



ST. ELIZABETH EPISCOPAL CHURCH



Today is Pentecost, one of the seven principal feasts of the liturgical year in the Episcopal Church. The word “pentecost” means “fiftieth day” and it shows up in both Hebrew scripture and in Christian scripture.

The Jewish reference involves a feast of seven weeks called the Feast of Shavuot that began this year on May 28th, fifty days after Passover. One of three major Jewish feast days, Shavuot began as a festival thanking God for the first fruits of the harvest. In biblical times, Jewish men were required to travel to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices at the Temple. After the temple’s destruction, the scattered Jewish communities shifted the holiday’s focus to celebrating the gift of the Torah.

Shavuot is now a two-day festival during which no work is allowed. On the first evening, the custom is for families to stay up late studying Torah and praying, followed by a sunrise service. In Jerusalem, huge crowds of people gather at the Western Wall to recite the Ten Utterings (or Commandments) and publicly reaffirm their dedication to obeying God.

Pentecost for Christians refers to the coming of the Paraclete shortly after the ascension of the Risen Christ. Christians came to understand the meaning of Pentecost in terms of the gifts of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. We recall the fulfillment of a promise that Jesus the Anointed gave that we heard in last week’s passage from Luke that the followers of Christ would receive the ability to become witnesses of Christ to the ends of the earth when the Holy Spirit awoke in us the inherent power residing in us by virtue of our nature as children of God.

For Episcopalians, this feast day emphasizes our understanding of the church as the body of Christ, gathered and given life by the Holy Spirit to go and share the light of God’s love. Our Book of Common Prayer suggests that this day is “especially appropriate” for baptism and the renewal of baptismal vows. The day is also at other times and places called Whitsun or Whitsunday, a corruption of “White Sunday,” referring to the white robes that people wore to church after being baptized at the Vigil of Pentecost the prior evening. These robes were much like the alb that ordained people and lay ministers wear at the Eucharist.

Preparation

If we could gather at St. Elizabeth, the altar and priests would be draped in red vestments. An icon of Pentecost would greet people in the narthex and the baptismal font would be prepared with warm water to be blessed for any baptisms and for the renewal of baptismal vows. After re-affirming those promises to God, we would be sprinkled with blessed holy water as a physical, visual reminder of our own baptisms.



While we are temporarily separated (and then, only physically so), consider taking this as an opportunity to bring some of that intention home. The Holy Spirit is always already available in your home, and you may want to awaken your awareness of the presence of the Paraclete with a red tablecloth or a red cloth of any kind set with a candle on the table or desk where you are collected. A bowl of water would also be appropriate. As in Pascha, you may also want to set out a favorite cross, an icon or rosary and spend a moment summoning up a sense of gratitude with friends or family by phone or through social media. Offer it with loved ones that we no longer see or saints that you admire.

You might want to listen to some liturgically appropriate music before or between readings or prayer. I commend the recording of the introit of “*Spiritus Domini*” chanted by the Benedictine monks of Abbaye Notre-Dame de Triors Châtillon-Saint-Jean in the Drôme, Rhône-Alpes, France, on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnbiW5dbQBM> From the Latin: “The Spirit of the Lord has filled the whole world, alleluia; and that which contains all things, knows every language spoken by men, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; and let those who hate him flee before his face.”

You might also try the antiphon appropriate for this feast day called *Vidi aquam*. This version chanted by the monks of Pluscarden Abbey in Scotland is found on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XhFeXt2I7o&list=OLAK5uy_mzjherEEJM1XNXknGfwxA-YqJ7YBOfTps&index=8&t=0s From the Latin: “I saw water flowing from the Temple, from its right-hand side, alleluia; and all to whom this water came were saved and shall say: Alleluia, alleluia.”

As always, we voice our worship is always voiced in the plural – “we,” “us” and “our” – because although we are temporarily apart from each other, we are also always bound together in Christ.

Pentecost
31 May 2020

Centering

Make the sign of the cross as the leader says: Come, Holy Spirit (+), fill the hearts of your faithful; and kindle in us the fire of your love.

The leader prays: Almighty and everliving God, who fulfilled the promises of Easter by sending us your Holy Spirit and opening to every race and nation the way of life eternal, keep us in the unity of your Spirit, that every tongue may tell of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Word of God for the Feast of Pentecost

The Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read.

A reading from Numbers: Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord; and he gathered seventy elders of the people, and placed them all around the tent. Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders; and when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do so again.

Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the spirit rested on them; they were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." And Joshua son of Nun, the assistant of Moses, one of his chosen men, said, "My lord Moses, stop them!" But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!" And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God



(The response: Prayed together or by alternating verses) Psalm 104:25-37

How many things You do!
So wisely are they made,
all Earth at Your command.

This vast sea beyond all grasp,
countless are the creatures in her,
tiny ones and giant whales.

There go stately ships,
this Leviathan You shaped
to play and romp therein.

They all rely on Your care,
to feed them well each time.

You give them and they take it;
Your hands' gifts sate them well.

You hide Your face—they panic.
You recall their breaths—they die;
they return to their dust.

You send Your Spirit
and they are re-created;
so too, You renew life on Earth.

Let Your Glory, YHWH, fill time and space.
Take Joy, O YHWH, in what You do!

You look at the Earth and she trembles;
Hills You touch and they smoke.

Let my talking give You joy;
I am so happy, my YHWH!

I wish no sin to exist on Earth,
all wickedness were gone.

Do bless, YHWH, my soul, my breath!
Hallelujah!

A reading from First Corinthians: No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the

interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-- and we were all made to drink of one Spirit..

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God



Read the gospel aloud without rushing. Allow the images to enter your awareness and find a home within.

A reading from John: When, therefore, it was early evening of that first day of the Sabbath-week, and where the disciples were the doors had been sealed for fear of the Judeans, Jesus came and stood in their midst and says to the them, "Peace to you." And, saying this, he showed them both his hands and his side. Thus, on seeing the Lord, the disciples were overjoyed. So Jesus again said to them, "Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, so also I send you." And saying this, he breathed upon them and says to them, "Receive a Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you let go, they are let go; for those you hold fast, they have been held fast."

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

Sermon:

The disciples are locked inside a room or a house; it's not clear. There is a threat outside the door. It is early evening and the disciples are in the dark. By that I mean, they are befuddled about the events still playing out around them. All they know is that something has changed. Something important.

It has been three days since Jesus was crucified and just this morning, Mary Magdalene went to the empty tomb and met someone she thought was the gardener until he spoke her name. And now she is with the other disciples and they are in an obscure, unnamed place with the door sealed.

Now, a door sealing the followers of Christ in may seem a trivial detail. Maybe. Except right in the middle of Pascha, on the Sunday that some folks call "Good Shepherd Sunday," we heard John's Jesus say this to his followers: "Amen, amen, I tell you that I am the sheep's door."

And then we heard Jesus describe his purpose: "I came that they might have life and might have it in abundance." And here, on the other side of his crucifixion, the Risen Christ appears. I'm not concerned about whether the physical body of Jesus literally passed through solid matter or not. I'm content to say that they experienced the astonishing presence of the Risen Christ.

What matters more is this: Life in abundance passed through a sealed door, through the opening that is Christ. The light shines once again in the darkness and abundant life enters into a room.

The first words the people in that sealed room hear are: "Peace to you." Through these words and the act of showing the wounds of crucifixion, the Risen Christ opens the disciple's eyes. They see and recognize who is offering them peace. No wonder they are overjoyed. Christ is fulfilling a promise to leave peace with them; peace that has always been associated with the work of the Holy Spirit, the revealer and energizer of the living flow of God's love.

And then what happens next is sometimes harder for us to work out than the notion of a man walking through solid wood. Unlike Luke's more vivid cinematic version of the Pentecost event, John's version is far more intimate and tender. The Risen Christ breathes into them and says: "Receive a holy spirit."

The Holy Spirit, God's own breath that flows into the moment of Creation, comes alongside and breathes into the followers of Christ. That's what makes it possible for the children of God to do great works, to keep God's commandments, to generate much fruit and to live out lives that witness to the love of God.

God will not be contained within boundaries. Not within sealed rooms or camps; not within religions or races or human authorities. Instead, creation is within God and God is within creation. We are within God and God is within us. We are integrated into God even as we are differentiated as unique individuals.

The Risen Christ is the opening – the door – through which, with God's grace, we enter into each other's lives and into the life of God as manifestations of God. Give that a moment to percolate.

The energy that created the galaxies and the stars; the life-giving energy that animates hummingbirds and blue whales; the awe that inspires poetry, music and architecture; the

righteous anger at cruelty and injustice – that energy, that is the love of God residing within the heart of every person and surrounding all of us.

The One God in whom we all have our being gives every one of us, each unique child of God, our own constellation of capacities to contribute. Not a single person is extra or unnecessary or unloved.

Pentecost interrupts our customary understanding of how life should be and what makes sense. In the reading from Numbers this morning, Moses has to remind people that God will manifest wherever God desires. The psalmist, filled with awe at God's abundance, has us singing with gratitude for God's generosity in filling all creatures, reminding us that these qualities naturally want to radiate from us all.

And can you see why yet?

The breath of God, the *ruach*, that moves on the surface of the chaos in Creation, is alive and breathing in you and you are breathing in her. You and I are not God, yet we are not other than a manifestation of God. It is in our nature to promote love and peace and justice because that is God's nature.

We live in a part of the world noted for the high number of people who self-describe as “spiritual-but-not-religious.” That probably felt more sophisticated and wiser when they could find God in a sunset, or maybe an ocean view or the smile of a newborn. Fr. Thomas Keating thought it would be more honest to say “spiritual-without-the-inconvenience-of-religion.”

Because, of course, we can also find God in all those things and more, as the psalmist pointed out. We have something a little different to offer, something that requires the inconvenience of other people. We are all living in the upheaval of a pandemic. We are dealing with the aftermath of the very public murder of an innocent man. I don't know anyone, by the way, more angry about that than cops.

But a sunset can't tell people why there is suffering. An ocean view doesn't move people to stand up to hate. No baby's smile gives us something to say to our children about people dying unfairly of diseases or by the hand of the people sworn to protect them.

“Spiritual-but-not-religious” won't help. “Spiritual-*and*-religious” can't explain those things away either. But then, that's not why we're here. Even with our buildings closed for now, we're here to say that God is present in every disaster and in every injustice.

I'm not claiming to be perfect. I'm claiming rather the opposite; that we are too small, too inadequate, too selfish to handle any of this new reality on our own. All that “spiritual-and-religious” people can offer is this; recognizing that there are just some things that we can't do on our own, like create an ocean. Some things that are substantially larger than we are, like disempowering racism.

We are communities who make room for each other's stories. We wash, raise up and anoint people through the Holy Spirit. We are groups of people who can open doors to God who shows up in countless and unexpected ways. We gather together so that God can set people on fire until they inhale and become the exhale of the Holy Spirit out in the world.

That's why we exist.

We are here so that people can join us with God in setting the world on fire with forgiveness and with justice. We exist to breath God's liberty, God's joy, and, yes, to breath the peace of God into other people's lives.

We are not better than anyone else. We simply walk through an opening together where we can experience God's response to the human cycles of evil and death; where we can feel God's breath on our cheek and we can share practices that allow people to stand in that wind, trusting God to blow us to where we are needed.

"If you want to be ready for and worthy of the Spirit of God," the Dominican mystic Meister Eckert wrote, "just look inside and see your spiritual being. Can you see how you already resemble what you seek?"

That's what we mean when we say, "Christ is risen." And Christ is risen indeed.

Silence and stillness

Renewal of Baptismal vows

Leader: God our Creator and our Life, hear us as we gather on this Feast of Pentecost to rejoice in the blessing of the Holy Spirit. We thank you for the gift of water. From it life emerged, by it creation is sustained, refreshed and cleansed. You chose water to show your loving-kindness when you led the children of Israel to freedom through the Red Sea and satisfied their thirst in the desert with water from the rock. In water, your Son Jesus received the baptism of John, and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Christ, leading us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life. We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son, we celebrate our union with him in faith.

Through the Paschal mystery, we are raised with Christ to newness of life inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Walking in the light of God's presence as the embodiment of God's love for all people, we renew the solemn promises and vows of Holy Baptism, by which we once renounced Satan and all his works, and promised to serve God faithfully in his holy Catholic Church.

Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?

Each person present, responding together: I do.

Leader: Do you believe in God the Father?

Response: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

Response: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Leader: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

Response: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Leader: Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Response: I will, with God's help.

Leader: Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Response: I will, with God's help.

Leader: Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Response: I will, with God's help.

Leader: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Response: I will, with God's help.

Leader: Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

People: I will, with God's help.

The Leader concludes the Renewal of Vows as follows: May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and bestowed upon us the forgiveness of sins, keep us in eternal life by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

Prayers for the church, the world and all who are in need

These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household:

Leader: God the Father, your will for all people is health and salvation.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: God the Son, you came that we might have life, and might have it more abundantly.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: God the Holy Spirit, you make our bodies the temple of your presence.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: Holy Trinity, one God, in you we live and move and have our being.

All: We praise and bless you, LORD.

Leader: In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the Anglican Church of Melanesia, the Most Reverend Leonard Dawea, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Melanesia and Bishop of Temotu.

In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for Christ Church, Puyallup; Holy Spirit, Vashon Island.

We pray for the safety and stamina of healthcare workers, for first responders and for their families.

We pray for those on our long-term list. Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, offered silently or aloud.

Leader: Lord, grant your healing grace to all who are sick, injured or disabled, that they may be made whole.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to all who are lonely, anxious or depressed, a knowledge of your will and an awareness of your presence.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Grant to all who minister to those who are suffering wisdom and skill, sympathy and patience.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Mend broken relationships, and restore to those in distress soundness of mind and serenity of spirit.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Sustain and support those who seek your guidance and lift up all who are brought low by the trials of this life.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: We join our prayers this day with Jews, Muslims and Christians of all denominations – Protestant, Catholic and Evangelical – who have chosen to come together to ask you, Holy One, to grant to the dying peace and a holy death and uphold by the grace and consolation of your Holy Spirit those who are bereaved.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: Restore to wholeness whatever is broken by human sin, in our lives, in our nation, and in the world.

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: God of all, your love is without limit and without end. Enlarge our vision of your redeeming purpose for all people. Through the example of your prophets, make us ready to serve the needs of your whole creation. Keep us from allowing pride of race, conceit of religion or hardness of heart to hinder our learning from and caring for each other. Open our minds and hearts to receive and share your wisdom and love so that we may dissolve barriers of fear, suspicion and hate trusting in your yearning for all your children to live in liberty, harmony and tranquility

All: Hear us, LORD of life.

Leader: You are the LORD who does mighty wonders.

All: You have declared your power among the peoples.

Leader: With you, LORD, is the well of life

All: and in your light do we see light.

Leader: Hear us, LORD of life:

All: heal us, and make us whole.

Leader: Let us pray.

A period of silence follows, and then: Hear the prayer we offer for all your people. Remember in your mercy those for whom we pray: heal the sick, raise the fallen, strengthen the fainthearted, protect those who serve, and enfold in your love the fearful and those who have no hope.

In the fullness of time complete your gracious work. Reconcile all things in Christ and make them new, that we may be restored in your image, renewed in your love, and serve you as sons and daughters in your kingdom. Through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ, our LORD, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit we lift our voices of thanks and praise:

All: Blessed be God, our strength and our salvation, now and for ever. *Amen.*



Pater Noster/Our Father/The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of spiritual communion

Most Holy Christ, we trust that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We love you above all things, and we long for you in our souls. Since we cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We embrace you as though you were already there and we unite ourselves entirely to you. Never permit us to be separated from you. *Amen.*

Concluding Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, lamplighter, midwife of change,
comforter, disturber, inspirer and advocate.
Come, fill the church with the gifts earth
can neither produce nor afford.
Come, fill our lives with that rich mixture of peace and restlessness,
calm and enthusiasm,
which are the hallmarks of holiness.
Come, promised Spirit of God,
find your way and make your home among us. Amen.

Blessing

Make the sign of the cross as you say: May the Spirit of truth (+) lead us into all truth, giving us grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and to proclaim the wonderful works of God.
Amen.

Giving Thanks at Table

Giving God,
bless all who have gathered round this table.
May we know the fullness of your presence
at every meal and in all our sharing.
Amen.

“Self-fulfillment is only complete when we give up being in love with our own enlightenment and plunge into the ecstasy of falling wholly in love with the light, one of the many names of the Holy Spirit.”

~ **Rev. Dr. Robert Davis Hughes III**



Sources and references:

Essay image: image of Pentecost in a letter “O” from Lorenzo Monaco’s Antiphony (Cod. Cor. 1, folio 111v), 1396, tempera and gold on parchment, Biblioteca Apostolica, Vatican.

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