

**The Spirit that Stays**  
Pentecost 2024  
St. Andrew's, Kelowna

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Happy Pentecost! We gather this morning to celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and what some have called the birthday of the Church. The Anglican biblical scholar Paula Gooder describes one of the main differences between the Spirit in the Hebrew Bible and the Spirit in the New Testament generally as this: "the Spirit in the old testament comes and goes and the Spirit in the New Testament comes and stays"<sup>1</sup>. Generally speaking in the Old Testament, the Spirit falls upon particular people and prophets to speak a particular word of challenge or comfort. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit comes and stays. Today is the day that the Spirit not only falls both upon and among those early apostles in the form of tongues of fire but it stays. And this Spirit stays as the life-force of the Church through the centuries, the the life-force of the Church today when we main in relationship with Her.

Our readings this morning give us three ways of thinking about the Spirit who stays and how we might stay in relationship with her, live in deeper relationship with the very of Spirit of the Risen Christ among us and in us.

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We know well the story in Acts of the tongues of fire and the many people, representing the whole known world at that time, being able to understand what the apostles were saying in their own language. This story has many layers and among them it is a redeeming of the story of the Tower of Babel. The story begins with humanity speaking one language but as we get rather pleased with our ourselves and our own power we build a tower to reach up to God, God topples that tower and scatters humanity, scattering us not just in body but also in languages and our seeking for power renders us unable to understand one another. On this day of Pentecost the Spirit comes and stays enabling all to understand one another not through uniformity of language but true understanding, each in their own language. So for us to be people who stay with this Spirit is to be involved in the Spirit's work of reconciling, of enabling people to understand one another, of knowing that it is not, and will never be, our own hubris and power that will unite us but rather God's own fidelity poured out upon us, among us and remaining with us.

Our reading from the Letter to the Romans invites us into another way of seeing the Spirit. If you had a bit of trouble figuring out which spirit Paul is talking about - our spirit or the Holy Spirit - in this passage you're supposed to because that is what is supposed to be happening in our spiritual lives. As Christ's Spirit dwells in us, the more the Spirit prays within us, the more our spirit becomes entwined with her, the more we will what God wills, the more we become like

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<sup>1</sup> The God who Speaks: The Holy Spirit and Bible.  
<https://www.stpauls.co.uk/resources/god-who-speaks-bible-and-holy-spirit>

Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work within us sanctifying us, enabling us to become like Christ. What is also fascinating in this reading is that Paul uses the same root word to describe creation groaning that he uses to describe our own groaning as we await redemption. On the one hand our spirits are to be entwined with the Holy Spirit while on the other our groaning is entwined with that of all creation. Sanctification is not a private, separate enterprise because we are also linked with the whole created order. And so the work of the Spirit, the work of new creation, happens deep within us as we are united with the whole created order in the same hope of, and longing for what is to come; we are co-creators of that new creation.

Lastly, our Gospel reading offers the Spirit as the Advocate, as the one who will defend us, like in a court of law. A few weeks ago we read of Jesus asking the Father not to take his disciples out of the world but to protect them and the Advocate, the one who defends, will protect us from the the Accuser or the Evil one. It is the Spirit who defends and Satan who accuses in John's understanding. And what's beautiful in John's gospel is that one of the ways the Spirit will defend us is to reveal the truth of the life of the Father and the Son to us. Through its own self-emptying the Spirit will reveal the self-emptying, the sharing of life, between the Father and Son, the life-in-relationship that is the truth of our Triune God. The Advocate will stay with us, defend us and make us part of all that God is.

So:

The Spirit who comes and stays.

The Spirit who enables true understanding and the ability to find unity not in uniformity or through our own hubris power but through God's faithfulness. Where have you seen this kind of work happening? How have I been a part of it?

The Spirit who is deep within us, entwining with our own spirits to make us holy while linking us with the whole created order as we together hope and long and wait for redemption. How have you seen this at work in your life?

The Spirit who defends us, who is our Advocate, revealing to us and drawing us into, the very heart of God. How have you known the Spirit as your defender in your life time?

Take these Spirit-ways and questions into your week this week. May they draw you ever closer to the Spirit who comes and stays.

Amen.