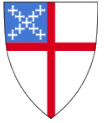




## Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost, May 24, 2026



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

[Acts 2:1-21](#)

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

[1 Corinthians 12:3b-13](#)

[John 20:19-23](#)

Welcome, friends. Welcome to holy chaos! Welcome to the fire of God's energy and love.

It's not tidy. It's not "buttoned up."

It's the Holy Spirit. Flowing. Stirring. Moving. Urging and propelling.

Welcome to the birth of the Church.

This day, Pentecost, is truly the culmination of Easter and the birth of something new. Jesus the Risen One, the Lord of Life, sends the Holy Spirit, and the life-giving fire and breath of God flows through the followers and friends of Jesus with the great message that something new has dawned. It is a new day. All is being made new. A path has opened for everyone. God is in our midst. The day of God is now. God's Spirit is pouring out on us and through us, and we bring you visions and dreams, even in these dark times. Even now, even in the midst of blood, and fire, and smoky mist, this is the coming of God's great and glorious day. Come and see, come and drink, come and breathe, come and receive the fire of God's passionate love!

Today, we sing and take joy in the coming of the Holy Spirit – of God's sweeping, vivid, rushing presence that comes on us and on whomever God pleases with the power of gusting wind and flashing fire, giving us courage and freedom to utter words we never knew we could speak and do things we never thought possible to do, for the sake of proclaiming to all the world around us that Christ is Risen, and God's salvation is complete, and everything is stirred to new life!

It is the big, audacious miracle that launches these huddled followers of Christ forward – with power to speak in any language so that the message of God's great, triumphing power of justice, mercy, and love through Jesus Christ can be heard and understood by every person they encounter!

In case you didn't sense it, I love – completely love – this feast day and this account from the book of Acts. I am taken up in hope and joy every time I hear this, and especially on the Day of Pentecost.

It's a day of new creation. And the power of new creation is shared with us – we share with the Holy Spirit in spreading the power of this new creation, this reclaiming of all things to become all that God has created us to be. New life, new breath, new fire.

This is a day of new life. It is the great day of crossing the threshold for the Church – when we come out of hiding and make ourselves known to the world, when the Holy Spirit flows and we follow the flow willingly.

It has been happening through the ages. It will continue on, with or without us. God's Spirit, the Spirit of Life, flows through all creation and all humanity, and stirs us, lures and beckons us, tugs us to new life and new ways of being

It must have felt and looked chaotic on that Day of Pentecost! The disciples feel themselves propelled out into the streets, into the city center. They feel themselves compelled by a fire burning within each of them to speak with people all around them on the streets and in the markets and in the parks. They find themselves able to reach out to others they do not know, from cultures they do not know, whose languages they do not know – and they are able to communicate! They are able to reach across the divides of speech and language – they are able to speak and be heard, to hear and understand, to translate the Great Story so that each person they encounter can hear it and know it for themselves.

And the people in the crowded streets during a harvest festival time, a festive holiday time, are thrown off kilter by what is happening. They are taken by surprise. Their patterns and expectations are disrupted by this band of Galileans – this groups that is moving from group to group and person to person, engaging everyone with passion and a fiery energy that grabs each person's attention. And they are stunned to understand what these fiery folks are saying – and they are even more stunned to sense that they themselves are understood and known, by these people and by Something that is stirring them to see themselves and filling them with a sense of being known for who they are in ways they have never experienced before.

How is this possible? And yet, Here it is, Happening now.

Maybe this is what we need in this land, and across this world, and here in this place where we live, at this time. At this time when we are so divided and entrenched in ways of thinking that are almost like separate languages that seem either completely right and familiar or completely foreign and bizarre. Some folks may be looking for the "big fix" – that one thing that will bring the unity we crave. But maybe God's gift for such a time as this is some of that same "holy chaos" of Pentecost – that flowing sense of the Holy Spirit that is not scripted, not contained, that moves from group to group and person to person, that speaks intimately and directly to each and every soul.

The miracle of Pentecost is that God the Holy Spirit breaks through our habits of withdrawal and seclusion, and draws us toward each other and toward others all around us with the fire of divine passion. The Holy Spirit stirs us awake – fully awake. The Holy Spirit brings release from fear and hesitancy, and stirs us to move and to speak and to connect.

What was in that fire??

That is the question that hit me this year as I read these great sacred texts. What was in that fire, what was in that wind? Because something happened to the disciples – and to the people outside in the busy city. Something happened that opened the gates of understanding, of connection, of speaking

and hearing and being taken up in the great things that the disciples poured out into the streets to share.

I believe that the Spirit of God, is the Spirit that draws us from ourselves to each other, the Spirit that opens the gates of true heart-to-heart communication, the Spirit that helps us recognize and take hold of and celebrate life in ourselves and in each person we encounter. I believe in this Spirit that is the true fire, wind, and breath of life itself. And Life recognizes Life. Life embraces Life. Life calls forth Life.

What was in that fire? In that holy fire of Pentecost was the stirring and release of passion. And passion communicates – across barriers, across differences of language.

When we were traveling in our sabbatical last summer through eleven different nations, we constantly faced the challenges of communication. We moved from countries where we had a bit of ability in their language to countries where we had virtually no words to recognize or speak in their native tongue. But we found people of good will and greater ability than us, who knew several languages and could speak with us. We found people of kind and open readiness to hear and help us, even when we didn't have words to share – and we relied with each other on communicating through motions and facial expressions and emotion. I remember shopping late one night at a grocery store in Sevilla, Spain, for some food for a late-night supper. The fresh bread was disappointingly sparse and a bit stale. There was a woman beside me looking at the meager bread selection with a bit of dejection and frustration. I motioned toward the bread, shook my head a little, and said, "No bueno." She picked up my line, recognizing me as the foreigner I was, and repeated, "No bueno! Si! Nooo buueennoo." She had a tone of laughter in her voice as she talked a bit more about the lack of bread. She clearly found me amusing, even as she recognized that I had recognized her frustration.

Think about our experiences as a church with the communities we have touched. Think about our events with North Idaho College – with the single-parent families, with the community gathered for Braver Angels training, with faculty and staff at our Oktoberfest. Think about the connections many of you made with adults and children during those events. There was a flow, and fresh wind, a bit of warm fire.

This is what it is like to put ourselves out there, open ourselves up wide, and receive others with open hearts. And we hear stories and make connections and touch heart to heart.

When we were in Morocco, we connected with an organization called the High Atlas Foundation. This is an organization I want our church to contribute to. They were founded by a Jewish American who originally went to Morocco as a Peace Corps volunteer, and returned, stayed, and launched a profoundly impactful program that is shaping agricultural, environmental, rural economic, human developmental, and interfaith relational aspects of Moroccan society. Because he fell in love with that country and its people and land. We went to village where a group of women had come together through the Foundation's work to form a fabric-working collective. We sat at table with Samira, the leading woman of the village, younger than others in the collective but a leader because of her qualities as a person and because of her story that inspired others. Our young guide, Mariam, was our amazing translator – fully fluent in at least four languages: Arabic, French, English, and Berber, the language of people in the mountains and rural areas. She had grown up in a rural village as well – but Berber is not a uniform language and varies from place to place, so she was working hard to translate Samira's Berber. But, through Mariam, we were hearing and understanding each other. Mariam was for us a channel of the Holy Spirit.

But even more profoundly, a level of close bond came as Samira shared in her story periods of her own transformation. Samira was married and had sons. Her husband had at first been skeptical about her getting involved with the Foundation's programs to help strengthen women's ability to contribute economically to their households and communities. But, as she learned to read and communicate differently, she was able to get a driver's license. Her husband saw the value in this, especially after he had an injury and could not drive himself to work. As Samira shared her stories of village life and family life with us, Heather and I both saw in Samira a mix of sadness, quiet strength, and gentle pride and contentment. At one point, Samira showed us a picture of her wedding day, when she was 14. Fourteen – note that. Now, Muslims do not typically take pictures at events, except maybe to share privately among family. So, this was not likely a posed portrait picture. But it was a snapshot of a lined up seating of her and her new husband surrounded by other relatives, mostly men. There was a deep sadness, not just a seriousness, in her face in the picture. I saw this but kept thoughts to myself because it was not appropriate for me to say something about this. But Heather saw the sadness and heaviness in the photo, lifted it up out of the photo, and spoke it aloud to Samira. "Oh, there is a sadness and heaviness in your face. Was that a hard day and time for you? You have become so much more since then, and you are so full of life and strength now." Mariam translated for Samira. Samira paused, and spoke back. She noted past sorrow when she was young (without stating aloud the ache caused to women by early arranged marriage), gratitude for life now despite its challenges, and a kind of love for herself and who she had now become. Without more words, a deep bond formed in the room between Heather, Mariam, and Samira, holding together the deep truth of Samira's life that had been recognized by Heather, the visiting traveler. I was part of that bond as well, but not at the same depth as the women shared together. That bond, which brought quiet tears and stillness with each other, was a gift of the Holy Spirit of God moving.

Passion is not always loud, boisterous, excited, and joyful. Passion includes the depths of all we experience, carry, feel, and hold – including in sadness and grief, in quiet relief, in stable ground under our feet, and in the small moments of turning and change.

Throughout the world, Christians celebrate this day with feasting and joy and with prayers for the power of the Holy Spirit to descend with might among us and through all the world.

We turn to prayer now – to remembering the grace given to each of us by the Holy Spirit in baptism, to renewing the promises we made at baptism trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us and strengthen us, and to praying for this church and its mission here and now in this part of the world.

Let us pray together, with the power of anticipation – that God will indeed answer, that the Holy Spirit will come and set us and the world around us ablaze!

Come, Holy Spirit! Thank you that you are here now! Awaken us, light us on fire, and set this world ablaze!