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PENTECOST C

5th June 2022

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening prayers

The Spirit is here,
And God is Spirit.
As you open your mind, your heart and your eyes,
In worship on this Pentecost Sunday,
Invite the Holy Spirit to come close,
To prompt and guide you this day.

Amen.

Think about images or pictures you might have for the Holy Spirit. If you have one, or could look one up – go and find it to have with or near you during this act of worship. It could be a dove, or a wild goose, or a painting of the wind, or a candle.

Spend a moment, in the stillness, thinking about this image, or other images, of who the Spirit is. How do you see Her at work in the world today?¹

Hymn:

393 STF – She sits like a bird, brooding on the waters - [YouTube](#)

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You may wish to say the Lord's Prayer in the language or version with which you are most comfortable.

Readings: [Acts 2:1-21](#); [Psalm 104](#)

Responding to the readings

So today we celebrate Pentecost. We remember the Holy Spirit poured out to 1st Century disciples and also poured out to us today, inviting us to collaborate in building God's kingdom here on earth.

This year, as Pentecost falls on the Queen's Jubilee and the gift of a double bank holiday, the Methodist Church has been challenging us, through the poem 'God's calling you out and about' to do just that; to open our doors. As we emerge into the summer after two years of covid-related lockdowns, we're being challenged to engage with our neighbours and our communities. *[You could play the video available to download from <https://www.methodist.org.uk/jubilee/>].*

¹ Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

For those of you who are filled with dread at the thought of getting out and about in the name of Jesus, please don't switch off. If we dig down into our Bible texts today: the account in Acts of speaking in tongues, and into the rejoicing of Psalm 104, we are given a blueprint for what getting out and about with the Holy Spirit might look like. And, spoiler alert, it isn't dread, shame and obligation that we're called to feel as we open our doors. Instead, I'd like to suggest, we are called to surprise, to collaboration and to joy. As our Pentecost, Jubilee and Bank Holiday weekend draws to a close, I'd like to offer these three ingredients for thinking about how we might continue to get 'out and about' in our communities.

Firstly; to surprise. The thing that I love about the account of Pentecost in Acts is that I imagine that every participant was surprised by the day's events. Of course, there is an account of the confusion from the onlookers who hear their various different languages being spoken. But did those with fire on their heads spouting unknown tongues feel utterly unsurprised? I think not. I imagine that stunned amazement was an emotion that everyone present felt utterly and entirely. We are not told how Peter is feeling when he explains what happens by quoting the prophet Joel, but I imagine that he is surprised too- perhaps even more so that the Spirit is leading him to a different kind of translation; translating what was going on.

So here we have it; a scene of wonderment. I wonder if you have ever been surprised by what God has done with you and through you and around you? I was at an adult baptism last summer, in a paddling pool in a friend's garden, where a man I knew, for whom faith had long been something unfamiliar and strange, was committing his life to God in front of friends and family. I felt humbled because I had not thought this possible – it hadn't even crossed my mind as a possibility that he might commit his life to God. Yet I felt so strongly the presence of the Holy Spirit as he was plunged into the pool of water. I was reminded that God's plans surprise us in going above and beyond our expectations.

Too often the plan we have when we open the doors of our Churches is an immovable feast. We expect not only those we're interacting with to join in on our terms, but also expect God to join in on our terms. Perhaps what we need to do more often is to leave space to be surprised by what God has planned – to get out and about with enough wiggle room to leave space for the Holy Spirit. I don't know what the disciples were up to that day when the Holy Spirit descended upon them, but if they had been rushing on to the next thing or sticking strictly to their agenda, things might not have worked out so radically. Perhaps it is best put like this: we need to let go and let God. When we leave room for nothing but our own plans and visions, we forget to leave room for the miraculous workings of a God's whose plans are far greater than our own.

And this brings me on to my second point; that we need to collaborate. One of the themes of Pentecost is diversity – of language, of ethnicities, of places of origin – and of God using this to show that the Holy Spirit is for all. Psalm 104 also rejoices in the diversity of creation:

In wisdom you made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number—
living things both large and small.

Diversity is a tribute to God's greatness. As a Church we can be a little guilty of holding a space that encourages 'people like us'. I met someone who described those she met as either 'PLUs' or 'not-PLUs'. Being a PLU (people like us) was the highest praise she could give. How blasphemous to God's great and glorious creation to look at the world in such binaries – like us and good, not like us and bad! Instead, just like in Acts, we need to ensure that the goodness of the Kingdom of God is shared with everyone.

This is challenging – if you look at your Church congregation, does it reflect the community in which you sit? Who is missing? How could you collaborate with the community to make sure that getting out and about feels relevant to those outside of your Church doors?

I'd argue that opening up the doors is the first step, and that walking outside of them is a good second step. The Holy Spirit is indiscriminate in whether it is flowing inside or outside of our church doors: are we?

Perhaps, in order to collaborate effectively with God and with our communities, we need to recognise that opening our Church doors should be an act of osmosis – we should get out into the community and hope that some of the community might feel welcome to walk on in... we should collaborate with our communities in the good stuff that's already going on 'out there' in the knowledge that all of God's creation is invited to collaborate in the bringing of the Kingdom of God.

My third ingredient for a successful getting out and about recipe is joy. How strange that people thought that when the disciples were speaking in tongues they were drunk! When those outside our Church community look at what we're doing, what do we look like we're feeling? Bored? Dutiful? Thinking about our next meal? I hope not. I hope that instead they might think that we look joyful, like we're having so much fun that some might suspect that we've had a glass or two of wine. The Psalmist says:

33 I will sing to the LORD all my life;

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

34 May my meditation be pleasing to him,
as I rejoice in the LORD.

There is joy in rejoicing, too! Indeed, joy is one of Paul's fruits of the spirit, which are not a bad set of ingredients for getting out and about into our communities.

If in God there is great joy and rejoicing, my question to you is this; could you have fun together? What would that look like for you as a church community?

And, thinking about our other two key ingredients, how could you collaborate with your community to have fun together and do so in a way that leaves room for surprise?

I have spent some time with a Church that I think does this beautifully. Working with Church and community members they began by running language classes for refugee families. When they asked community members what they'd like alongside this a few different things came up: a food market, a quiet space for prayer and meditation, a pay-as-you-feel café, and a citizen's advice worker were all asked for and are now in place. Those that use these spaces are a diverse group: refugee families, young parents, climate activists, church goers – it even includes people who fall into all of these categories! And these diverse people are also invited to help; to volunteer to help run all of these initiatives. All of this is a surprise; it grew from a very small language café. An even greater surprise was that putting all of these things in place was possible and is now a reality. The Holy Spirit is flowing through that Church community, and as a result all of this is delivered with joy. Nobody thinks they're drunk but there is no mistaking that there is much joy to be had in joining in. There is joy in collaborating with the Holy Spirit. There is joy in collaborating with our communities. There is joy in being surprised by the goodness and greatness of God's plans. So; let's get out and about!

Here are some questions to reflect on personally and as a Church community this Pentecost:

- What could getting out and about in collaboration with your community look like?
- Are there people in your community already doing good work that you could join in with?
- How can you leave room for the Holy Spirit to work?
- How can you ensure that whatever you do is full of joy?
- What else do you think are key ingredients for getting out and about?²

Blessing

The Kingdom of God is justice and joy,
And you rise from this moment to go out to seek that Kingdom,
To celebrate in that Kingdom,
To bring that Kingdom about,
In Jesus' name.

Amen.³

² Reflection written by Lucy Zwolinksa

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 6th June

As you reflect on the first Pentecost, you might like to pray these prayers over the next few days.

Loving God, send your Spirit.

I recognise that the world is not as you intended it to be;

War, disease, racism, poverty and oppression have no place in your Kingdom and so

I ask that you bring peace, justice and flourishing for all.

Loving God, send your Spirit.

For those in our community experiencing pain, I ask that you lay your healing hand upon them. Amen.

Tuesday 7th June

Loving God, send your Spirit.

For all those who are on the margins, who are told that they are not welcome, I pray that they might know that your love is for all.

I pray that you show me how to be to be part of the solution where suffering is the problem.

Loving God, send your Spirit. Amen.

Wednesday 8th June

Loving God, send your Spirit.

I pray for your Church, that it might be a place full of joy and goodness, able to demonstrate your endless love to all.

May I know how to talk about the love of Jesus Christ in this time and this place.

Loving God, send your Spirit. Amen.

Thursday 9th June

Loving God, send your Spirit.

I hold up to you the moments in which I have fallen short of what you ask of me, where I have walked down selfish paths instead of yours.

For these times I ask for your forgiveness and gratefully receive your abundant grace.

Loving God, send your Spirit. Amen.

Friday 10th June

You might like to use this prayer as a blessing or grace before one of your meals today.

Gracious God, thank you for the many ways you have blessed me, and for the nutrition in the meals I am eating this day. Thank you for the strength that comes from my food to keep me going. Thank you for the tastes I can enjoy and the refreshment I can feel.

Gracious God, today, as I eat, I remember that all I have is gift – and I look out on the world around me, knowing that many people are not as blessed as I am, and many will go hungry today.

God, help me to seek justice in your world. Amen.

Saturday 11th June

Holy God, you have called me here, in this moment, this day, this weekend.

Lord of life,

I see you at work in the world around me.

Open my eyes, and open my heart,

That I may be ready to receive your Spirit into my life. Amen.