



Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost, May 19, 2024

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene The Rev. Dr. David Gortner

[Acts 2:1-21](#)

[Psalm 104:25-35, 37](#)

[Romans 8:22-27](#)

[John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15](#)

*You send forth your Spirit, and all things are created; and so you renew the face of the earth.
I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will praise my God while I have my being.*

May these words of mine please the One who makes us all new. Amen.

Good morning! Happy Pentecost!

Today, it is mystery. Today, it is Wind, and Fire. Today, it is Life, and Passion, and consuming Love. Today, it is the world drawn together even in all its wild and wonderful and frightening diversity, to hear the one message and receive the one Spirit that unifies.

And – It's not our own wind and fire. We did not make the wind. We take in and ride the wind.

The church does not make its own fire. The church does not make its own light.

The church reflects and releases into this world the light and fire it receives.

So the season of Easter ends – with a new beginning! So the age of Pentecost opens. So the adventure begins. So begins the season and age of the Holy Spirit, and of the Church that tries to keep up. All paths are open. All connections are possible. The Holy Spirit comes upon us the followers of Jesus the Christ, giving us power and overflowing ease to speak in ways that others can hear. And the Holy Spirit goes before us into the streets and neighborhoods of the city, opening people's minds and hearts to hear from us the great Good News of God the Lover of Humankind. The gateway is open. And from this day forward, the wind and fire of the Holy Spirit has continued to spread across the face of the whole earth. We cannot contain it. We cannot control it. We cannot centralize it in one place, or one language, or one narrow way of seeing. Instead, we can wait with anticipation, ready to move. We can listen and open our hearts, ready to receive. We can move throughout this city and the world, absolutely knowing that the Holy Spirit has gone before us, touching and stirring people's hearts and minds so they are ready to hear and to recognize the great Good News we bear with us into all places.

This is the age of "God with us." You have heard me speak before of Jesus by his other name, Emmanuel, God-with-us. The story of God among us, God incarnate in Jesus Christ, that story does not end like some other great mythic stories end with the ascension into the heavens of the hero. If that's where it ended, we might be left with a great story of hope and wonder and amazing teaching – but we would still be left as the same lowly everyday humans we first found ourselves. If that's where it ended, and the curtain falls as Jesus ascends and blesses us as he leaves, then it's been a good story but now we have to get on with our lowly lives again.

But this is not where the story ends! The story of Jesus moves to a completely new chapter – a chapter that is still going – when Jesus sends his beloved Holy Spirit to rush among us and stir within us and awaken us to new life we never imagined. It is the story of "God with us" in a way we never thought possible. God is with us – always! And with the Holy Spirit with us and in us, with the Holy Spirit going before us and leading us in all

places, the story is now with us and with the One who rides the wind and brings the fire and speaks the tongues of every person and creature on this earth.

The Holy Spirit is God closer to us than we can ever truly grasp. And the Holy Spirit can't truly be "grasped." How can we describe our experience of this God-with-us who is closer than we can imagine? We use words like we find in the stories from scripture. She is like Breath, each breath in and out that we treasure and that we need. Like Wind, blowing where it will and uncontrolled by our own wishes or efforts. Like Fire, with the power to sweep through and consume but also the power to warm and sustain, with a life that seems all its own. Like a Voice that speaks in the quiet, that soothes and centers us, that directs us, that opens our eyes to things we just weren't seeing before. Holy Wisdom, who cries out at the gates, she comes to us in speech, in visions, in dreams, in the warmth and fiery love and truth of others.

God the Holy Spirit – God intimately close to us – within us, around us, always moving, in and between and through every being. We so often forget. We so often get dulled in our senses. But we are swimming in a sea of God's presence. God is in the air we breathe, the blood pulsing through our bodies, in our minds and hearts, our eyes to see and ears to hear, our mouths to speak, our arms to embrace, our feet to carry us where God leads, our hands to serve and to receive and to give. God is among us and flowing and moving between us all, in our ability to understand and feel with each other deeply, in our sharing of sorrows and our offering of hope and love, in the new ways we come to see because of each other, in the ways we hear each other in our own languages, even despite our differences.

And we know something of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We know this One we can call "The Spirit of Life." We know the Spirit of God with us and among us as Comforter – Strengthener, one who fortifies us and stays with us. We know the Spirit of God as Advocate – Champion, Backer, Supporter, one who comes to our aid, who speaks on our behalf and gives voice to us and for us. We know the Spirit of God as Communication itself – the Bond that arises and awakens between people, the opening of doors between others and ourselves, the speaking of deepest truths and feelings with one another that opens hearts and minds. We know the Holy Spirit as Prayer itself – she, Holy Wisdom, who prays on our behalf when we don't know what to pray or even when we refuse to pray, with sighs and groans too deep for words which still are known and held by God. We know this Spirit of God as Connector, the Bridge of hearing each other deeply, the bond of intimacy. We know this Holy Spirit as the Truth – that recognition of what we did not see before or did not want to admit before but now see and now must embrace no matter how much it changes us.

I pray that we each open ourselves to God's Holy Spirit that is already at work in each of us and flowing among us. I pray that we each open ourselves to look for signs of the Holy Spirit in the lives and people all around us of all types – friends and strangers, white and black and Latino and indigenous and Asian, conservative and liberal and all in-betweens, women and men, old and young. God is with us. We are not left alone with a hero in the heavens far away. We are here with that same Christ who sends the Spirit of God into us, so that we may ourselves be little Emmanuels and so that we may see all around us little Emmanuels. Look around you. This is God-with-us, here, moving in each heart and mind and body. Look around you outside this park. The Holy Spirit is stirring and moving, calling forth each person and creature to the life that is God's gift.

Open your hearts. Open your minds. Open your eyes. Open your mouths and breathe in deeply. Open your mouths with me and speak and proclaim our faith. Christ is risen! Life is God's ever-loving gift! The passionate love of God flows and fires and cannot be contained. Let us proclaim this good news and invite all to hear what God has done and is doing.