

Signs of Pentecost

By [Jim Honig](#)

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It's commonly suggested that the Pentecost story is a reversal of the chaotic separation of the Tower of Babel. That point gets debated.

What isn't debatable is that people remain separated in abundant ways. Even in the church--ostensibly the place where divisions are reconciled--there is still ample reason for repentance.

But there are signs that the Spirit is working, that the Pentecost vision of unity of tribe and nation and language in Christ is being realized.

An octogenarian woman from a nearby senior residence began attending our church recently. She is always well-dressed, carrying herself in a way that demands respect. She is a woman of few words and generally comes and goes pretty quietly.

A few weeks ago, she happened to come to the communion rail and knelt right next to one of our young Burundian mothers, clad in her colorful patterned dress with matching head scarf, her little baby perched on her arm. The baby nestled her head into her mother's neck, staring at this woman next to them, perhaps wondering who this is who looks so different from her own mother.

The older woman leaned into the young African mother, rested her head on the mother's shoulder and gave the baby a grandmotherly pat on the back. Both women smiled deeply, smiles that communicated more than a casual hello. They betrayed rather the deep connection in Christ--at Christ's table--of people different in so many ways, who speak different languages but nevertheless are sisters.