

McCabe United Methodist Church

The Book of Acts: A Spirit-Fueled Adventure

“Holy Spirit You are Welcome Here. Come Flood this Place and Fill the Atmosphere.”

Sermon on scripture Genesis 1:2; Numbers 27:18; Isaiah 61:1;
Matthew 3:16 and 4:1; Acts 2: 1-4 and 9:17 (9/3 & 9/4/16)
Pastor Mark Ehrmantraut

Dear God, we come this morning praying for your Holy Spirit to break through and renew and revive us, unleashing a cycle of new life through us. We pray every day that your Spirit will empower each of us to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' resurrection power and promise. We pray that every day you will continually transform and boldly use us without limits, without delays, or without excuses. Use us to care for one another, and to reach new people and make new disciples of Jesus Christ. We pray every day that you will work through each of us to raise the dead to new life. Use this time of worship, use my words, and dear God, use the meditations on each of our hearts to help further your work here and now, and for all of eternity. This prayer is offered in the powerful... and the precious name of your Son Jesus. Amen.

We've just finished our sermon series on the Book of Acts: A Spirit- Fueled Adventure. As we prepare to start a new series next week, I thought I'd share some ways I've experienced the Holy Spirit working in my life. I invite you to consider where you've experienced the Holy Spirit stirring in your own life, and where the Holy Spirit might be nudging and prompting you here this morning.

Francesca Battistelli is a contemporary Christian artist. One of my favorite songs of hers is: Holy Spirit¹. Part of the refrain from this song is the title of today's message: ***Holy Spirit, You are Welcome Here. Come Flood this Place and Fill the Atmosphere.*** We'll refer back to this title a couple times in the next few minutes.

I'm continually reminded that we don't just see the Holy Spirit working in the book of Acts. The Spirit is active and working throughout the Scriptures.

¹ Francesca Battistelli - Holy Spirit (Official Audio) – YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvBBC7-PSHo>

- In the beginning, the '**WIND, the Spirit of God**' swept over the waters.
- Throughout the Old Testament the '**SPIRIT of the LORD**' is active.
- At Jesus' baptism, Jesus 'saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him.'
- And Jesus 'was led up into the wilderness, by the Spirit, to be tempted.' After his Resurrection, Christ told his disciples, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.'
- And on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit came upon them. It was like tongues of fire, racing wind was all around, and the people were filled with the Holy Spirit.'

Friends, before I went to seminary, I went to licensing school in Kansas to get a crash course on being a pastor. We learned things like basic church administration and structure. We learned about weddings and pastoral care, and we learned things like 'how to serve Communion.'

The first time we had to serve Communion, no one wanted to go first. We were all intimidated. We were afraid we'd mess up. Finally I volunteered. I just wanted to get it over with. That's a pretty good way to approach serving Communion, isn't it?

I was maybe the quietest guy in our class of thirty or so students from the Great Plains. I started working my way through the Communion language, and pretty soon my hands were in the air. Pretty soon I was speaking with a voice of authority, and pretty soon I had goose bumps running up and down my arms. I got done and there was silence in the room. I stood there, and everyone just sat there for a moment.

There weren't tongues of fire. There wasn't wind racing all around. Yet there was no doubt that something had happened. The Spirit of the Lord had come upon me, and I think we were all shocked by it. We were all humbled by it, and we were all emboldened by it.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe the Spirit was alive and working during Biblical times, including in the Book of Acts, and I believe the Spirit is alive and stirring right here, all around us today.

Will you pray with me the title of this message? It's printed in your bulletin:

Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere.

This is personal. The touch of the Holy Spirit is intensely personal. The more we press into God's presence, the more we experience the Spirit moving.

Do you believe in the power of the Holy Spirit? *ANSWER?*

Do you believe the Holy Spirit is alive and working today...???

A few of us have talked about it. I still marvel at it. I'm not sure I should actually admit it, but I've never really wanted to be a pastor. It still surprises me, yet it wasn't really up to me.

There was a point some 15 or 20 years ago that we thought we had everything we ever wanted and needed. We had a nice house by the river, a great family, good jobs and good income, etc. And yet, the more we pressed into God's presence the more restless I got. And I kept getting more and more restless until we decided that I would give in. I'd quit running and I'd let God have my life.

This looks different for each us, but for me, this meant I had to admit that God wanted me to be a pastor. And here I am...

There was no promise that it'd be easy.

There was no promise that it would be comfortable.

Yet, until I gave in, until I let the Spirit have the lead, I wasn't going to find peace. The restlessness wasn't going to go away.

And I'm living proof that God doesn't choose perfect people. Every day I'm reminded of that. And yet, I'm also reminded, almost every day, that the more I press into God's presence, the more faithful my words and my actions are...

Please pray with me... ***HOLY SPIRIT, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE. Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere.***

Did you know we have OVER 175 Draw the Circle Prayer Books floating with people from McCabe right now?

The Spirit is at work and stirring right here.

It was between 1 and 2 years ago, I was approached by a small prayer group from the church where I was serving. They approached me saying: 'We're not sure why, but we feel like we should be praying for our children and for our youth in the community.' They didn't know why, but the Spirit was prompting them...

We put together a simple prayer card. People throughout the church and the community could use if they wanted, and they prayed for God's Spirit to stir and create new life in the children and youth ministries in the community.

It wasn't fancy. It wasn't specific to the church I was serving. It WAS specific asking for a new life cycle to begin, but we had no idea where it was leading.

And then, in less than a year, the weirdest things started happening.

I started getting text messages from people at tractor pulls asking about day care. God brought people to the church asking if they might lead new ministries for kids. Long time members from the church were in tears as God warmed their hearts in new ways and as they went deeper in faith.

In less than a year, we launched a state licensed daycare ministry. They're serving over 50 kids from across the community and hiring more staff.

In less than a year, we launched a Wednesday evening children's ministry that involved over 100 people in Scripture and prayer every week.

In less than a year, the community Vacation Bible School, put on by all the churches in town and that takes place in the city park, went from serving 75 kids to 125 kids. A couple weeks ago I got a text saying they had 210 kids at VBS this summer. Holy Cow! Holy Spirit!!!

I could go on... From shoes for kids ministries to people in tears doing mission work with flood victims to hearts softening and lives changing as we met together in small groups.

Will you pray with me? ***Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere.***

I don't know how many times I've literally been on my knees praying: God, I don't know what to do here. My sense is that you want this to happen, but if it's going to happen, you have to ...show me / show us the way, or, show us how to go forward, or, bring the right person forward, or, Break down this barrier.

And I was repeatedly in awe, and I'm still in awe at the way, as Mark Batterson² says it, I'm still in awe at how God repeatedly shows up and shows off. *In the beginning the Spirit of God swept over the waters.*

Friends, the Spirit of the Lord is upon us.

Would it be okay if I shared one more example of when I had no question the Spirit was alive and moving in my life? I'm looking for a YES or NO.... Yes? okay!

A few years ago, I had the privilege of preaching at a special worship service. It was right here at McCabe. I believe it was for McCabe's 130th anniversary... At the service I basically shared about God's call on my life to pastoral ministry. I'd been invited because I'm a product of McCabe. Some of you were there that night...

I don't know if anyone other than me remembers this, but I sure remember it.

At the end of the service Pastor Art invited everyone from the congregation to gather around me in the center aisle. Everyone laid hands on me and he invited the prayer champion Barb Egan to pray, to wrap me, and to seal me in the power of the Holy Spirit.

² Mark Batterson, author of *Draw the Circle: The 40 Day Prayer Challenge*. Mark serves as the lead pastor of National Community Church in Washington, DC.

That was a few years ago. That was right here in this sanctuary.

Friends, that night this church sent me back out into the world. This church sent me out in the power of the Holy Spirit.

WE are people of the Spirit!!

The Holy Spirit is alive and stirring right here through you and me, right here through McCabe.

As we prepare for Holy Communion this morning, I'd like to invite you to pause, and to think about, maybe even to make some notes on your bulletin, about:

- When have you experienced the power or the presence of the Holy Spirit?
- AND, Where is the Spirit stirring and leading you right now?

I'd love to visit with you about your experiences some time.

Will you pray with me one more time?

Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere