



## A Litany for an Unfinished Church

*Note: In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist Church were joined together into the United Methodist Church. Dr. Albert C. Outler, Perkins School of Theology, Methodism's foremost theologian and church historian at Perkins School best known for synthesizing John Wesley's approach to theology – "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" – was the preacher at the service of union April 23, 1968. This litany for an "unfinished church," is based on Outler's sermon. His text – Acts 2:1-21. The General Commission on Archives and History offers this litany as a worship resource for Sunday April 22, 2016, the Sunday closest to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic uniting service. It may also be used on Heritage Sunday which this year, May 20, falls on Pentecost Sunday.*

One: We gather in this time and place, all of us from different times and places, here to worship God.

**ALL: Many years ago, the people gathered and were ignited by passion for God, lit up by Pentecost fire, shouting out in Pentecost voices, carried away on Pentecost winds.**

One: So many years later, we gather. We have learned new words, and written books of rules. We have heard the stories of our past. We come to create stories for the future.

**ALL: We are an unfinished church.**

One: Like those disciples so many years ago, we are not sure we know the way. We are afraid to make mistakes. We are afraid to fail.

**ALL: We are an unfinished church.**

One: But, Christ calls us to carry on the blessing of discipleship, to move forward in love and faithfulness, so that all might find a place in our holy space, our church.

**ALL: We are an unfinished church.**

One: So long as even one of us is left outside the door because of our coldheartedness, we are an unfinished church.

**ALL: We are an unfinished church.**

One: So long as any one is lonely, hungry, sick, in prison, naked, we are an unfinished church.

**ALL: We are an unfinished church.**

One: So long as any one of us is destitute of the great Hope that is our future in Christ Jesus, raised up to set us free from death into holy and everlasting life.

**ALL: We are an unfinished church.**

One: Every day is a new Pentecost, full of the promise and possibility that God offers.

**ALL: Today is a day of dreaming. A Pentecost day filled with refining fire, and holy smoke, and winds of change, and voices full of passion for God and for each other.**

One: We are an unfinished church, but we are God's church.

**ALL: We are God's church, full of grace and love and hope. Today is a new Pentecost Day, may we be birthed again into new beginning.**

Excerpts of this litany come from from "Visions and Dreams: A Sermon for the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church," Dallas, TX, April 23, 1968. It is written by Tanya Linn Bennett, March 2010.

Tanya is the Associate Dean of Vocation and Formation and Associate Professor in the Practice of Public Theology and Vocation at Drew Theological School.