

Good morning! What a joy it is to look out across the sanctuary and to see you all here today. Today is not just any Sunday. First, it is the day that we celebrate the feast of the *Pentecost* – – the day on which the Holy Spirit came down and poured over God's people, shredding barriers of division, spreading the hope of unity, and inviting all who would hear and believe to be bearers of Christ's gospel into the world — to become the church.

*Pentecost* is the day on which we recall the disciples' experience, and hold closely Jesus' words of promise and assurance: The promise that the Holy Spirit would be sent to us as an advocate, a guide and comforter, and to be our companion. And, the assurance that we are not and will never be alone. It is through the giving of the Spirit, and by the invitation to dwell with the Spirit that we are able to navigate this mortal life and to be recipients and bearers of God's love & mercy.

Today, we also celebrate the feast of our patron saint, Dunstan of Canterbury whose life and actions inspire, and who by his example, calls us to employ our Holy-Spirit-given gifts for the good of the church and society.

And, if these two celebrations alone were not enough, today we also celebrate the launching of a new Mission Statement for St. Dunstan's — Holy Spirit-inspired words which your Vestry hope convey Christ's invitation to each one of us, as well as to those outside our doors: a heartfelt invitation to **come**, to **explore**, to **serve** and, to **be**. To find here at St. Dunstan's a faithful community of welcome, purpose and belonging.

Intertwined within *Pentecost*, Dunstan and our mission is a common thread of invitation — specifically the invitation of the Holy Spirit, and how it has the power to shape and transform our lives in ways we cannot even begin to imagine!

We heard in today's readings of miracles and mystery, brought forth by God so to remind and to assure God's people of God's power and glory, of God's care and love for humanity, and that God has been, is, and always will be with us. It is God who breathed breath and new life into dry bones, who has the power (in both the literal and spiritual realms) to transform that which is deemed dead into that which is teeming with life. Beyond the physicality of relics being restored into mortal beings, God with this act, restores Israel's trust and faith in him and all that he can and will do. Israel had lost hope, and God, through Ezekiel, has acted to restore it.

Fast forward to Jerusalem, where Christ's disciples have gathered, waiting with anxious anticipation. The last fifty or so days of their lives have been a rollercoaster. First they lost their beloved Lord, rabbi and friend to a brutal death. Then, they experienced the shock and delight of his unimaginable, but hoped for, return. Just as they had begun to settle in with him, Jesus then announces his ascension, reminding them that he must return to the Father to complete his mission, and then promising that he would send the

Holy Spirit to be their companion along the way forever. "Wait for the Spirit", he told them, and this is where our lesson from Acts picks up.

Like a forceful wind blowing through the summer heat of a desert, the Holy Spirit comes — immediately breaking down barriers of language and culture, causing those present to be awed, perplexed and amazed. Such is the mystery and power of the Four Winds to which our psalmist speaks. We know not from which direction it comes, nor can we explain it or prove it, but we can sense and feel its presence. And the gifts it bestows are profound. In Acts, Peter embodies bold proclamation, displays empowered confidence, and has the presence of mind to speak, affirming to those who would listen, the fulfillment of the scriptures in Jesus Christ.

Most of us have not had or witnessed such an experience of the Holy Spirit. It is difficult to imagine God's Spirit breaking into our lives in such a way. In fact, for many of us, the Holy Spirit is more mysterious than tangible, harder to access or connect to than Jesus or God. And yet, throughout John's Gospel, Jesus names, describes and promises believers that the Holy Spirit is indeed real, that this Spirit, who is of and in both Christ and God, will be sent, and is present and dwelling among us now, and always.

Jesus uses the word "Paraclete" as a name for the Spirit, which translated means, "the one called to be alongside you." The Holy Spirit is sent to come alongside us, in our times of joy and particularly in our times of need. As Jesus prepared for his death, resurrection and ascension, he promised to send the Spirit, and with that Spirit came a new invitation, one echoed in the words of our mission statement, and which articulates the invitation Christ gave to his disciples when he called them, and the invitation spoken by the Spirit to St. Dunstan over 1200 years ago.

During his life, Dunstan made significant and lasting contributions to the church and the world. Empowered by the Spirit, he used his gifts of leadership to reform monasticism and to shape many rites and rituals in the church, including some still employed in England's coronation liturgies. Dunstan valued communal life, working to make monasteries centers of learning, spirituality, social services, and belonging — all the while tending to the faithful. Much of his work as counsel to kings brought forth both social and spiritual renewal, and in his role as Archbishop of Canterbury, he was dedicated to the study of scripture, to prayer, and to the service of those in need. His creative expressions included being an accomplished musician, metalworker, and illuminator of scripture. I don't think it is mere coincidence that so many of Dunstan's expressions of faithful living and service are found reflected here in our congregation — for the gifts of the Spirit are made available to all, and Christ calls each of us to seek and embrace ours, so that we too, may make a difference in the world.

So, how do we become more conscious of the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives? How might God, through the Spirit, be inviting us to more deeply engage our faith and ministries, so to garner the confidence and courage to live out our faith more boldly?

It might help us to think about some of the ways that the Spirit can show up in our lives:

- In times of challenge, heartbreak, pain or suffering, God's Spirit comes to dwell with us, bringing us peace and comfort that sometimes surprises, and which often transcends our understanding. We may be reassured of God's love and care for us, and that we are not alone. (Philippians 4:7)
- In those moments when we become acutely aware of our own faults, when we manage to recognize where we have done harm or fallen short, and are filled with shame or regret, it is the Holy Spirit who swoops in, offering us grace and the opportunity to repent, to begin again and to have our hearts transformed. (John 16:8)
- When our lives feel unsettled, when we sense God is nudging or calling us into something new, it is the Spirit who speaks into our listening, whose wisdom and guidance is spoken to us through prayer, in scripture, from deep within, and more often, through the words and being of others. (John 16:13)
- Each of us has been gifted by the Spirit with unique and needed spiritual gifts. Not only does the Holy Spirit empower us to claim and use them, she is quick to dispel the stories we tell ourselves, that we have nothing worthwhile to contribute to the church or to our community. We all are called to use our voices and gifts to God's glory. (1 Cor. 12:4-11)
- And, it is the Holy Spirit at work in our lives who increases in us the desire to praise and worship God, to spend time in prayer, and to draw us closer to Jesus, so as to deepen our relationship with him. (Rom. 8:15-16)
- But, perhaps most mysterious, but often most visible, is the power of the Holy Spirit to change and transform our lives, helping us to grow in holiness and to be more Christ-like in our living. This is an ongoing process for each of us. Sometimes the changes are subtle, while other times, we see noticeable shifts in attitude, behavior and relationship. Frequently, it is within the safety of beloved community that we find the courage and strength to become who God is calling us to be.

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When we pause to take notice of all the ways in which God is present and active in our lives and in our interactions with one another, it is then that we come to better know and appreciate the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is alive and present in this place! Our Sr. Warden, Susan Pitts said to the Vestry at our Vestry Retreat, "We are standing on the brink of everything!", and I believe that is true! We may not know exactly what lies ahead, or to what God is inviting us next. But we have faith in Jesus, in his love for us and in his promises to us. And we

Pentecost Sunday / St. Dunstan's Feast Day  
Launch of New Mission Statement

The Rev. Laurel Coote  
Acts 2, John 16:12-17

can imagine! What if we were to lean into the Spirit's invitation, follow its lead, and entrust it to show us the way? Who knows where God will take us!

The Spirit is calling us all to **come, explore, serve** and **be**. Amen.