

The Day of Pentecost
Acts 2: 1-21
Jon Frost

“I have no idea how to fly the airplane.” Darren Harrison said these words to Robert Morgan, an air traffic controller and certified flight instructor. The occasion was a flight out of the Bahamas on May 10th in which the pilot of a small aircraft had become incapacitated. Robert had never flown this particular model but he pulled up a picture of the instrument panel layout and proceeded to guide Darren step by step through his headset in flying and landing the plane. He guided the passenger-pilot to the vicinity of a larger airport so he’d have a bigger runway to work with and if you’ve seen the video it was a pretty perfect landing. Other airline pilots couldn’t believe it when the tower announced, “You just witnessed a passenger landing that plane!” And now Darren Harrison has the ultimate dinner party story to top all others.

I recalled this story approaching Pentecost Sunday because in many of the final interactions Jesus had with the disciples, he had promised the Holy Spirit would come after him. In one such place in John 14, Jesus said, “The Advocate (or helper), 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.”

I wonder what they expected. I wonder what we hear when we hear these words of Jesus. If I’m honest, I would love for his words to mean that the Holy Spirit would be in my ear like an air traffic controller, guiding me every step of the way, particularly in those times when I have no idea how to fly the airplane. But that hasn’t been my experience. No, the Spirit’s voice in my life has been more subtle, more like a nudge here or there than an elaborate set of instructions.

This Pentecost text describes an amazing and powerful scene about the coming of the Holy Spirit. But if you continue, particularly in the book of Acts, you find all sorts of stories of how the Spirit uniquely lives and breathes in the lives of the early Christians. I think that’s how it is with us, too. No two stories are the same.

Bella Brun, along with her sister Sammie, have blessed us these past Advent and Lent seasons by using their gift of dance and movement to help bring the liturgy of the season alive. Today, we invited Bella to share a reflection on what dance has meant to her as an expression of her faith.

I think many people can relate to being in a time where they were struggling in their faith. For me, it was these last few years. No matter what I tried, I felt a distance from God. It was as if I couldn’t speak the right language for Him to hear me. This last year has been a major time of growth in my faith. I joined a dance group at my studio called

Anointed Too. I was able to share my passion for dance with God. My dancing has become a language I use to connect to God, whether in class or just for myself. Dancing for God finally felt like it was my own faith. Before, I would read a passage given to me or sing a song. Both set me up to be on an amazing journey of faith and worked perfectly for some of my friends, but for me it felt like it wasn't my words I was using. It made what I was saying or singing feel shallow and scripted. I felt as if there was only one way to speak to God and I didn't speak that language. Now, I have learned that there are a million ways to speak to God in a million different languages, all beautiful and unique. For me, it is dance. When I dance, I feel most connected to God, like I'm finally speaking to him in my language. Finding my language has shown me the beauty of faith. It is so original to every person. For the first time, my faith reached beyond one building and spread. I performed in places in West Chester sharing my dancing. I have found a new love for listening to others speak about God and their experience with faith. My experience in Anointed Too has taught me that whatever language you use to speak to God is perfect, and sharing our languages helps others find theirs.

Thank you Bella! I love this image you have given us; of finding your language to connect with God. And what a Pentecost image it is. "How is it," they asked that day, "that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?" That is what the Spirit does. Through the prophet Joel, God declared "I will pour out my Spirit on **ALL** flesh." Every time someone discovers or rediscovers, for the first or thousandth time, their particular language to connect with God, it is a Pentecost moment. How can we be a church that helps others find their language to connect with God?

I think perhaps the most important move is to be a listening church. But not just a superficial listening. We need to learn to listen at a deep level; at the level of dreams and hopes as well as pain and disappointment; the place where our full humanity dwells. This posture is at the heart of the Pentecost offering, which kicks off today. The goal of this offering is to unite the church in an effort to support young people and inspire them to share their faith, ideas, and unique gifts with the church and the world. What will happen to those ideas and gifts if the church does not make the space to listen to them?

In addition to listening, I think we need to be a church willing to let go. In saying that, I need to offer a disclaimer that I deeply resonate with the old joke, "How many Presbyterians does it take to change a light bulb...**CHANGE????**" The reality is we are in this critical moment of immense change. The staff picture display in the hallway outside of the office area is going to look a lot different over the next several weeks and months.

Beyond that, I don't know that we can even accurately assess the kind of change that has happened since the pandemic began. We use phrases like "get back to normal" but I don't know about you it still doesn't feel normal. Should ministry in 2022 look exactly like ministry in 2019? Is the world the same?

Are the ways in which the church can best serve you and your household the same as they were in 2019? These are the kinds of questions that keep your staff up at night.

The Celtic symbol for the Holy Spirit is the wild goose and it is the symbol we need right now. A good friend of mine from Scotland explained it to me this way. Before geese are ready to migrate, they just sort of stand around looking at one another. Settled. Comfortable. But if they don't leave they will die. Along comes this feisty goose nipping at the other geese until one by one they begin to take flight. They cannot remain settled while this crazy goose is running around!

My friend Graham says that to follow the Spirit is to listen to the voices on the edge; the voices that are dissatisfied or perhaps speaking another language. To follow the Spirit is to become restless as well, to allow those voices to invite you on a journey to somewhere new. Listen and let go.

The day of Pentecost was just the beginning. The Spirit is still on the move. May we feel the wind of the Spirit stirring even now; wind that were we to allow enough of it to get under our wings we would take flight and journey to the places God is trying to lead us. But we'll have to listen. And we may just have to let some things go. Come, Holy Spirit, Come! Amen.

Notes

<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/florida-passenger-lands-plane/index.html>