

A Community of Communities
SERMON FOR 10-23
Based on Acts 2:14-18

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,*

(discerning what God is doing in the world, see through the BS of life, such clarity empowers people to participate in the "cutting edge" movements of history)

*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.*

This morning we have a lot going on around here. Help me name off a few things.

Breakfast.

African refugee choir

Thomas Brown with RISE

Brian Gruhn is visiting

Education Opportunities

How are we to make sense of all of this?

Our reading this morning can help us gain perspective. There is this sense of mesh-mash and coming together of all these diverse people and yet there was understanding and unity among them. Please note the unity did not come as result of everybody changing into the same thing, but was the result of a pouring out and sharing of Spirit.

NOTE: Living in right relationship with history. At the heart of this for us as a congregation is the idea of being "cutting edge"?

NOTE: History as a series of events. The events are one thing and the interpretation of the events are quite another.

NOTE: The meta-narrative of history or a master narrative of history..

(NOTES are points covered in Fall 2011 Peeble Article)

As people of faith and spirit we interpret the events of history with an over arching, all encompassing narrative. The arc of history is bending in the direction of peace and justice. Slavery, women's rights, marriage equality, racism, anti-Semitism, democracy, etc. history has already decided the rightness of these movements and the consciousness of humanity is already shaped with this orientation. It is a done deal. There is still a lot of work to be done. There is a kind of mopping up and vigilance that is necessary but history has already decided. These issues are important but they are not "cutting edge".

The issues that are cutting edge are the issues that are still in the balance. The issues that are cutting edge are the issues that have yet to be written into the meta-narrative of peace and justice. Anti-Muslim, structuring of our economy, defining family, defining life, empowering women all around the world, world citizenship, the environment, the division and preservation of resources, the role of community in the shaping of individuals and etc. are examples of issues not yet written in the narrative. This is the role of the Church in the world.

Church is not one of the things I do. Church is not my job. Church is building community. My calling is to build and nurture a group of people who are committed to the vision of incarnating life's greatest possibilities. Church is building a very specific kind of community. Church is a way of being. It is not a place you go to on Sunday morning. Church happens wherever and whenever the Spirit of Life and Love shines bright in the dark and shines hopeful through despair.

There are plenty of communities that specialize in afflicting wounds; this is not Shadow Rock!

There are plenty of communities that specialize in fragmenting people's lives; this is not Shadow Rock!

There are plenty of communities that specialize in perpetuating the lie of scarcity; this is not Shadow Rock!

There are plenty of communities that specialize in conflict; this is not Shadow Rock!

There are plenty of communities that specialize in injustice; this is not Shadow Rock!

We have said what we are not, but we haven't said what we are. Let's do that.

We are a very special kind of community. We are a community of faith, hope, love, spirit, and vision. We are a witness to each other and the world that Creation is meant to be an existence of healing, wholeness, abundance, peace, and justice for all people. Sometimes we let that other message creep into our own community and for a season it may limit us but we always find our way back because we hear the voice crying in the wilderness encouraging us to be the sanctuary community we are capable of being.

Who are we?

We are a people that make a home for the spiritual homeless.

We are a people who help others find their gifts, their calling, and their greatest joy.

This is what is going on this morning. We are being most true to ourselves and our Covenant when we are a Community of communities. We break bread, share stories, and find strength in each other's company.

We are diverse but we are one because we share the same hope and the same vision and the same spirit.

Thomas has discerned his calling and now we have the joy and privilege to help empower him.

We are diverse but we are one because we share the same hope and the same vision and the same spirit.

Brian is honing his gifts, like steel on steel, so he can serve the world and be faithful to his calling.

We are diverse but we are one because we share the same hope and the same vision and the same spirit.

People from Africa are waiting for years in refugee camps until their name finally comes up on a list and they are transported to the United States for another chance at life.

Waiting for them is Pastor Francis and the Arizona Miracle Prayer Ministry congregation.

We are diverse but we are one because we share the same hope and the same vision and the same spirit.

As the community of Shadow Rock United Church of Christ we are stepping up and taking our place as a "cutting edge" community. We are this and a whole lot more. We are a Community of "cutting edge" people. As a community of communities we are a Community of cutting edge communities.

We are a cutting edge community of cutting edge communities.

Shadow Rock is like a mustard seed. Sometimes we feel like we are the smallest of all seeds but when we are planted, watered, and cared for and care for others, we grow into the greatest of all shrubs and many birds make their homes among our branches.

