

The Anglican Parish of St. Francis

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Pentecost 2020

My brothers and sisters,

This past Sunday, churches around the world celebrated the day in which the Spirit of God was poured out upon the earliest disciples of Jesus. I must admit, I have always liked Pentecost Sunday, those deep red vestments which adorn our churches and which sadly (I like red!) appear so infrequently in our Sunday Liturgies. Oh yes, Pentecost, the birthday of the church, a great excuse to have birthday cake during coffee hour, right? A celebration of our beginnings. The descent of the Spirit. Power from on high! Red helium balloons along the pews, helium signifying the spirit, a great teaching moment for the kids? Yes, I've done it all! However...

This Pentecost took on a whole new meaning for me. Maybe it is because I miss gathering together with my church family. Maybe I failed to realize that when the spirit descended upon the early church, according to Acts, it did so upon a group of men and women who were terrified, weak and vulnerable, just as we are in these pandemic days. The tongues of fire, the rushing mighty wind and the resulting upheaval, the nations of the world together in one place, all the nations of the world, and . . . diverse tongues spoken and everyone understood each other! Such are the images of Pentecost. Now let us fast forward to today. Fires ablaze south of our border? Disruption and chaos, acts of protest, and decades and decades of injustice as we fail to understand one another – white American, African American, Israelis, Palestinians, Settlers, First Nations.

And then there is John's version of Pentecost. Jesus "breathed" on his disciples, we are told, and they received the Spirit. And then Jesus went on and on to talk about forgiveness and reconciliation, all those difficult things that we need to hear, as difficult as it may be. Jesus' Breath? Covid-19? Masks? And our dear brother, George Floyd, his haunting words that will live with us forever – "I can't breathe.....Mama.... Please...silence...deafening silence..."? We've all seen the video. The entire world has seen the video. Someone told me the other day (a woman and mother), "I lost it when I heard George call out to his deceased mother".

My brothers and sisters, we are living through disturbing times. I realize that it is not easy and more than anything we want to come together to share our stories of this our exile. Yet as the disciples were told "to wait in Jerusalem until the coming of the Spirit", we too must wait. Please be aware that the leadership of the church, together with the province and our Diocese, are working very hard to determine the best time for us to reassemble. And reassemble we will. But only in a way that is safe for all of us, especially those who are most vulnerable. Until that day comes, we are seeking to find ways to stay connected with each other recognizing that we are family and families always stay together through the good and through the bad.

Enclosed with this letter you will find a summary of what we are planning and where we are going as a parish. I do hope that you have had an opportunity to view one of our “virtual services”. If not, I invite you to see the enclosed document which will explain how to do that. Don’t miss it. You will also find some really good news in that regard. And remember, your thoughts and ideas are always welcome. Don’t hesitate to contact us.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this letter. If I have learned anything these past few months, it is that the church is not a building but a community. We are the church, in exile of sorts, but still very much the church. Please continue to remain safe. Care for each other. Pray for each other. Remember the needy and those who are alone. When we gather together again, face to face, I am certain we will have many stories to tell, stories of faith and courage....and hope. Stories not unlike those contained in our sacred scripture which speak of the many ways God acted in history – our history.

This letter comes with my warmest personal wishes.
Yours sincerely,

Fr. Wayne