My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us pray. Lord God of our Pentecost Hearts, Minds, Spirits, and Souls, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

Most of the time on Pentecost we tell the story of the disciples gathered in the upper room, locked doors, wind and fire, yada yada yada. We didn’t do that this year, and for good reason. Today is not only Pentecost, it’s the annual meeting of this church to deliberate its future. Most of the time we focus on the financials, electing a slate of officers, and that’s all fine and good, it’s the necessary business of our church Corporation. But we also should understand that process as it relates to what we just heard in the scripture. The dry bones. The Holy Spirit. The intersection of the mundane business of the church, the mystery of our faith, and the path forward as people of the resurrected Christ.

“Dry bones” are different than fresh remains. There is nothing left, no marrow, no nothing. The images are stark in Ezekiel’s description, and most of us probably can relate to how different it is to come across remains that have been there a while, with only bones to the point that we might not even be able to identify the animal at all. It is the metaphor for a people who have been in exile with no hope, and can no longer understand what their future looks like. Mostly because they have demanded the certainty of what the future looks like; and when the people did this, they lost the trust in the mystery of faith, they turned to their own plots and plans, and forgot God along the way.

Our old testament text is filled with these commentaries of God and God’s people. Trust in God doesn’t mean each day will be sunshine and roses. But it does mean that we not abandon hope altogether. For hope is what God calls us to be, it is where God calls us to go, and it is why we gather each week to get energized and focused on God’s word and work. We can make all the plans we want, just like ancient Judah. But when they weigh what we want most, we can, and on occasion do, leave God behind.

And that means we also leave Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, behind, too. We are gathered in a specific expression of faith in this Community Church, United Church of Christ. It is the church that seeks to include those who wonder if they can be a part of anything, those who are on the outside looking in, those who are discriminated against by the dominant caste of society. Yes, that means that we support diversity. Yes, that means we support equity and equanimity for those who haven’t known it and need it. And yes, that means we have to start talking more about it beyond our book group so that our hearts don’t forget.

I’ve heard that even saying these general principles means we’re getting political. That’s not what I said if that’s what you have heard. But understand that uplifting the powerful and privileged is not the mission of the church. That’s not why Jesus came. But we should search our heart of hearts and understand that, compared to many people in the world, we are still privileged beyond measure. We gather to remind ourselves of God’s grace, to understand that what we have is not ours to keep, that we can give more of our time and our money and our expertise and our passion to make a difference in the world. Our faith has a corollary to it: in grateful repose for God’s grace, we have to get into the world. We speak well of plans inviting the community in. But we have to be more deliberate in our participation with people with whom and causes with which we are not familiar or comfortable, in the name of those who seek mercy, justice, compassion, community.

The fact that people come to the rummage sales and Christmas fair demonstrate that they know where our building is at. But have we turned them into disciples of Christian community? Do we demonstrate not just tolerance, but acceptance? Not worrying about us, but about others? Do we even understand God’s truth and talk about that, or do we talk more about our truth and what we want? If we are serious about our enterprise here, how do we approach meaning-seeking, getting connected to this community and its people?

Many churches thrive. Some are alive, but not healthy. Some might be fresh remains, and others are just dry bones. On this day of annual meeting, on this day of celebrating the arrival of the Spirit of Truth, where is the intersection for us, and are we following God’s path or our own?

I’ll leave you with these final thoughts.

We love to blame others for our own troubles; it pushes responsibility onto them, if only they would change all would be well. So let’s start being honest with ourselves and one another. It starts with following God first. Loving each other until it hurts, and it is hard. For we cannot grow if we cannot demonstrate God’s grace and our understanding of it. Otherwise, we can be a really good community center and social club. But that’s not why we are here.

There’s more, and there’s no place in Greenland that’s more equipped to be the heart of Greenland than us, right here, right now. Several council leaders attended a session about a month ago in Concord with other small churches just like ours, challenging us to be honest whether we are a church of God’s purpose or whether we are headed to be part of the valley of the dry bones. It was a sobering realization that we are not alone, but we can easily fall away if we don’t act as God calls ALL of our churches to action on behalf of justice.

So as we deliberate the business of the Church, remember what the church’s business is. Remember the valley of the dry bones. Remember the Spirit of Truth. And let’s try to understand how we avoid both of these things. God doesn’t expect success, but God expects us to try, this day and each day.

Thanks be to God, Amen.