



**A Sermon for Pentecost Sunday
May 19, 2024**



**Rev. Barbara Bond
New Life Episcopal Church, Uniontown, OH**

Click Here for today's Readings:
[Day of Pentecost – The Episcopal Church](#)

Acts 2:1-21, Romans 8:22-27. John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

With sighs too deep for words

Pentecost Sunday! An exciting day! We wear red, we fly the Holy Spirit kite, we say the Lord's Prayer in different languages, and we celebrate a Spirit-infused liturgy. This is a wonderful day to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit fifty days after the Resurrection, when the Spirit landed on lots of people in Jerusalem, loosened their tongues so that they could speak to each other, and gave them the great gift of understanding: all those folks understood each other! Since ancient times, Pentecost has been celebrated as the second great feast of the church, the first, of course, being Easter. There is a direct connection: liturgically, Easter Sunday begins the Easter season, and Pentecost Sunday is the final day of Easter, and both are all about God coming to us and abiding with us.

Both St. Paul's letter to the Romans and the Gospel reading from John allude to the dawning of a new era. In the Gospel, Jesus is still with his disciples, before his Passion, telling them the good news that the Spirit is coming. He says, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." To me, this sounds like new and eternal news, an ongoing infusion of the Holy Spirit, continuing into the future, challenging us to move and change with the times.

But it is St. Paul's letter that moves me the most. Paul uses the metaphor of birth, saying "The whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now." And what are we waiting for? We want to let go of the old ways and embrace whatever is coming from the Spirit. In this hope and expectation Paul uses a phrase that stops me every time I hear it: "With sighs too deep for words." Our innermost feelings, our innermost hopes, our experiences that we can't talk about or explain – they go too deep for words. So perhaps we just sigh. Breathe in, breathe out.

I love all the words associated with breathing, and the breath of God. The breath that moved over the waters at the first day of creation – a mighty

creative act brought by the breath of God. We look for INSPIRATION – breathe in the spirit – INSPIRE -- when we indulge in our own creativity, for instance trying to write a sermon! EXPIRE – letting loose of breath, and letting loose of life on this side of eternity. Birth, life, death – all experiences that can't really be explained meaningfully except through metaphor. Our hymns have examples:” Like the murmur of a dove’s song...like the vigor of the wind’s rush...come Holy Spirit, come!” (Hymn 513). Our communion hymn will intone: “Breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life anew” (Hymn 508) Here’s a great verse from Hymn 507 (vs 4) “Tell of how the ascended Jesus armed a people for his own; how a hundred men and women turned the known world upside-down, to its dark and furthest corners by the wind of heaven blown.”

What do these inspired words tell us today? St. Paul speaks about letting go of what was, and embracing what is coming. This applies to our churches, and to our lives. In the church, we may be getting in our own way, blocking the Spirit’s work, by insisting on old comfortable ways, while the Spirit is trying to break through with a new kind of wildness. Let us allow the Spirit to speak to us, to come to us, to inspire us with new expressions, new ideas. This is the Spirit of Pentecost – engaging, inspiring, lighting us up with new fire. Let us embrace this new wind, that it may carry us to a whole new world in Christ!