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Imagine getting ready to take a hot air balloon ride.

Looking at an uninflated balloon on the ground, it may not appear like a sturdy vehicle for flying. One may even question the wisdom of signing up for such a ride.

The balloon appears flimsy, and even as heated air begins to inflate the balloon, one may feel a bit skeptical about taking a ride, especially when the balloon seems to have a life of its own and seems to want to escape across the field. Then it begins to rise, straining against the ropes that hold it to the ground, and flight begins to seem possible.

Once the balloon stands upright, full of air that is hotter than the surrounding air temperature, excitement builds as the time for the ride draws closer.

When the balloon lifts into the air, objects on the ground begin to shrink as you move farther from the earth. You recall that the pilot can make the balloon go up and down with the heating or release of air in the balloon, but steering is based

on the direction of the wind, something not controllable. You wonder where you might end up traveling.

Those who remain on the ground watch as the balloon drifts away, becoming smaller and smaller, blown away by the wind, traveling to some nearby or distant destination.

As I watched the progression of filling this hot air balloon last summer, I thought of today, Pentecost, when wind filled the room where the disciples had gathered. The followers of Jesus had no plans to ride on a balloon or any other vehicle, but little did they know they would have the ride of their lives as they were blown away.

I imagine they were confused, wondering what to do now that Jesus was no longer among them. They may have recalled the promise Jesus had made to always be with them, some wondering when they would experience the presence of the Comforter, the Spirit, the Counselor that Jesus spoke about.

Suddenly, a strange Presence filled the room. A feeling of warmth surrounded the followers of

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Jesus, appearing as small flickers of fire dancing over their heads. A breath of fresh air blew through the windows, filling them with a Presence of courage to leave the room and enter the streets of Jerusalem.

The city was bustling with people gathered for the Jewish Festival of Weeks, called Shavuot (shuh-VOO-owt), a festival celebrating the spring harvest. People from many nations had gathered, speaking a variety of languages. As Jesus' followers entered the streets and began telling them of their experience, those in the crowd were confused, wondering how these common folk could speak their many languages.

Due to their excitement, some wondered if they had drunk too much wine, but Peter explained, "It's only 9:00 in the morning, so no, we've not been drinking too much wine. We are filled with God's Spirit, just as the prophet Joel envisioned when he said, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men

shall dream dreams.' That's what's happening, everyone!"

Peter then offered a mini history lesson, from King David through Jesus, and in response, many were baptized, resulting in what many suggest was the birth of the church. Happy birthday, everyone!

That's often how the Spirit moves, in unpredictable and surprising ways. The Spirit may inspire us to speak amazing words, go to unexpected places, or serve in unanticipated ways. When the Spirit blows in your life, you may feel a gentle nudge to do something new, to try something different, to sense a new idea.

Maybe that's why the Spirit is often compared to the wind—it randomly blows things around, can catch us by surprise, but has a power that can create energy, which is something that William Kamkwamba (kam-KWAAM-buh) discovered as a young boy.

William was born in poverty in Malawi, Africa, in 1987. At the age of 13 he had to drop out of school because a famine thrust his subsistence-

farming family into poverty. They could no longer afford to pay his school tuition.

William spent time in the local public library instead. After reading a book called *Using Energy*, he decided to create a makeshift wind turbine using blue gum trees and material he'd scavenged from a local scrapyard. There he found a tractor fan, a shock absorber, and an old bicycle frame. He made the windmill's blades by melting pieces of PVC pipe. For a dynamo he used an old bicycle generator.

His device worked. William was able to power a few small electrical appliances in his family's house.

That was only the beginning. Another wind turbine he built was able to pump water for irrigation. Local farmers became interested. Journalists, too, learned of his accomplishment, making William an international celebrity, a symbol of grit and inventiveness. In 2013, *TIME* magazine named him one of "30 People Under 30 Changing the World." He

graduated the next year from Dartmouth College, his education having been supported entirely by scholarships.

The award-winning 2019 film, "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind," tells his story.

Since then, William has built a solar-powered water pump that supplies the first drinking water in his village and two other wind turbines, the tallest standing at 39 feet. He is planning two more, including one in the capital of Malawi.<sup>1</sup>

The wind has power to create energy, something life-giving, just as the Spirit has the power to create something new in the life of our church and in your life. Even though you may not create an invention to harness the wind, and you may not take a hot air balloon ride, you may still feel blown away to an adventure as you sense God's Spirit moving in your life.

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<sup>1</sup> HomileticsOnline, May 28, 2023, based on "William Kamkwamba," Wikipedia.org. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Kamkwamba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Kamkwamba); and TED talk, "How I Harnessed the Wind." [https://www.ted.com/talks/william\\_kamkwamba\\_how\\_i\\_harnessed\\_the\\_wind](https://www.ted.com/talks/william_kamkwamba_how_i_harnessed_the_wind).