

PENTECOST

Revd. Cara Heafey, Associate Minister, Summertown URC



Photograph by Carolyn Wheeler

READ: ACTS 2:1-21

"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place"

REFLECT:

Our reading today begins with the words "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." How casually I've taken those words for granted on Pentecost Sundays gone by, and what an ache of longing they evoke now! Remember how we used to be able to be together in one place? Ah, those were the days!

Let's remind ourselves: this won't last forever. The day will come when we'll be together again (I feel like I'm about to break into a Vera Lynn song!). And when we do gather under one roof, I imagine we'll be feeling a bit like those followers of Jesus who gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem at Pentecost: intentional, expectant, excited. Because being able to physically gather for worship is something I for one won't take for granted again.

This passage contains promise, not only for this awaited future, but for the here and now. We may be separated by distance and by the current rules of our society, but in this story from Acts we meet a Holy Spirit who transcends the boundaries that limit and separate (such as gender, age and status), barriers to communication (such as differences of language and culture) and even physical walls (somehow this indoor, upstairs gathering – see Acts 1:13 – draws crowds of curious onlookers, many of whom go on to be baptised).

Pentecost is thought of by many as the church's 'birthday', and this Acts account as the story of the day the church was born. Despite our situation now the church hasn't 'stopped' and isn't 'closed.' We are the church (Happy Birthday to us!). And the Holy Spirit is alive and well and full of surprises.

WILD GOOSE:

Did you know that in the Celtic art that accompanied the earliest expressions of Christianity in these isles, a wild goose was the image used to depict the Holy Spirit? At Jesus' baptism the Holy Spirit took the form of a dove. But I think the account of Pentecost fits the 'goose' image far better. Geese are noisy, powerful birds. Their harsh cry can be startling. There's something exhilarating about the experience of a flock of geese flying low overhead. And you can tell where geese have been, as they tend to leave a lot of mess behind!

This week I challenge you to think about the times you have felt, or retrospectively seen, the Spirit at work. Was the experience peaceful? Comforting? Disruptive? Exciting? What words or images would you use in praise of the Holy Spirit? If you'd like to share your reflections please get in touch, I'd love to hear them. Or if you're feeling really creative, perhaps you'd like to create an image, prayer, poem or hymn we can use in our worship together.



PRAY:

- "Come Holy Spirit"
- For a sense of "togetherness" as church families and as the wider church
- For the Holy Spirit to overcome the differences between us, and heal the divisions in our world
- For discernment as we plan our next steps together
- For inspiration and opportunities to serve our communities
- That we will be expectant, and open

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS:

Our friends at Wheatley URC have a huge archive of online sermons you can listen to, and are regularly posting new resources on their website:

www.wheatleyurc.org.uk

If you need any help, have a prayer request, or would like someone to talk to; please contact your elder or one of us:
Rev. Pauline Main
Tel: 01865 513581 or 07931 305803
Rev. Cara Heafey
Tel: 01865 863053 or 07835 172206