

# The Pigeon of Pentecost

By K Karpen

Last Sunday after worship some kids and parents were working in the chapel to clean up from Sunday school and set up the space for John Week's memorial service.

At 93, John was one of our oldest members. In his day, he worked tirelessly for this church and tirelessly for his God. He and his wife Irma liked things to be just so. I was pretty sure that didn't include crayons on the carpet and a chapel filled with the detritus that had accumulated over the previous week. So we picked everything up and just moved it next door into the Board Room. Not sure John would have liked that any better.

As we were moving things into the Board Room, Julia Kristeller pointed out a newborn pigeon on the window ledge. It was small and gawky, and its head looked like a dinosaur. We watched as its mother sat beside it and its father hovered nearby.

We resisted the initial impulse to shoo them all away. We began to feel in awe of this bit of new life and energy sitting on the ledge. As one of the parents said, "I can't believe I'm feeling maternal about a pigeon."

In Greek, the word for pigeon is the same as the word for dove: perister. That makes sense; they're basically the same bird with different press agents.

From the word perister comes our English word peristerophobia, the fear of pigeons. Okay, so you've never heard the word before; if you've ever been dive-bombed by a flock in the park, you've experienced it.

Of course, in this day and place, there is a fear of everything. I just heard on the radio that Nelson Mandela is still on the US terrorism watch list. Nelson Mandela?

In Acts, chapter 2, we read that the apostles who gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost had a powerful experience of peristerophobia. They were dive-bombed by the Holy Spirit, that came upon them suddenly, filling them with fear but lighting them on fire. And the people all around them were in awe of this new life and energy in their midst.

All of a sudden it wasn't okay to sit quietly anymore. All of a sudden it wasn't okay to ignore the teachings of Christ and the urgings of God. It was time to prophesy. It was time to act. Why do you think they call the book 'Acts'?

We're moving into the season of Pentecost. Pentecost is a time when the world doesn't change, but we do. It's the season of Spirit. It's the moment for prophecy. It's the time for action. It's the day of dreams that God makes happen. It's the time when we get up from our seats and begin to work tirelessly for our God.

John Weeks would be so pleased.