

Trigger warning. This morning's sermon contains an animated deacon who might get a little bit loud.

Wind! Fire! That's what we're here for today.

Wind! Fire! On Pentecost we celebrate that the Holy Spirit comes among us. In the first scripture lesson today, Jesus' friends were all together when "Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit."

Wind! Fire!

To explore wind and fire, I've enlisted the help of two people.

First, Walter Brueggemann - a Christian scholar and theologian who is widely considered a foremost authority on the Bible. Brueggemann died this week at the age of 92. He wrote 58 books and hundreds of papers, essays and poems.

Second, Dylan Hollis - a 29 year old viral sensation known for (as stated in his online biography) TikTok videos about unconventional vintage American recipes with an off-kilter humor. Hollis has compiled 2 cookbooks filled with other people's recipes.

Wind! Fire!

Let's talk about wind. Walter Brueggemann wrote this poem for Pentecost.

We name you wind, power, force, and then, imaginatively, "Third Person." We name you and you blow...

blow hard, blow cold, blow hot, blow strong, blow gentle, blow new...

Blowing the world out of nothing to abundance,

blowing the church out of despair to new life,

blowing little David from shepherd boy to messiah,

blowing to make things new that never were.

So blow this day, wind, blow here and there, power, blow even us, force, Rush us

beyond ourselves, Rush us beyond our hopes, Rush us beyond our fears, until we enact your newness in the world. Come holy Spirit, come.

Wind! It's a force of nature. It whips right through and cleans things out. While I am certain that the Holy Spirit, as often imagined as a dove, COULD be a gentle breeze or a lilting zephyr....the wind of Pentecost is described as "violent".....this wind takes over and changes the world completely.

Our Holy Spirit in Bruegemann's poem is a wind that "is blowing to make things new that never were" is an extremely powerful, forceful wind. Imagine hurricane force winds that are making things new that never even existed before!

There is no time for a gentle nudge, Bruegemann suggests. This is a time for action! And we need the power of a mighty wind.

When Jesus talks with Nicodemus, a Pharisee, Jesus says, "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

The Holy Spirit comes to us at Pentecost like a mighty wind. Let us become just as forceful. And look out! You don't know where it's coming from or where it's going to take you.

And now, let's talk about fire.

In his cooking videos, when Dylan Hollis lights the gas burners on his range....every single time....he yells, "Fire." He tilts his head back and yells "Fire!"

It's one of his signature pieces of schtick...like pronouncing the word "egg" with two g's. Egg – g.

But we're talking about Fire!

Again – the Holy Spirit could be a cozy campfire for roasting s'mores. Or a snugly warm, pine-scented fireplace at the holidays. But today is Pentecost and it's Fire! The Holy Spirit comes to us in Fire!

Mother Sylvia was showing the clergy's vestments to some of our pre-elementary youth a few years go. They learn the church liturgical year by the colors of each

season. When Mother Sylvia pulled out a red stole, one young person remarked, “That’s what you wear when your tongue’s on fire.” Our youth pay attention. They know what’s what in the church year.

Indeed. We wear red on Pentecost. And our tongues are on fire! Fire!

One of my favorite Bible stories takes place after Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus joins some of his friends as they walk to the village of Emmaus, but they don’t recognize him. After the journey has concluded and Jesus has broken bread for dinner, he disappears and his friends realize it was Jesus. They say “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us?” Weren’t we on fire with the love of Jesus?

When you get a chance, take a look at these beautiful Pentecost windows up here on the north wall. There are people depicted with flames on their heads.

Fire! The Holy Spirit comes to us on Pentecost as Fire!

Imagine how you’d act if your hair was on fire!

Imagine the things that would come out of your mouth if your tongue was on fire.

Think about how you’d move if someone lit a fire under your.... tushie....as my ex’s Jewish mother would have said.

A friend shared a meme on social media this weekend it is the classic red, or course, British poster that reads “Keep Calm and Carry On.....on Pentecost is an oxymoron.”

It’s true. On Pentecost you cannot keep calm. The Holy Spirit comes among us as wind and fire and we must act accordingly.

In today’s Gospel lesson we hear Jesus tell Philip “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these.”

Did you catch that? Jesus tell us that if we believe in him (and, my friends, we believe in Jesus....that’s why we come and worship in a Christian Church. We are followers of and believers in Jesus.)

OK. Jesus tells us that if we believe in him, we'll do the works Jesus does....and, in fact, we going to do even great works.....greater works than Jesus.

That is mind blowing. Greater works than Jesus. Us.

Jesus concludes by telling Philip, “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”

And when the Holy Spirit shows up, it's as wind and fire. The Holy Spirit comes to teach us everything with wind and fire.

Wind! Fire! – not soft bedtime lullabies and cucumber water – Wind and fire!

Once again, (and really, we don't plan it this way) I have the privilege of preaching on LGBTQ+ Pride weekend in Albuquerque. I've got a story to share with you about traveling out to Gallup for their Pride celebration last September. Yes! Gallup celebrates Pride!

My husband and I joined the small Episcopal Parish of Church of the Holy Spirit at their booth at the Pride festival. They were the only religious organization there. I was asked by one of the Pride committee to give an invocation – since no other clergy person was around. I gladly did so.... With wind and fire.

The following day, I received an email from a member of Church of the Holy Spirit telling me that a photo of me praying at Pride was on social media and trolls were leaving derisive and mean comments about it. They asked if I wanted the photo to be taken down.

Here is my written reply, “There's no need to take a photo of me down from the Facebook page or anywhere else. I've been attending Pride events since 1981. Back in MY day, detractors had to show up in person to laugh at you, mock you, spit on you and call you names. If I endured that, then who cares at all about chicken (expletive) little (plural expletive) who sit in the parents' basement and attempt to make themselves important by tapping their laptop keys.

As for me and my house, we will proudly go out in public and spread the words of acceptance and love to and for all of God's beloved children.

I haven't even looked at the pages you mentioned. I'm sorry it happened. I'm glad there are people trying to prevent it and clean it up. I don't care about those crackpots. We've got bigger fish to fry."

My friends, the Holy Spirit is among us. Every single day we have to robe up, show up, stand up, and pray up, whenever possible. There is no reason for us to underestimate ourselves. We can do anything with the power of the Holy Spirit.

God's love, acceptance, mercy, and salvation is freely given to everyone. There are people trying to tell us that is wrong. But they are wrong. We know the truth. Jesus told us we'd do even great things than he did! We have got to get busy!

Just imagine what we can accomplish with wind behind our backs and fires in our hearts.

Let us pray.

Holy Spirit, blow this day, wind, blow here and there, power, blow even us, force, Rush us beyond ourselves, Rush us beyond our hopes, Rush us beyond our fears, until we enact your newness in the world. Come holy Spirit, come.

And bring us your Fire!

Amen