Have you ever heard the call of a wild goose?

A number of them reside at Lord’s Park year-round on my side of town.

And in Iowa, my family lived on the edge of a state park with two large lakes that were heavily populated by Wild Geese, Herons, Wild Ducks, Pelicans, Bald Eagles and sometimes even Trumpeter Swans.

Therefore, I know well the sound of a Wild Goose’s call.

In fact, I know well not only the sound but the feeling, “harsh and exciting” indeed, of enjoying a quiet hike across the plains and then being surprised by a low-flying, suddenly honking V of geese, cutting across an otherwise serene Midwestern skyline.

I know well the feeling of such a surprise and the connected wonder at being so close I could hear wings indeed flapping against feathered bodies like waves of water against the side of a boat only a hundred times faster.

I know well the awe-filled speculation that I could almost feel the air forced down from between those feathers.

It seems to me the Holy Spirit arrived with that same kind of harsh and exciting, awe-filled fervor.
The text tells us,
“And suddenly from heaven
there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind,
and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.”

Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them,
and a tongue rested on each of them.

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in other languages,
as the Spirit gave them ability.”

As though undoing the curse wrought from the Tower of Babel,
everyone in that room could suddenly hear in their own language
the harsh and exciting word of God
communicated through the likes of these lowly Galilean disciples
and through the work of the Holy Spirit.

My children have a knack for finding friends on playgrounds.
These friends can be younger and older, newer and well-known.

On one Midwestern playground, a woman I will call Lois
taught my children one of the reasons why
the geese make that harsh and exciting noise.

“They are calling to each other,” she told them.
“Listen,” she said. “They want to move together.” (whisper)
“They’re saying, (whisper)
Honk-honk, I’m over here.” (shout!)“Honk-honk. I’m over here.” (shout!)
And so, for at least a year,
    that is the foremost way my toddlers and I
would call to each other in the woods or on playgrounds
or in supermarkets and at home:
    “Honk-honk. I’m over here.” Sometimes we still do.

Preschoolers have a knack for the harsh and exciting.

Perhaps that’s because for the most part
    they are by measures more tuned in than adults
      to the playful creativity of the universe and the Creator.

The inhibitions that can come with both gift and challenge in adolescence
    have for the most part yet to shake from them
      an unfettered relish for expression, creativity, and imagination.

This gift can also mean that they can sometimes be mistaken for raccoons
    if taken to a quiet restaurant or another zipped-up adult space.

Yet, surprising, creative unruliness too was a mark of the Holy Spirit
as it arrived with wind and fire that day.
    The skeptics snickered and poked fun
until Peter had to rise and proclaim,
    “Indeed, these are not drunk as you suppose.”

The as yet unimagined is a specialty of the Holy Spirit it seems.
    Indeed, the Godhead is nothing if not creative,
calling and breathing into being the whole world,
    sun and moon, day and night,
land and ocean, animals and plants,
    before any as yet were named.
How harsh and exciting, wild and unruly was that? That is the Holy power that breathes life into world, the first humans, and into a new vision of a faith community in that gathering place in first century Jerusalem. Like all the great, creative and life-bringing movements in human history, that first Pentecost, which we might hail as the birthday of the church, was greeted with both awe-filled wonder and cynical jeers.

The Holy Spirit had always been God and yet, it had never been seen or known quite that way before.

Whenever that happens watch for “the way we’ve always done it demon” to raise it’s ugly head not just all around you but in your very own heart.

Have you ever struck out to do something untried, new-to-you, or creative? If you have, then maybe you know the voice of that demon all too well, shutting down, squeezing out, and squelching your strong connection to the creative and life-giving breath of the Holy Spirit.

I find the voice of that cruel and critical demon is loudest for me when I am tired, burned out, and spent.

If I am lucky, I can realize what’s happening before things get too bad and slow down, relax, get some rest, and “remember” as the Mary Oliver poem says, “[my] place in the family of things.” “When the day of Pentecost had come,” the text says, “they were all together in one place.”
Indeed, whether it’s my thoughts, my energy, my time, or my loved ones
I feel most at home and in tune
with the creative, sustaining, life-giving presence of the Holy
when all are together in one place.
When I stop and find the quiet center
where I believe the spark of God always resides
that is when I feel gathered in one place.

Faith communities too,
I believe could use rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation
that allows us to remember “our place in the family of things.”

When our energies, our time, our talent, and our resources
–even if not necessarily all our people–
can pause to gather themselves in one place
then I believe we are in a better position
to hear the Holy Spirit and the Wild Geese calling
us home to a new and exciting future.

Peter rises that day to quote the prophet Joel,
““In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young shall see visions,
and your old shall dream dreams.”

Peter proclaims the Holy Spirit’s powerful possibility
to spark our imaginations,
granting us with visions and dreams.

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What did you wish for when we blew that candle out today?
You don’t have to tell me.
But I want to tell you,
I wished that with the help of the Holy Spirit,
we would continue refreshing, renewing, and rebuilding
a wild wishing, Holy Goose following community.

The kind of faith community in which we can practice wearing purple
with red hats that don’t go.

We may want to choose to do these things
not necessarily for the sake of being unruly or surprising
but rather for the sake of meeting the unruly and surprising Holy Spirit
and heeding her call
to do a new and creative thing
to try on new and creative ways of being
to pass on the tried and true traditions
with renewed vision, wonder, and awe
to imagine what the future could look like
when we relax into a freeing imaginative encounter
with God as known in the Holy Spirit.

Change of any kind can be scary yes,
but Peter declares in the words of the prophet Joel
that even when it seems like the end of the world
when heaven and earth are full of blood, fire, and smoky mist
everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Perhaps not saved in the way we expected,
Perhaps saved in ways harsh and exciting
but always with the eternal love and grace
of the creative, life-giving Holy Spirit
who frees us of our fear
and calls us home
to a new and beautiful future.
May it be so. Amen.