St. Luke's Episcopal Church

The Message to the World

Pentecost C, June 8, 2025
St. Luke's Episcopal Church
The Very Rev. Holladay Sanderson

Welcome to our annual Sunday
of pronunciation challenges.
It is a fateful day for the church
when at least one other person in the room
understood one of the different languages
spoken by Jesus' followers;
the day the Holy Spirit reversed the Tower of Babel
with all this new babble.

It is the Sunday that some lectors practice faithfully
so they can say all those names
including Parthians, Medes and Elamites,
people of Phrygia and Pamphilia and so forth.
Whew!!!
And here WE are dealing with
Maori, Ukrainian, Hindi or Farsi sentences and phrases!

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was clearly at work,
confusing the ones who thought Jesus' followers were drunk and
filling the rest with the Holy Spirit.
Jesus had promised, after all, that
they would not be left alone,
even when Jesus was not with them.
The Holy Spirit would guide them, lead them,
comfort them, and be present in their lives.

That presence was not just
so they and we would all feel good about ourselves.
That presence offered us an empowering push
to use the gifts given to each of us by the Holy Spirit
so that we could go forth and
share God's message of life and love
to all who might hear it in the world.

After this day of Pentecost,
the twelve and all Jesus' followers
began spreading God's message that
great possibility lay ahead of them,
not behind them.
The fullness of the reign of God that
Jesus lived and taught
IS indeed possible
as sons and daughters prophesy,
young men see visions, and
old men dream dreams.
God's reign IS possible,
especially when we can step out into the mystery and
truly walk with God.

After my first two years at Virginia Theological Seminary,
I spent that second summer here in Coeur d'Alene
where my husband Sandy was living and working.
Because of the transitions here at St. Luke's then,
my ministry was to call on the homebound folks
whom our priest had been visiting regularly.
Because our rector was suffering from some profound medical issues,
I was to help explain to them
the possibilities of transition that
would lie ahead for our church.
Because I had been a member here since 1980,
I was acquainted with many of them
but only knew a few well,
This would be a formative experience
of learning how to chat with folks
whom I kind of knew
but was often too shy
to engage in conversations.

How would I speak with them?
What would I say?
What on earth could we have to say to each other?

There may be some of you here
who recall Jerry Kirk.
When present, he was usually in the second row on my right.
I was the organist here once
so I got to know the faces
of the folks on that right side.
No names; LOTS of faces.
Back then, the organ faced the choir and
I directed them with head nods and
an occasional hand in the air.
But I had a great view
of my right side!

Anyway, Jerry"s was a name I was quite familiar with,
so I started my ministry with him.
Still… before I even got out of my car at the nursing home,
I said a quiet prayer to the Holy Spirit,
asking her guidance and presence
while I visited with Jerry and
shared communion.
All my nerves left my body and soul
as I walked through those doors;
the time Jerry and I shared
was blessed indeed.
All my other visits have been as well,
as varied as they may have been,
because I always pray to the Holy Spirit and
invite her to be with us when we meet.
Just as our Lord promised,
she has always been with us
whenever I visit folks.

Being present is only one of the gifts
we have to offer each other and the world.
In the noise of our present time,
there is a lot of hurt, anger,
loneliness, and fear in our world now.

Our call to the least, the last, and the lost
is more urgent today than in many eras.
And these folks are not just those from Matthew 25:
imprisoned or homeless or detained or deported.
They are just as easily folks
in our own congregation or neighborhood
or local community activity or club.

As people of God, we are created in God's very image.
At the Burning Bush, God told Moses
"I have heard my people crying out from Egypt.
I am sending YOU to free them from bondage."
As people created in God's image,
we have that same heart:
a heart that can hear people crying out
for release from whatever their bondage may be:
their hurt, their anger,
their loneliness, or their fear.

The Spirit invites us
to open our hearts
so that <u>we</u> can be aware
of the world's cry;
so that <u>we</u> can respond in a way that
suits each of our gifts.
When we reach out with a helping hand or heart,
we are living the love that
God calls us to share with the world.
What that might look like will be different for each of us.
God calls us to step outside of ourselves in love
to touch the world
any way we can with God's love.

On this day, we will renew our baptismal vows
not just to affirm our faith
in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In the Episcopal Church,
we have those additional five sentences that
affirm what we pray our lives will be like
when we invite the Holy Spirit
to walk with us as God's hands and feet in the world.
We vow we will share this life in community
so that we can be nourished and
then be dismissed back into the world.
We vow that we won't let ourselves be overtaken
when take wrong steps in our lives
because God's love for us is endless and unconditional and
always offers us an open embrace
whenever we return.
We vow that we will share (in what we say and do)
the stories of God that we have learned throughout our lives.
We vow that we will live deeply into our call
to love our neighbor
(that means ANYONE who is not us…
even those who drive us batty).
We vow that we will be mindful,
always, of the depth of the meaning
of justice, peace, and human dignity.

That's a tall order of vows that
we will renew this Pentecost.
Thank God, though, for the Good News.
Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit
to support us in ALL that we do in our lives
so that our family, our community,
our world can be enriched
through the knowledge of God's life and love.

Thanks be to God that the Holy Spirit is indeed among us,
doves and flames and all…
Water, oil, bread and wine…
all those sacramental signs of God in our midst…
The love and care for others that
we can share either easily or with difficult…
Open hearts and lives open to another...

Living in the Holy Spirit's presence AND support,
we are empowered to touch the world
with the knowledge of God's immeasurable love.
AMEN