

Maybe you have **experienced Pentecost**, an event when the concrete “reality” that can obscure God at work in our lives is ripped away. Maybe you have **experienced Pentecost**, when you met your spouse for the first time, or when your child was born, or right here at Church of the Resurrection. I’ll never forget my friend Andrew’s ordination, which happened to be at a church very near here. Andrew was so aglow with the spirit of Christ that a young attendee insisted that Andrew floated, not walked, out of the church that day. And you know, I think the child was right. Andrew’s joy, and the responding joy of the whole community, literally lifted him up.



Pentecost: a time when the concrete “reality that can obscure God at work in our lives is ripped away. The Holy Spirit is God’s agent of Pentecost. Some call the Holy Spirit “God on the move.” But God is always on the move. And the Holy Spirit is what inspires us to act on behalf of God, gives us the idea and motivates us into action.

Those who witnessed that first Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit whooshed through the room in which the disciples were gathered, didn’t know what was going on. Our Acts lesson says they were “amazed and perplexed” to hear words spoken in one language understood by everyone from all over the world, each in their own language.

“**Are the words magic?**” That’s, in essence, what the people who heard them asked. The nice people. Those who weren’t so nice sneered, our lesson says, and assumed that Jesus’ disciples had been nipping the Pentecost wine as they celebrated the first of the wheat harvest.

At this point Peter—the very **ROCK** on whom Jesus had said he would build his church—answered the confused crowd of observers. “**No,**” he said, “**we aren’t drunk but just filled with the Holy Spirit, as the prophet Joel said would happen when the end of the world is near.**”

Let’s think for a minute about Peter’s answer. Jesus’ disciples must have **FELT** like the end of the world was near. The Messiah had come. He had been murdered. He had risen from the dead (depending on which gospel account you read). And now he had gone away. This didn’t sound good for all humanity, even if the Messiah had said at every point during his departure, “Peace: I’m leaving you

peace. I'm giving you my peace." Jesus' disciples felt like they were living in the "end times," so was it any wonder, he said, that the people were doing things that had been foretold of the end times? So in one sense Peter's answer to the people was true.

But did Peter give the BEST answer? If he had been faithful to Christ Jesus' farewell teaching, he might better have said, "Jesus told us that he would ask the Father to take some of his spirit that he had given to Moses (Numbers 11:25), and some of his own God-spirit, and give those who are his disciples a helper—an Advocate, the Spirit of Truth—to live within us forever. The world cannot accept him, because it doesn't see or know him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:15-17)

I often get to be with people who are looking behind what we call "reality" and deciding whether to participate in God at work in our world. In other words, I get to be with people all the time who are deciding whether to experience Pentecost themselves, or just sneer at it.

I vividly remember the Holy Spirit DANCING here during an anthem, on more than one occasion, running around gathering up all those musical notes and combining them in a new way, a fantastic way, so that all the singers seem to have one voice. Ask any member of our choir when they are all back in town from our Shrine Mont retreat weekend. They are good, musically speaking, but they will tell you that there are times when the Holy Spirit shows up and takes over, making them sound even better than they actually are, reminding us that we are one and that God is very much with us here.

The Holy Spirit definitely was with us here when you welcomed me officially as your Rector. Remember THAT worship service? My brother Dan rocked the house on the organ and our spirits rejoiced and united as one in worshipping God.

I'll bet that you have your OWN Pentecost story to share, or you would if only you knew how to recognize a Pentecost moment. <P> I use three "tests" about Pentecost:

- 1) A near-impossible task;
- 2) Improbable agents (often with broken lives); and
- 3) The breath of God blowing a new reality into being, a reality filled with hope and joy.

You can use these three tests (*) as I tell you a couple more Pentecost stories. Real people. Elsewhere. Their permission to share their stories:

Dave was a lawyer; well, he HAD been a lawyer. He had been running around real hard trying to keep his life together, trying to keep people from finding out about the booze. His wife left him. Took

the kids. He drank more. Lost his job. Lost his home. Then he found an “upper room” in a church, more as a place to be warm and get free coffee than anything else. But somehow—Pentecost, he says—the compulsion to drink left him.

Tracy was a teenager. Funny. Smart. Kind. Beautiful—except for her teeth; she needed braces. Did I mention poor? Tracy wanted to be an engineer, but couldn’t figure out how to pay for college. Suddenly she had braces and a scholarship. Just like that. She told me, with the light shining through her eyes, that Pentecost had come. I also knew both the dentist and the oil heiress in the congregation, and that same light was shining in their eyes, also. Pentecost!

I have personally experienced Pentecost. The occasion was the eve of the 2003 General Convention of the Episcopal Church, the one which ended up consenting to the consecration of the Diocese of New Hampshire’s choice of Gene Robinson (a partnered gay man) as its Bishop. Lenore and I were in the Minneapolis cathedral on the opening night of the convention. The cathedral was crammed full to overflowing with people. There were people everywhere: sitting on the floor in the aisles, in the chancel area, in the choir loft, and even out on the lawn. The acolytes waved “spirit banners” over everyone’s head. Spirit banners are streamers—representing tongues of flame—attached to the end of a long flexible pole. There was a “whoosh” that tore through the building, from one corner to the other. We could feel it go by, filling us all with hope and pure joy.

I’ll never forget the sermon, though, which was this: “God is who God is, God does what God does, and God calls who God calls.” Silly me; at the time I thought that the preacher was talking about Bishop Robinson, never dreaming that she meant me.

I haven’t been the same since. For the past 14 years I have been caught up in the whoosh of the Holy Spirit from that fly-by. Carted off to the seminary. At my age!? That’s the thing about the Holy Spirit. You never know where you will end up. God is ALWAYS calling us and carting us off to do new, improbable things.

I wonder about us. Tear down our church and build affordable housing? Whoosh! All will be well.

I wonder about you. Are you here today BECAUSE you have experienced the breath of the Holy Spirit blowing a new reality into your broken life? Or, did you bring your broken life and old tired body here to wait for the Wind? Either way, you are in a good place, a place where many have experienced Pentecost.