place until we receive the promise and are invested with His power to be His witnesses.

Waiting challenges our will to yield, surrender, and cultivates patience. Waiting builds our faith, knowing Jesus cannot lie.

*Pastor Ted Howard
Edison Street Community Church, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Lord, may we never lose sight of the importance of waiting and expecting. Help us to surrender our will and commit daily in the most holy place, not in idleness, but in service. Cloth us with power to effective and viable witnesses for You.



High Fashion!

And behold, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. – Luke 24:49

Wow! Talk about a promise! Can you see the picture Jesus is painting? Our clothing is what the world sees, their first impression of us. Jesus is preparing His disciples, and all future disciples, for their new wardrobe. The first impression people have of Christians should resonate with God's wardrobe change – that we are, “clothed with power from on high!” What does this mean? It means we have Holy Spirit in us and on us. It means we re-present Christ everywhere we go. Everything Jesus did we get to do – and more! “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (Jn. 14:12). With Holy Spirit in us and on us, we can see the sick healed, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dead raised,

the possessed freed, and people born again. These are all pieces in our new wardrobe!

If you've never seen this except in the pages of the Bible, be assured that many from today's church, individuals just like yourself, are seeing people healed, delivered, and brought into intimacy with our Heavenly Father. Blind eyes are being opened, deaf ears hear again, growths disappear in an instant, metal rods dissolve in bodies, and so much more! This is our – yours and mine – normal Christian life! When the world sees what you are wearing, they will expectantly ask, “Where did you get those clothes?” It's time to wear your Holy Spirit wardrobe and shed any lifeless, old rags!

It's time to wear your Holy Spirit wardrobe and shed any lifeless, old rags!

*Pastors Justin and Jessica Collins
Vanguard Church, North Tonawanda*

Prayer Focus

Holy Spirit, clothe us with Yourself, that everyone around us would be drawn to You and to the depths of Your love. We pray Your promise would be demonstrated in our lives through the miraculous!



Powerful Words

Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction... – 1 Thessalonians 1:5a

I love good preaching. I love good teaching. I love hearing the Word of God explained with clarity confidence and excellence. Most of us do. I have never walked away from a good sermon saying, "I wish the preacher was less clear, more nervous, and less prepared." Have you? Sometimes good preaching has an unintended negative consequence. Excellent communication can tempt believers to leave the preaching to the professionals. The problem is that God has called each of us to share the good news (gospel), and our message requires us to use words. What if we are not good at using words?

Here is what God says: God's good news does not require wise or lofty words (1 Cor. 2:1). God's good news does not require an excellent presentation or even an excellent presenter (1 Cor. 2:3). God's good news can be effectively delivered in weakness

Excellent communication can tempt believers to leave the preaching to the professionals.

fear and trembling (1 Cor. 2:4). God's good news requires Holy Spirit power, and Jesus promised His disciples that power with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Peter explained that this promise was for all believers (Acts 2:38-39).

Paul said an effective, Holy Spirit-empowered presentation of the good news results in full conviction and assurance that is the real deal in the hearts and lives of the hearers. In fact, he says, that a proclamation of the gospel

that is wrapped in the Holy Spirit is better than one wrapped in a powerful personality or wise speech, because it allows the hearer to put their faith in God's power over the presenter's wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4-5). All this gives me real hope. The hard work is Holy Spirit's work.

*Pastor Josh Hamlin
New Covenant Tabernacle, Buffalo*



Holy Spirit, thank You for fulfilling the promise of Jesus through me. Thank You that it is not up to my wisdom. Empower my words today to be an effective witness of Jesus to those around me.



Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. — Acts 2:1-4

The word “Pentecost” is derived from the Greek word *pentékosté* (fiftieth)

which represents the festival celebrated by Israel on the 50th day after Passover. Pentecost is first mentioned in the New Testament as the occasion for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus’ disciples. The Lord had given instruction for them to wait in Jerusalem until they received this promise of the Father (Acts 1:4, 8). Although they had no idea what was about to happen, they waited with a spirit of expectancy, knowing it was going to be an awesome experience based on what Jesus had explained to them.

We, the Church, need a revival of the Pentecostal experience. We can no longer be afraid or ashamed of

the true move of the Holy Spirit. If we restrict the moving of the Spirit, it will restrict and hinder other areas in our lives. The Holy Spirit is orderly and not a cause of confusion. God does not want us ignorant concerning the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the life of the Church, the Body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the life of the Church, the Body of Christ. A wrong attitude concerning His work can be very grievous to the Spirit of God. Putting your faith in the finished work of the Cross will allow the Holy Spirit to do great things in your life. If we surrender, deny ourselves, pick-up our Cross daily and follow Christ, the enemy can’t stop us, and we will do mighty things in advancing the Kingdom of God.

*Bishop Jesse Scott
Word of Life Ministries, Niagara Falls*

**Prayer
Focus**

Father, help us not to be ignorant of the Holy Spirit’s work, but instead, to yield to all He desires to accomplish within the Church.



Filled With The Power of The Holy Spirit

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

– Romans 8:10-11

The incredible news to the believer is that we not only give our lives over to Christ, but He empowers us with His Holy Spirit. The Scriptures declare that because the Holy Spirit is living inside of us, we have a new power in our lives that compares with nothing or no one on earth. It is this power that Paul refers to which is not of this world nor has it ever been. The power that fills us as believers is the same power that raised a crucified Jesus from the dead. It is the same power that brings us back to life from a sinful nature and a hopelessly broken life. The Holy Spirit has the power to give us a new mind, a new life and a resurrected hope. It is

The Holy Spirit has the power to give us a new mind, a new life and a resurrected hope.

the same power that restores a marriage and reunites a broken family. This Holy Spirit power gives a supernatural answer to every natural challenge.

D.L Moody was asked why he urged Christians to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. His reply was, “Because I leak!” He then pointed to a water tank that had developed a leak. Understandably so, for us as the people of God, life has a way of creating “leaks” in our lives. Leaks that cause us to forget about His power. Leaks that cause us to take all of life’s troubles and challenges on ourselves when we have His power to rely on.

Pastor Marty MacDonald
City Church, Batavia

Prayer Focus

Lord, I ask You today to fill me with the power of Your Holy Spirit so I may live a life that pleases you. Thank You Father, that You promise to, “give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. (Luke 11:13).



God's Power Yet Lives

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. – Acts 2:1-4

In the beginning, when God created man, He breathed life into us from His own being, enabling us to fulfill the creation mandate – “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion...” (Gen. 1:28). Such is the purpose of the Church – to be victorious in Him. To assure that we would possess the power to accomplish His purpose, God breathed into the Church the Holy Spirit – His presence – the One Jesus promised would be with us and in us (Jn. 14:16-17).

Isn't it good to know, Jesus not only promised that He would never leave us nor forsake us; (the promise of His presence), but He also gives us, the Church, everything we need to accomplish His will and live victori-

*As we believe God,
there is no power
too great to defeat
God's will in
our lives.*

ously in this world (the promise of His power). We live with the assurance of knowing, “greater is He that is in us – the Holy Spirit – than he that is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:4). As we believe God, there is no power under heaven that is too great to defeat God's will in our lives. Peace, healing, and each of God's promises are available to us too as we receive them by faith.

As the Church prays together, works together and believes together, let us also rejoice together in the strength of God's promises, and praise God together in the joy of the Holy Spirit.

*Pastor Jeff Carter
Ephesus Ministries, Buffalo*

Prayer Focus

Lord, we give You praise that You are with us. Let us be one, even as You are one. Let our singleness of purpose be that Your will is done here on this earth, even as it is in Heaven.

Pentecost Together



CHURCH
OF WNY

As we began this 50-day spiritual journey, we were praying that each of us would hear God's voice as He used these daily devotions to encourage our hearts and challenge our faith. We are certain that as you have taken time each day to faithfully sit before the Lord, He has been equally faithful to meet you personally and powerfully through His Word and by His Spirit. As we're sure you observed, no attempt was made to remove the uniqueness of the various expressions of our faith found within The Church of WNY. In fact, this rich diversity is not something we tolerate, but rather, something we celebrate, as the manifold glory of God is displayed in and through His Church.

During our first week, we focused on the New Life the Resurrection of Jesus has made available to all who believe. The following week we came to terms with the New Priority all believers are called to embrace, The Kingdom of God. Next, we learned about our New Identity as Jesus' Witnesses in the earth, doing our part to ensure that every man, woman and child in our City and our region have repeated opportunities to see, hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Accepting our identity as His witnesses brought us to the New Mission we each have been assigned, the Harvest. Our joy not only arises when we see someone come to faith in Christ, but more so, as we see them assimilated into a life-giving, local body of believers. Here, as new-found members of the household of faith, the New Community becomes our focus, and we see how God's Spirit does His transformative work, resulting in Unity / Reconciliation. Having found community among other believers, we gain a New Confidence through the hope and Promise given to us in God's Word. Finally, as we approached Pentecost, we learned of the New Power the Holy Spirit makes available to believers, enabling us to live the kind of fruitful and victorious life Jesus intends for each of His disciples.

Our ongoing prayer is that we will truly be The Church of WNY – one body in different locations, each of us committed to building meaningful relationships with one another, unifying in order to see our City and entire region saturated with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We're committing our lives toward this purpose and hope you'll join us on the journey.

*Living Pentecost Together,
The Servant Team
Church of WNY*

Visit <http://churchofwny.com> to connect.



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