

**Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ – Los Angeles**

**Pentecost Sunday – May 20, 2018**

**Rev. Anne G. Cohen, Minister**

**Acts 2:1-21**

**FOR REFLECTION**

**“This much I have learned: human beings come with very different sets of wiring, different interests, different temperaments, different learning styles, different gifts, different temptations. These differences are tremendously important in the spiritual formation of human beings.”**

~ John Ortberg, American Clergy (b.1957)

**Wild Child**

Give me some names or metaphors for G-d:

Breath  
Wind  
Creator  
Potter  
Shepherd  
Bridegroom  
Fountain  
Rock  
Fire  
King - Sovereign  
Alpha and Omega  
Father  
Mother Hen  
Laboring Woman  
Physician  
Midwife  
Property Owner  
Homeless Man  
Counselor  
Song  
Home

A few sources:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/dictionary-of-bible-themes/5409-metaphor>

[http://www.jesuswalk.com/books/pu\\_names-god\\_list.htm](http://www.jesuswalk.com/books/pu_names-god_list.htm)

If we look at just one of our hymns, #11 “Bring Many Names”, we can see that we have a plethora of metaphors for and descriptions of G-d to play with:

Strong Mother, Warm Father, Old Aching, Young Growing, Great Living G-d

Ancient religions had a different god for each of the personalities that they perceived in The Divine aka That-Which-is-Greater. They had pantheons of warriors and lovers, creators and destroyers, tricksters and wise ones, partiers and protectors.

In ancient Greek religion and mythology, **Pan** is the god of the wild, shepherds and flocks, nature of mountain wilds, rustic music and impromptus, and companion of the nymphs. He has the hindquarters, legs, and horns of a goat, in the same manner as a faun or satyr...Pan is connected to fertility and the season of spring. The ancient Greeks also considered Pan to be the god of theatrical criticism. The word panic ultimately derives from the god's name.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan\\_\(god\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan_(god))

[In the same pantheon] **Dionysus** is the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, of ritual madness, fertility, theatre and religious ecstasy... Wine played an important role in Greek culture, and the cult of Dionysus was the main religious focus for its unrestrained consumption... in some cults, he arrives from the east, as an Asiatic foreigner; in others, from Ethiopia in the South. He is a god of epiphany, "the god that comes", and his "foreignness" as an arriving outsider-god may be inherent and essential to his cults...the only god born from a mortal mother. His festivals were the driving force behind the development of Greek theatre.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus>

We Christians, derived from a One-God religion, wrestled with the reality that our G-d has multiple manifestations and personalities. We settled for three: Serious Father/Creator who is Beyond Understanding, Human Christ (who at least has a sense of humor) with Whom we can relate, and a Holy Spirit / Comforter who is like a mother but also very mystical. We tend to be so serious about our Trinitarian G-d. We forget that – as Pope Francis said recently:

...God is the God of Law, but he is (also) the God of surprises.

And it is this G-d of Surprises – this Wild Child – that we celebrate today on Pentecost – The Birthday of the Church.

How often do we think of G-d as a Child – let alone a Wild Child? We have the image of the baby Christ in a manger, peaceful and beloved of farm animals. There is the 12-year-old who forgets to tell his parents that he's going to hang out in the big city – at the temple with the elders – amazing them with his youthful wisdom – rather than go back home with them to a less-than-stimulating small town. We have imagined him working with his step-father, the carpenter, in a serene shop-setting. But G-d is more than the stories we tell about the Human One.

What are the characteristics of a Wild Child? Here's one definition:

[A] wild child has his/her own mind, can be extremely rebellious and often just wants to be left alone to discover things for him/herself. Authoritarian figures hate them because they simply refuse to listen and are often most resourceful. They can be very bright and able to fend for themselves under all kinds of conditions. They cannot be taught but are quick to learn: they normally have to be shown only once and may end up teaching the teachers better, more efficient ways of getting the job done.

<https://www.quora.com/What-are-characteristics-of-a-wild-child>

Here's another:

The wild child has little to do with age...

The wild child has little to do with...gender and sexuality.

The wild child embraces life every day and looks for adventures.

The wild child doesn't let the necessary and mundane parts of life keep him down or beat [her] up beyond recognition...

The wild child is a blend of carefree and caring.

The wild child doesn't wait to the end of life and say, "I wish I'd have done that."

Instead, they end each day saying, "I'm glad I tried it."

The wild child is alive, physically, spiritually and emotionally...

[The wild child] is free [and non-conforming].

Danielle Tate, Christian Blogger  
<https://danielletate.org/wildchild/>

What kind of G-d runs through the house like a violent wind – sets people on fire – and fills them with words they never knew they knew?

What kind of G-d knows how to amp up a party and get people talking about it with amazement and anxiety and perplexity?

What kind of G-d showers gifts on every single person who shows up to the party – not little party favors – but priceless gifts that can change lives, even save lives?

What kind of G-d creates a universe, sets up some parameters and rules of physics, and then cuts it loose to see what happens? Our kind of G-d, that's what!

My Dad was telling me that a bunch of rocket-scientist-students and Cal Tech were blowing things up on campus – and finally drove the administration to send them off to a piece of property up the canyon where they could experiment without endangering everybody else. (An origin story for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory – JPL.) One of the founders was a kid who didn't even have a college degree. These were (and are) wild children inspired by the Wild Child G-d to explore the universe.

Our Wild Child G-d pushes the boundaries, creates spectrums rather than single prototypes – evolves too many species of plants and animals to categorize in a thousand life-times.

Our Wild Child G-d introduces variations of gender and sexuality that force entire nations to re-think their social contracts.

Our Wild Child G-d eludes definition – pries open the human mind – presses us to create more religions and denominations and spiritual behaviors to try to express our sense of That-Which-is-Larger-than-Ourselves.

Our Wild Child G-d creates finger-painting sunsets and water color sunrises and Jackson Pollock, abstract expressionist style landscapes on a whim.

Our Wild Child G-d sings jazz and rap and opera and heavy metal and Tibetan monk chanting at all hours of the day and night.

Our Wild Child G-d goes barefoot and lives off the generosity and kindness of strangers and camps under the stars near the L.A. River and on freeway overpasses and in public parks.

There is no way to tame this G-d of ours. So, it's probably best if we go with the flow, expect the unexpected, gratefully receive and treasure these messy, hand-made kid-gifts handed to us at the end of each day – and quit trying to get G-d to go to sleep at a reasonable hour.

Blessed be the Wild Child G-d who thrives when we get over our need to control her.

Blessed be the Wild Child G-d who laughs and cries with abandon – along with us.

Blessed be the Wild Child G-d who busts open like a Pentecost Piñata and showers us with enough gifts to share with the rest of the world.

Blessed Be.

**Acts 2:1-21**

2When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.7Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

9Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ 13But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

19 And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

20 The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”