Our church’s ancestral fathers and mothers were wise and Spirit-led in developing our liturgical calendar. The liturgical calendar, as you know, is our calendar of feasts and fasts of the Church as related to the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The wisdom of our ancestors in establishing our calendar manifests itself in many ways, but, especially, in its built-in times of anticipation of hopeful, watchful waiting in prayer.

In our church year, we are in one of these times now – while still in the festival season of Easter – we are between the celebration of Jesus’s ascension (the feast of which was Thursday) and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which will be celebrated next Sunday. The theologian Karl Barth once designated this time as a “significant pause” between the mighty acts of God, a pause in which the church’s task is to wait and to pray, *Veni, Creator Spiritus*. It is a time when we as a congregation, like the group of disciples, stop, take a breath, and reflect on what we have learned about and from Jesus during Lent, Holy Week and Easter. It is a time when we seek help from the Spirit in discerning how to put that into practice.

Perhaps each of us, as we reflect, might name some things we have learned or relearned as a church community. Here are a few of mine:

* We have been reminded of how often Jesus shows up in the gift of music of all types – the rock of the Gospel Groove band to the meditative music of Good Friday – to songs written by Stephen Swartz
* We have been reminded of Jesus’ presence in the covenant between both our congregations – St Johns and St Andrews -- in the jointly planned Holy Week and Taize services. These services helped planners and congregants to walk more closely with Jesus
* We have seen the presence of Jesus in members who are sick or struggling. Jesus gives them hope and helps them conquer their troubles and illness and as we see them walking hopefully, we walk in hope as well.
* We continue to learn about Jesus through our relationships in community – at fish fry, and, in preparation for worship as Lay Eucharistic ministers, choir, altar guild, lectors.

I invite us to pause and pray this week to discern what else we hear the Holy Spirit telling us about our ministry in the world – to discern where we will feel the Spirit’s power most keenly- to discern what the Spirit is calling us to do to help spread that Spirit across a wider world. As you are inspired by the Spirit, share with your vestry or with me. God speaks to all people, not just the official leaders.

The breather isn’t just for the church as a whole, however.

Our liturgical calendar contains within it parallels for all the rhythms of our personal earthly life – times of great happiness and celebration, times of great sadness, times of ordinary routines and times of waiting. Sometimes in our personal lives, just as in congregational life, we are called upon to wait in prayer, to be watchful, hopeful and discerning.

Most of us have experienced times of great jubilation in our lives – the birth of a child, a marriage to someone we love, a reunion with one from whom we’ve been separated. Although joyful, these times can require great energy. I invite us into the discipline of applying the wisdom of the liturgical calendar to our lives – to take time apart, to slow down, to pray, to reflect and to process these times.

Most of us also have experienced times akin to Lent or Passion Week in our lives – times of fasting, sadness, grief and confusion. Perhaps these are times of illness of ourselves or our loved ones, or of deep loss. I invite us to taking time apart, to pray to wait for the Holy Spirit to help make sense of what has happened and to empower us to serve anew.

For some of us waiting is hard. We see much to be done in the world around us. We can’t wait to get started. Active ministries are important – Jesus calls us to be witnesses – doing His work in the world. But Jesus also knows that the needs and conditions of the world and of earthly life are so great that we cannot meet them without Divine help. For even the busiest person among us, reflection and prayer time is important.

Life is full of times of celebration and times of sadness and most of us are active in ministries to which we are called during those times. But without the Holy Spirit, the activity is just busyness and not ministry. I invite us to use wisely the waiting times built into our liturgical calendar and into the rhythms of life. Sometimes, we are called to pause and wait. When we stop to take a breath, we make ourselves ready to receive the daily coming of the Holy Spirit. We make it possible for the Holy Spirit to breathe within us.

Amen