**[1]** Pentecost Sunday, **June 15, 2025**
Sermon Title: “Paraclete: Advocate of God”
Scripture: John 16:12-15
Theme: This is the 3rd in a 3-series sermon on the Holy Spirit. In this one, we explore the
theological implications of Advocacy (Paraclete).

**[2]** Today is, of course, Father’s Day. So, I begin with a reference to a Father’s Love from the Prophet Hosea, 11:4:

*“I taught Ephraim to walk, taking [him] in my arms, leading [him] with cords of kindness, lifting [him] to my cheek, and bending down to feed [him] ~ Hosea 11:4*

In the words of Paul, “I was as a father to you,” urging, encouraging, and pleading” (1 Thess. 2:11-12), “calling you to walk beside me,” “sharing family stories with you,” and “advocating for you, advising you.” This leads me into today’s sermon about the Holy Spirit, the Advocate!

**[3]** Last Sunday was Pentecost Sunday, sometimes called Whitsunday, on which we celebrated the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles after the Ascension of Jesus. Pentecost varies from year to year, as does Easter, and we celebrate it after the seventh (7th) Sunday of Eastertide, after 50 days of celebrating Easter in our worship.  A week of honoring the Holy Spirit at Pentecost leads us into 24 weeks of regular worship.  Today’s sermon is the 3rd in a three (3) series sermon on the Holy Spirit. Two weeks ago, we discussed the Holy Spirit as the Breath of God, the life-giving power of God.  Last week, we focused on the Shekinah, the Holy Comforter, from God. Today, we will be examining the Holy Spirit as Advocate, the “Stand-by-me” aspect of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit as Advocate is one who is “called to someone’s side,” to advocate for someone, one literally ‘called close-beside.’  We might think of the Advocate as an attorney, who in modern terms, sits beside someone in court and speaks for them, arguing their case before
the court, representing them. But, the word Advocate contains a larger meaning in our context. It could be extended to someone who is a legal assistant helping to defend someone, or to someone who simply gives evidence that stands up in court, like a bystander witness who testifies on behalf of another.  We also might think of the Advocate as an “Advisor-helper,” who advises someone on the best strategy for living, not just for defending themselves.

**[4]** One of the terms used to refer to both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is the word “Advocate,” (John 14:16 “the Father will give you another Advocate”; 1 John 2:1 “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ”).  In something of a deeper understanding, we could think of Jesus as going to the Father to be our Advocate in heaven, while sending the Holy Spirit as an Advocate for the community of believers on the earth.  Fred Craddock once preached that: “The Holy Spirit will do for the Church what Jesus has done for the disciples." What also seems important in this regard is that the Holy Spirit is none other than the Spirit of Christ himself. If we connect the dots of spiritual mystery, we will also find that the Holy Spirit is none other than the ‘continuing presence of the Lord with his people.’  Why do I say this?  Because the only way we can discern the Spirit in our time is by testing our inspiration to be consistent with the mind and action of Jesus Christ.  In other words, when we think ‘Spirit,’ we are to think ‘Jesus,’ and when we think ‘Jesus,’ we are to think ‘Spirit.’ If you know what Jesus would do and say, then you need not plan what you are to say; the relationship inside of you will guide your speech.

The Holy Spirit reminds us of the relationship by “keeping the words of Jesus ‘fresh on our minds.’ Jesus says: “I will not leave you orphaned.” (John 14:18). The Gospel of John calls the Holy Spirit, as Advocate, the “Spirit of Truth,” which will lead us to the testimony of Christ, which we are to share with others, giving us strength, courage and knowledge, giving us the words to say in dangerous situations (Luke 12:12; Mark 13:11).

**[5]** But, the tradition behind the Advocate includes even more. John tells us that the Advocate is also an “interpreter,” One who precisely and accurately translates for us and to us, disclosing the truth and guiding us into truth, revealing what belongs to Christ and what is to come in the days ahead.  You may remember the testimony of Elihu in the Book of Job. Elihu identifies himself as a ‘young and angry man,’ angry at Job’s other older friends who are silent when they should be speaking up with advice and angry at Job himself for being too self-righteous before God.
Elihu declares that the “Spirit of God has made me and the breath of the Almighty gives me life (Job 33:4),” and he speaks of a messenger, an angel of God, who is an interpreter for those near the Pit of death, a mediator and ambassador who translates for those like Job with “continual strife in their bones (Job 33:21-23).”

**[6]** Going one step further, through God’s advocates, who “live continually before the face of God (Matt: 18:11),” who advocate for the children, for adults, for you and me, we are “translated” into God’s kingdom (Col 1:13).  The Holy Spirit Advocate is an interpreter, a translator, both of divine and human communication, but also, more importantly, a translator of human lives into the Kingdom or Reign of God. Alexander Campbell once said that we must be able to translate what we believe into life, if we are to believe in its truth.  The Holy Spirit translates our faith into our living, so that we make a connection between our thinking and our doing, so that faith becomes real for us. One scholar has described the Holy Spirit as a ‘vital force field’ that contains the power of heavenly fullness as applied to real life.

**[7]** While I was serving at First Christian Church, Smith Center, a representative of the Family Guardianship Program from Manhattan, KS came by my office this to recruit for “guardians” that are needed in rural areas of Kansas.  She told me that these guardians have as their primary duty to “advocate” for the person assigned to them.  They are to report to a Judge concerning the situation and status of those assigned to them.  A Guardian Advocate must pay close attention to the needs and concerns of those for whom they advocate, in some sense stepping into their shoes to understand how they perceive their situation and what is required of them on a daily basis.

**[8]** In the Book of Esther, we are told that Mordecai was an advocate for his people, and, as such, held the ear of the King.  As an advocate, Mordecai pursued the prosperity and well-being of those which he represented before the King; he spoke for the Shalom and Tov of the people, literally, the peace and goodness of his people, their wholeness and wealth.  Esther also took on this role for her people.

To be effective advocates, Mordecai/Esther had to walk the walk of their people, talk the talk of their people, and translate their lives into the King’s understanding. The Holy Spirit as Advocate might also be one who stands-behind someone like a benefactor or a “patron of the arts.” Many classical poets and sculptors through the centuries have been sponsored by patrons who stand behind their creations, their artistic products.  Like a sponsor who verifies and guarantees a product, so too the Holy Spirit verifies and guarantees Christ’s seal of ownership on our hearts.  In our philosophical debating forums, someone does not have to believe in a point to
argue for it. In our legal arenas, an advocate for someone does not have to believe in the innocence of their client, but the Holy Spirit as Advocate always believes in those being defended; the declaration of grace creates innocence out of guilt.  The Holy Spirit does not just neutrally argue our moral or spiritual position, but truly sides with us in doing so. The Holy Spirit feels our truth at the deepest level and brings the passion of our hearts into our defense.

As the Philippi jailer stood out in front of his family, as Lydia of the purple dyes stood out in front of her family, to represent the family, so too the Holy Spirit stands-beside, stands-behind, stands-in-front stands-together with you and me.

**[9]** On the May 2018 Royal Wedding of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry, a gospel choir sang the song: “Stand by Me,” Lyrics: Songwriters: Ben King, Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller

“When the night is come and the land is dark and the moon is the only light we'll see; I won't be afraid,  I won't be afraid Just as long as you stand by me And when the sky that we look upon Should crumble and fall and the mountain should crumble to the sea; I won't be afraid, I won't shed a tear Just as long as you stand by me”

I think the song’s lyrics go beyond just comforting the bride and groom in a wedding; they can also apply to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, coming alongside us, standing beside us, fighting the elemental powers of this world alongside us.

This past week at WOCC, our many volunteers stood-beside children and youth as they explored ancient Egypt and its bustling marketplace. All this month, volunteers for our Disciples Summer Camping Program stood-beside youth and children from across the State, as they escaped to a different world from their day-to-day lives, to explore the outdoors and themes of love, compassion, grace and hope. And on June 17th, our WOCC volunteers, along with volunteers from the local middle school, elementary school, and PC West High School, will come together again to plan for the annual Back-to-School-Bash to be held on August 2nd, as we stand-beside hundreds of local children and youth to provide for needs in the upcoming school year. When each of us stands-beside these, the least of these, as scripture says, we stand beside our Lord, and we engage the Advocacy of the Holy Spirit.

**[10]** Pastor James Somerville has likened the Holy Spirit as Advocate to their family babysitter.  ‘The children love ‘Brittain’ as their babysitter,’ he says, because she acts out plays with them, makes chocolate chip cookies, runs around the room with them, and many other things.  So much so, that when they ask “Who will take care of us?” and they hear the name “Brittain,” they rejoice and jump up and down in joy.  She “nurtures their young lives like a loving parent.” As long as she is with them, they are not afraid. It is not so hard to imagine the Holy Spirit as a babysitter, someone who stands out in front of the children to protect them while their parents are away. One who cares for the Church while Jesus is away, one who comforts, teaches, reminds, and even romps with the sons and daughters of God.

 Alleluia! Amen.