

Pentecost

Pastoral Letter: 5th June 2022

I will give you a new heart

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The Coming of the Holy Spirit

The miraculous events of the day of Pentecost reflect the stories of long ago: Elijah and the sound of wind, Moses and the mountain enveloped in smoke and lightening. But now these elemental experiences have come indoors and the unapproachable has come close. The result is not fear and trembling but communication, speech in many languages. The message is that God has poured out his spirit on ALL people. The universality of the message is important for all cultures and religions.

Look at John Brokenshire's painting opposite, entitled, *Pentecost*. It can be found in the Methodist Art Collection.

How does this painting speak to you of Pentecost?



Read Acts 2: 1-21

- **2** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. **3** Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.
- **5** Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” **12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” **13** But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

- ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:
 - ¹⁷ ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.
¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.
²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

Experiencing the story

A way of entering into something of the experience of Pentecost is to place a disc of paper in the base of a salad spinner and pour some paint into the centre of the basket – red and yellow for the fire of the Spirit and gold for its holiness. Cover it with lid and spin.

The Spirit came and it moved where it willed – just as the paint is splattered by the centrifugal force of the spinner. The resulting image on the paper is unique, displaying the energy by which it was created – just the lives of those of the first disciples displayed the impact of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – and as God desires our lives to be inspired and influenced today.



Strawberry Cheesecake

Like Christmas and Easter, the Festival of Pentecost requires party food, particularly as this is Jubilee Weekend! Strawberry cheesecake fits the bill beautifully.

The first Pentecost, fell on the Jewish festival of Shavuot, 50 days after Passover, celebrating the wheat festival and entry into *The Promised Land*. This was described as flowing with '*milk and honey*,' so dairy products were traditionally eaten, with cheesecake being a favourite.

Christians added to this tradition by decorating their cakes with halved strawberries, because they resemble the shape of open hearts. The prophet Ezekiel said, '*I will give you a new heart, and I will put a **new spirit** within you. I will take away your stony stubborn heart and give you a tender responsive heart.*'



So decorate your cheesecake and contemplate the state of your heart. Pray that the Holy Spirit may be at work within you, kindling that open, responsiveness to his love.

You are then invited to pray with the words of Charles Wesley.

***O thou who camest from above
The fire celestial to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart!
There let it for thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return
In humble prayer and fervent
praise.***

Celebrate the joy of this weekend by sharing your cheesecake with others and may you know yourself blessed. Amen



Amen