Pentecost Sunday

The headlines of this week demand comment from every faith leader.

At the same time, I am very much aware that on this Pentecost Sunday, we are led in worship by our children and youth, and we are celebrating our graduates. Every service of the last 12 weeks has been an intergenerational service, and today’s service is even more deliberately so.

And my own words should neither go longer than our worship leaders’ nor be in language that cannot be comprehended by our children and youth, so I thought perhaps I would speak directly to our children and youth today.

Our world is imperfect.
Beautiful and beloved children of God are discriminated against, treated unfairly, or worse, because of the color of their skin, or because of their ancestry. That’s called racism, and it’s wrong. I want you, our children and youth, most especially within our congregation to hear this said in your church’s worship: Racism is wrong, and we as Christians, we as Pilgrim Church, are called to speak out against racism. We are called to stand up against racism. We are called to consider and confess our own bias and prejudice. We are called to work for justice for our neighbors, every one of them beautiful and beloved children of God. And should you or a friend or neighbor ever experience racism, I want you to feel certain we will stand with you.

On Pentecost, Jesus’ followers moved from telling his story, into living out his story of love and justice. Two thousand years later, this is our Christian story, lived out in community.
This week Rev. Timothy Peoples had this to say:
“The hope of transformation that comes from Jesus’ story had to be spoken out, cried out, called out by the ones who were working toward redemption and change in their own context. And that is what is required today: for voices to cry out, egos to be put aside, unjust actions to be denounced and unjust policies to be challenged. It requires the majority to see the injustices and to rise up on behalf of the abused and the oppressed.
It takes another Pentecost to happen for each and all of us to yield to the redemptive power of the Spirit and to use our tongues to call out for justice.” ([https://baptistnews.com/article/ahmaud-breonna-christian-george-and-the-...](https://baptistnews.com/article/ahmaud-breonna-christian-george-and-the-talk-every-black-boy-receives/?fbclid=IwAR1xT9MIcRVHuRsv11-0wv4TkAxIamSykbOak5yQZ5UEYmt_KxwPrQnyYnk#.XtDoCyUpCaM) )

There are people we’re thinking of today, individuals named Breonna and Tony and Christian and Ahmaud and George. There are groups of people we’re thinking of today: African-American victims of violence, folks of Asian descent hearing anti-Asian bias in CoVid19, Native American communities without access to healthcare during this virus.

Today is Pentecost, the day when the Spirit showed up and started connecting people across barriers of ethnicity, race and language within the church. The Spirit is still moving, and we need to listen to her language, reminded that on the day of Pentecost the church became diverse, and Jesus sent the church out to serve people from many backgrounds and places.

Grown ups, a word for you: It’s hard work, humbly listening to the Spirit and humbly listening to our neighbors when they are hurting, learning, studying, praying, confessing, showing up, and working for racial justice. But this is our holy commission. I commend to the adults the prophetic letter from the UCC and the film screening at 6pm tonight - details are on the front page of UCC.org, and email me if you want to participate in conversation afterward - and to consider how you can listen, learn, and show up for racial justice in this moment. Amen.