

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

²⁵ "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

The word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

It is, perhaps, the oldest trick in the movie-maker's book. One or two characters are running away, trying to escape imminent danger, or capture, and they wind through streets, or hallways, or passageways, or tunnels, hurrying, checking behind them, ducking around corners, hiding in doorways...but then there always comes that point...the point of no return. That point where they reach a dead

end--a fence in the alleyway; a wall in tunnel; the roof of the building; the edge of the cliff.

Maybe it's James Bond or Jason Bourne. Maybe it's Batman or Spiderman. Maybe it's Indiana Jones or Luke Skywalker. If you're living in my house these days, then maybe it's Rapunzel and Flynn Rider, or Princess Anna and Kristoff, or, really, pick your favorite Disney movie.

Whoever it is, whatever the story is, it's a story we recognize as we read these words from the Gospel of John. It's a story of going along in life, following the path, and then reaching the moment of "Ok, now what?"

"Now what do we do? Now where do we go? We can't see our way out of this; we can't see our way through it. There's no obvious answer for what we should do next, for how we go forward. So, now what?"

Phillip and his fellow disciples have been following Jesus for several years now. And that journey is about to end. Jesus is about to depart from them and, as he says, go to the Father. He's going to leave them soon, he is going to his glory, which is just a very Jesus-like way of saying he is going to go to the cross and die, and as he tells his friends this, he tries to reassure them--at both the beginning and the end of this chapter in John, he tries to reassure them, "Don't be afraid. Don't let your hearts be troubled." But you can almost hear the waver in his voice. And you can certainly hear the concern in theirs. "What does this mean for us? What do we do now? If you are leaving, can you at least show us how to find God,

to find the Father? You've led us again and again to the Father, but how will we find God when you are gone?"

"Now what, Jesus?"

Those who have lost a parent have surely felt this bewilderment--this sense of being uprooted, unmoored--in this same chapter Jesus assures his friends, "I will not leave you orphaned." But the feeling can be shared, perhaps, by many. Many of us have found ourselves at a dead end--at the point when you know you are entering a transition, but you are not sure just what you are transitioning to--you are not sure just what will come next. This week my first child, my oldest child will turn seven years old. And I think back to the time when the weeks and days of waiting for him to be born were coming to a close, I came to the realization that this baby couldn't stay in there forever, that he was eventually going to come out. And though I knew, I understood that this was going to be a massive change in my life, that I was about to take on a new identity, a new way of being in the world, I knew that was true, but that was all I knew. I didn't know what that was going to mean, who I would become on the other side of this parenthood thing.

I believe that the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ is in a similar place. We have come to the point when we realize that we will no longer be exactly who we've been. As we see further decline in the global North and growth in the global south, we have come to see and accept that we, God's church, will change. Being the church, doing church, will look different, it will be something different...but...what will it be? Who will we become?

Perhaps this is also the question echoing throughout our denomination, the United Methodist Church. Perhaps, in this time of transition, this is the question echoing around in Westbury Church.

Now what? Who will we be? Who will I be?

Cue Pentecost. The followers are gathered. Jesus has come back from the dead and he has left again, and they have followed him and they have done what he has asked, and yet again they find themselves at the end of the alley, with nothing but a fence; at the end of the tunnel with nothing but a wall; on the roof of the building; at the edge of the cliff. There seems to be nowhere to go, no WAY to walk, no Jesus to follow. Their future is unclear and they just don't know who they are.

Cue the wind. Cue the fire. Cue the voices. Cue the crowd gathering outside, talking, chattering, wondering, worshiping! Cue the unexpected. Cue the unpredictable. Cue the uncomfortable. Cue the Spirit. Cue the church. Cue God's future.

Church, I don't know where you are today, on this Pentecost Sunday. I don't know if you are in a place of bewilderment, a place of confusion, of wondering what comes next for you, a place of loneliness, a stagnant or directionless place. Maybe you are in a place of fear. I don't know just what rope you've reached the end of, what dead end you've found yourself at. But the Spirit tells us today on this

Pentecost Sunday, that where there is no way, God will make a way. Where the way is unclear, God will lead the way. Where the outcome is unsure, God will make the change. Friends, Pentecost didn't just happen one day long, long ago in a room in Jerusalem; The Pentecost spirit who broke into that room with wind and fire and word is still active today. From the beginning of Genesis God's spirit has made something out of nothing; God's wind has parted the sea and made a way through the desert; God's fire has lit up prophets and brought change to God's people; and it has taken a gaggle of directionless disciples, and made them a church. Pentecost is the daily reality of life with God's spirit--God's accompanying, challenging, comforting, pushy spirit. This is the Spirit who has challenged us to care more about what and who is outside these four walls that inside them. This is the Spirit who has consoled us in the midst of flood. This is the Spirit who is bringing us together, black, white and in between, rather than letting the laws of segregation remain written on our hearts. This is the Spirit, who drives us forward through unfamiliar terrain, who takes us off-roading if we're willing to go. This is the ride we signed up for when we became part of this Spirit movement called the church. It is a movement in which God turns our hopeless, dead end, "Now what?" into an anticipation, an expectation, and we begin to ask, "Now what?" Now what will God do with us? Now what might God have before us? Now what is God saying to us? Because though we do not know--God knows. Though we do not see--God sees. Though we cannot imagine where we will end up--God's spirit will be with us all along the way.

Cue the wind. Cue the fire. Cue the Spirit, in your life, in my life, in the church, in all the world.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

(Move toward "God will make a way where there seems to be no way.")