



Worship Resources for *Steeple's Ad Run* – Fall 2008

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Romans 8:14-17

All the People

It was wonderful growing up in New York City, on the lower eastside of Manhattan, by the Franklin D. Roosevelt highway, better known to us as the east river drive, and the Williamsburg Bridge, ferrying folks over into Brooklyn and back. The world was here in miniature concentrated with all the pulp of the people. If you didn't like your city served up with All the People pulp, this wouldn't be the city for you.

It was here that I was reared in the Pentecostal faith, a much later branch of the Protestant Reformation, descendents of the Holiness Movement and even further back of the Methodist folks. My family worshipped in a local church on East Broadway, across the street from a row of Hasidic synagogues. Every time we walked to church we would pass by these houses of worship and devotion and experience the intrigue of a people wholly devoted to the practice of their faith and the study of the Torah. I knew then, in some way, that I was related to these rabbis and Jewish brothers and sisters.

I will always remember that boyish voice calling out "Abba, Abba." I immediately recognized the word and turned to see where it was coming from. Sure enough, there running after his father was a Jewish boy calling for his dad.

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are [sons and daughters]. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba, Father [Holy Parent]. It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are [sons and daughters] of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ--if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him." (Romans 8:14-17)

All the People, sons and daughters of God? Yes, All the People, children of God! Given a Spirit that whispers and witnesses to our spirits that we have this inheritance of lineage descending back, further back than blood and cultural lines, to the One who has called us Her/His very own!

This is the deep gift of the Holy Spirit who in freedom made it known to me that I was no less, no more than God' child, "never to fall back into fear."

This is the deep gift of the Pentecostal church that I inherited when in all the confidence of its faith and proclamation it made known to me my joint inheritance with Christ.

This is the deep gift of the United Church of Christ when it dared and dares to claim the fullness of this inheritance for all God's children excluded from the orthodox and conservative streams of the Christian faith because of their color or culture or gender or sexual orientation.

This is the deep gift of our witness running after and into the arms of extravagant welcome, radical hospitality and glorious inclusion.

In those early days of my upbringing I did not know where the Spirit would lead me. Today I know it has led me to the Stillspeaking God of the United Church of Christ and of All the People. And it leads me still beyond my name, my home, my nationality, my culture, my religious lineage, my language into an ever expanding Stillspeaking Spirit bearing witness to my spirit never to fall back, but to make my way forward in freedom's gift, "so that we may be glorified with Jesus, the Christ."