

Mount Hollywood United Church of Christ – Los Angeles

Pentecost Sunday – June 4, 2017 - Communion

Rev. Anne G. Cohen, Minister

Acts 2:1-21

For Reflection

“[Christ's] mission and work it is to help against sin and death, to justify and bring life. He has placed his help in baptism and the Sacrament [i.e., communion/Eucharist/Lord's supper], and incorporated it in the Word and preaching. To our eyes Baptism [capitalized in original] appears to be nothing more than ordinary water, and the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood simple bread and wine, like other bread and wine, and the sermon, hot air from a man's [sic] mouth. But we must not trust what our eyes see.”

- Martin Luther, German professor of theology, composer, priest, monk and a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation (1483-1546)

“Symbolically, what the rabbis say is that at Passover, what we have to do is try to get rid of our hot air - our pride, our feeling that we are the most important people in the whole entire world and that everything should revolve round us.”

- Jackie Tabick b.1948, British Reform rabbi, Britain's first female rabbi in 1975

Hot Air

According to JPL (Jet Propulsion Laboratory):

Hot air expands, and rises; cooled air contracts--gets denser--and sinks; and the ability of the air to hold water depends on its temperature. A given volume of air at 20°C (68°F) can hold twice the amount of water vapor than at 10°C (50°F). ...

<https://sealevel.jpl.nasa.gov/overview/overviewclimate/overviewclimateair/>

Hot Air expands, rises, holds water.

Cold Air contracts, sinks, expels water.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary citing Mark Twain (who originated the phrase “full of hot air” in 1873), **Hot Air** is:

Vaporous or boastful talk, pretentious or unsubstantial statements or claims.

<https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/107376/origin-of-idiom-full-of-hot-air>

And according to Wikipedia:

Hot Air is a conservative American political blog.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hot_Air

Today, however, we are going with a biblical metaphor: tongues of fire accompanied by the sound of a violent wind – **Hot Air** – aka The Holy Spirit – aka *Ruah* the Breath of G-d. We call this particular event (Pentecost) – The Birthday of the Church. Even though Matthew 16:18 records Jesus as saying, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” – a metaphor that leads to land ownership and building construction – most Christians will refer to this Hot Air Event as the foundational moment for the post-resurrection-continuing Jesus movement.

This organization that we are a part of is founded on Hot Air – G-d’s Breath. And that means that we are free to breathe and think and feel and act outside of any box built to house G-d or the Jesus movement. It also means that as long as we have breath – as long as we are alive – as long as our bodies are full of hot air (and the water it collects) – we have choices. We may not have control over the events of our lives – but we have choices about how to respond to those events. And we have choices about how to influence the shape of events that have not yet happened.

At the Southern California Nevada Conference UCC Annual Gathering Friday I learned some rather cool things – or, should I say, “hot airy” things – about the UCC here in So. CA. For example: One of our ministers has a cyber-church where people attend as avatars from all around the world. It is a totally UCC church – with one exception – they hold 10 worship services a week. Any number of avatars have returned to the default world to find a UCC church in their community and begin to participate.

Another bit of news is that our SCNCUCC Conference Staff are now deployed. We are selling the building (shared with the Disciples of Christ for decades), finding a base camp in a local church, and staff will continue to operate mostly on the road and online. A deficit budget that at one point was minus \$3 million a year is down to minus \$200,000 this year. Shedding the building and having contracted staff will bring us to a balanced budget. Funds that come in are all being redirected to Missions. This is the streamlining and greening that may save the denomination from instant annihilation by bankruptcy and irrelevancy. This is the Church driven by Ruah that promises to give new life to this planet.

Yet another bit of news is that First Congregational Church of Los Angeles – an English Gothic cathedral on Commonwealth Ave. – the church that LED the fight against joining the UCC back in the 1950’s and has championed the National Association of [Independent] Congregational Christian Churches – a church famous for its organ and music – the church out of which Paul Tellstrom came into ministry with the United Church of Christ – THIS First Congregational Church, in two week, will be joining the United Church of Christ. Holy Moly. Who would’a thought....this is a Hot Air Event of vast proportions.

When the lesbian daughter of a Southern Baptist minister ends up at Mt. Hollywood UCC getting ordained – this is a Hot Air Event.

When Lutherans, UCCers, Salvadorans, and elementary school kids plan to dig and create and use a garden together – this is a Hot Air Event.

When my Dad's roommate from physical rehab hears we are in need of languages for a Pentecost reading – he shows up HERE ready to contribute Armenian to a truly Hot Air Event.

When 45 decides against the better judgment of most of the world to remove our country from the Paris Climate Accord, Michael Bloomberg steps up to pay the US share of the funding and (so far) 76 cities including Los Angeles have declared themselves in accord with the Paris Accord. Talk about your Hot Air Event.

What are some Hot Air Events you've experienced lately – G-d's Breath moving us beyond our boxes?

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What are some Hot Air Events you'd like to see happen in the near future?

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May this Hot Air move from your mouth to G-d's ears.
May G-d keep us moving, breathing, thinking beyond what we already know.
May miracles never cease.

Acts 2:1-21

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. **3** Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **4** All 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. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' **12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' **13** But 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. **15** Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. **16** No, 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."