

## From the Pastor: Declaration of Dependence

Returning from foreign travel, U.S. citizens are obliged to declare their purchases. Travelers make a final inventory of what they have acquired and present it to customs. Making declarations happens in other areas of our lives too. Sweethearts declare their affection for one another, which may lead to a further declaration of love and faithfulness in marriage. The President, Governor declares a state of emergency, which paves the way for help and needed relief. In early July, Americans celebrate the ratification of the ground-breaking Declaration of Independence, acknowledging and declaring that “we hold these truths to be selfevident ...” In the midst of John’s lengthy narrative of Jesus’ final meal with his disciples (it goes on for five chapters) Jesus declares certain things to and for them. He declares that the Spirit of truth will come and guide them into all the truth, a declaration both profound and terrifying. For one thing, it continues the conversation begun early in the gospel when Jesus anticipated the Advocate, the Holy Spirit sent by God. This Spirit talk anticipates Jesus’ breathing on the disciples after his resurrection with the declaration “Receive the Holy Spirit.” This proclamation energized the lives of the disciples, for upon receiving the Spirit, they went forth to witness to the world. (Something they never expected to be about.) We too are sent out each day to witness to the world God’s love, grace and forgiveness. In the word’s of the ELCA mission statement, we too are sent out “for the sake of the world.” The Sundays after Pentecost, that long season of the church before us, presents us with an opportunity to breathe in the Spirit and exhale the truth of the gospel, our “declaration of dependence,” which begins when we acknowledge the Spirit’s presence and allow the Spirit to guide us. The Spirit bears fruit in lives that follow where the Spirit leads, as exciting and as frightening as that may be. The catechism reminds us that the Holy Spirit calls us, forgives all sins, and raises us from the dead. The Spirit is active and at work in our lives. The Spirit gives life. This enlivening Spirit supplies the breath for our proclamation and the power for service every day and in every place. The Spirit sustains us in our sufferings and provides the expression for our hope (reread what Paul says in Romans 5). Called and sent by the Spirit of truth, we have much to declare. This month, I invited you again, to share your faith, to declare your dependence, and invite a friend, neighbor, or family member into a relationship with Jesus through our faith community. Summertime blessings!!

