

MCC REFRIGERATOR CARD

The Way the Spirit Moves

Romans 8:22-27

Acts 2: 1-21

Pastor Rich

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Happy Birthday! Today is the traditional birthday celebration for the birth of the Christian church at Pentecost. So today I want to talk about the way the Spirit moves – there are countless, endless ways, but I think the most frequent ways the Spirit moves is in stories. I want to share some stories about how the Spirit moves today. Sometimes the Spirit moves with laughter and there is a common thread through stories that involve the teller telling a story on himself or herself. When the Spirit moves us to laugh at our won foibles & situations, then the Spirit is free to spread like wildfire. Here is my own Pentecost story that took place at the church I pastored in Covington, Georgia while I went to seminary at Emory University. It was my first chance to lead the celebration of Pentecost & I was young, excited & well, stupid. I wanted something with fire, so I filled the baptismal font with rubbing alcohol – mind you, I didn't try this ahead of time, I knew it would burn... Well it burned all right, & burned & burned & burned & kept getting higher & hotter & just about the time I began to see the church & my career going up in flames, the Board Chairman grabbed the cover to the baptismal font & wrestled it in place over the flames. The service continued but to this day people must wonder why the lid to the baptismal font is severely charred. Sometimes the Spirit moves like a bird, soaring & swooping in the air. Sometimes the Spirit moves like the feeling in your stomach when you are on a swing or like the feeling right when the roller coaster cascades down the hill. Or that feeling when you are riding in the car with Jeff Simpson who abruptly decides he needs to be in the far lane. AND, sometimes... the Spirit moves like a sense of awareness, of oneness with

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all of creation around you. Yesterday, my husband, Jeff & I visited the Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford, Illinois. WOW! Here was an ordinary guy, a successful businessman, who was so fascinated by Japanese culture & gardening that he hired a famed Japanese horticulturalist who had designed the Japanese Gardens in Portland, Oregon & thus began a tourist designation in Rockford, Illinois. There were at least as many Japanese-heritage folks present on Saturday taking pictures as there were people from all other backgrounds combined. It was awesome. It was serene. Every plant, every stone planned. And near every turn in the path, a bench of some kind to allow people simply to sit & enjoy. There was a large section of raked gravel garden that was meticulously raked into 2 square striped squares of alternating directions. The Spirit moves that way too. And sometimes the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words – especially in times of human loss. And it's not ok, but the heavy heart nevertheless knows that it will be made ok. Sometimes we wait & wait & then the Spirit moves like a mighty rushing wind or with tongues like fire!, like the overwhelming vote in favor of marriage equality in Ireland. And sometimes ... the Spirit moves like ripples upon a body of water. I had hope for some ripples when I asked folks last Sunday to share a "It's a God Thing" moment with me on their participation cards. You did not disappoint. I was humbled by many, puzzled by a few; chuckled at a few; deeply moved by several. When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts, each of us can sing that prayer-hymn made famous by Josh Groban... O God... "You raise me up so I can stand on mountains, You raise me up to walk on stormy seas. I am strong when I am on your shoulders. You raise me up to more than I can be." The Spirit moves with singing, joy, laughter & tears & sighs too deep for words. Happy Pentecost everyone!