

**Sermon**  
**Community United Methodist Church of Coeur d'Alene**  
**Day of Pentecost & Aldersgate Sunday**  
**May 24, 2026**  
**9:30 AM**

Text: Romans 8:18-25

Theme: Pentecost People: Resurrection and the New Creation

[prayer]

Every year when I read the Pentecost passage in Acts 2, the same question rises in my spirit: Why doesn't that happen today? Why doesn't the outpouring of the Holy Spirit look like it did two thousand years ago, when the breath of God moved through the faithful in Jerusalem like a hurricane and fire fell from heaven?

My experience of the Holy Spirit has always been pretty quiet and gentle – in the words of Emily Dickinson, “the thing with feathers – That perches in the soul – And sings the tune without the words...”<sup>1</sup> And so, I find myself wondering what it would be like to experience a divine revelation like those first believers experienced, to be physically bowled over by the Spirit's power, consumed by the miraculous, so that there is no doubt in my mind that God has acted in a new way. The infant church grew by three thousand people that day. Three thousand people drowned and then raised to new life in the waters of baptism. Three thousand people anointed by holy fire.

It feels unimaginable. I think every church has asked itself at least once: Might God do that here? Might God work that miracle again in our midst?

It is not wrong to long for a revival of faith, to pray for spiritual renewal in our lives and the life of the church, to ask for the transforming presence of God's Spirit to move among us in a new way. It is good and faithful to ask for these things.

But we get ourselves into trouble when we believe that the story of that first Pentecost is prescriptive, when we think that the only proof of the Spirit's presence is the miraculous. Yes, the first Pentecost was dramatic – an

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42889/hope-is-the-thing-with-feathers-314>

ecclesiological Big Bang as the Church burst into existence. Sometimes new birth, new creation, is a dramatic, even violent process. We are entering wildfire season here in the west. Several of our pine species, including the Lodgepole Pine and the Giant Sequoia, require fire to reproduce. The heavy resin that glues their cones shut need heat to open and disperse the seeds into the ash-fertilized soil. Like a wildfire cleansing a forest of dead brush and sowing the seeds of new trees, the fire of Pentecost consumed the first disciples, burned away the dross of their old lives, and sowed the seeds of a new and radical mission.

But not every new birth is dramatic. We remember on this day two hundred eighty-eight years ago how the Holy Spirit kindled a small fire in John Wesley's heart, a fire that grew into the global conflagration that became the Methodist movement. We call this day Aldersgate Day, named for the street in London where the event occurred. John Wesley's experience of new birth was quiet and intensely private. The people seated around him knew nothing of the change that was happening in his soul. Aldersgate was Wesley's Pentecost experience, and it looked nothing like the first Pentecost. Still, here we are, nearly three centuries later, inheritors of a Spirit-led movement that began in the quiet recesses of one man's heart.

The drama of the first Pentecost does not mean we have less of the Holy Spirit than the early church. The Spirit falls equally on all of us – men and women, children and adults, ancient church and modern congregations. Sometimes she comes like a rushing wind and a consuming fire; sometimes she nests in our souls like a tiny bird and sings a quiet melody. Just because the Spirit chooses to act a particular way at one point in history does not mean she is not acting now in a different but equally powerful way. The work of the Spirit throughout the Church's history, in all times and places, has always been to lead the people of God in building the kingdom of God.

We are Pentecost People because we have each been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that feel two thousand years ago is given at every baptism, sealed at every confirmation, and poured out anew every time we gather to worship. What do Pentecost People look like? What do they do? These are the questions we will be concentrating on for the next seven weeks. Pentecost continues to inform the type of church God has called us to be: People healed and transformed by the presence of the Holy Spirit; sharing in the death and

resurrection of Christ; living in dynamic, welcoming communities; empowered to bear witness in example, deeds, and word to God’s reign of love in the world.<sup>2</sup>

In our reading from the Letter to the Romans, Paul reminds us that “The whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now...We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free” (vv. 22-23 CEB).

Many of the Jews gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost expected the resurrection of the dead as proof of the arrival of the messianic age and the inauguration of the new creation. Isaiah prophesied a new heaven and a new earth (Isa 65:17; cf. Rev 21). But as Peter preached to the masses, proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, the people were confused. Jesus’s resurrection was just one person. Death, the mark of the old creation, was and still is a reality. Where was the new creation, the new heaven and earth, that God promised the Messiah would bring?

We are that new creation, or at least the beginnings of it. Paul reminds us that all those who have the Spirit are the “first crop” of the new creation. We are a sign of the new creation because, through baptism, we have been raised to new life with Christ. As people who have been transformed by God’s grace, our redeemed words and actions point to the new creation that began with Jesus’s resurrection from the dead. All around the world the good news is being preached; the hungry are being fed; prisoners are being visited; the sick are being cared for; the marginalized are finding a home; migrants and refugees are being welcomed; people are coming to faith; UMCOR and other agencies are engaged in disaster relief; churches are being planted; justice is being pursued; evil, injustice, and oppression are being resisted; and communities are being transformed. Only a fraction of these deeds will be immortalized for future generations. But they are all evidence that Pentecost is a daily reality for the Christian. We are a witness to the new creation breaking through the old.

And in all we do the Spirit that was given to us at Pentecost is laboring alongside us. Like a woman in the throes of childbirth, the Spirit groans and pants and pushes as she strives with us to bring the fullness of God’s kingdom into the world. The Holy Spirit is the assurance we have from God that God bears with us

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/pentecost>

in the temporary suffering of this age even as God has already won the victory for us over sin and death.

Wherever the people of God are, the Spirit is present and new creation is happening. To be Pentecost People is to live as participants in God's new creation in the midst of the old creation. Wesley wrote that the Christian's "whole tenor of action and conversation is new, and he lives, as it were, in a new world."<sup>3</sup> The new creation will come to pass through the glorification of the children of God (v. 21), as we are sanctified by God's grace and conformed closer and closer to the image of Jesus, who shows us how to love God, our neighbors, and ourselves.

I learned recently that in the language of the people of Papua New Guinea, there is no word for hope. Instead, they describe hope as "seeing through the horizon." To have hope is to look at the world with the eyes of faith. We see beyond what is to what will be. And we choose to live our lives as if God's new creation is already here...because it is.

Where do you see evidence of the new creation breaking through into the old? How does your faith proclaim the good news that God's new creation is already among us?

Paul closes out our Scripture reading by exhorting us to wait for the new creation with patience (v. 25). Christian patience is not just passively sitting back and waiting for better times to arrive. We are called to pray and work for God's kingdom on earth as it already is in heaven. Paul exhorts us to engage in an active waiting – to wait with eager, breathless expectation that God's promised future is coming to pass precisely because we know that Jesus has risen from the dead. The seeds of his resurrection have been sown in our own bodies and the whole of creation. One day we will see the fullness of a new heaven and a new earth, and our mission as Pentecost People will be complete. In the meantime, let us not forget that the Spirit has been poured out equally on each one of us. The power of Pentecost is coursing through us. God is making a new creation in and through you!

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<sup>3</sup> Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament 2 Cor 5:17

“Look! I’m doing a new thing,” says the Lord; “now it sprouts up; don’t you recognize it?” (Isa 43:19). May we have the eyes to see through the horizon to the new creation that is beyond and act with hope.

Amen.