

Sermon  
The Day of Pentecost  
Church of the Ascension, Ottawa  
The Reverend Victoria Scott

Readings: [ACTS 2:1-21; PSALM 104:25-35, 37; 1 CORINTHIANS 12:3B-13; JOHN 20:19-23](#)

“Hooked on a feeling,  
high on believing...”

These are lyrics from the 1960s song “Hooked on a Feeling”.<sup>1</sup> I’m going to suggest that this – hooked on a feeling, high on believing – is our Pentecost song.

Years ago, I read that Pentecost is best reflected on – experienced, lived into – as a *feeling*. We might be tempted to focus on Pentecost – the 50th day after Jesus’s Resurrection – as an **event**. In doing that, we might look at details in our reading from Acts, wondering “*What happened, exactly?*” What happens, though, if we open our hearts and minds to the feeling of Pentecost? What if we listen for the feelings in the texts our lectionary offers us at Pentecost, and consider our own “Pentecost feelings”?

Hooked on a feeling – high on believing. We can certainly find this in our passage from Acts. The rush of wind. Tongues of fire. The disciples filled with the Holy Spirit. The chatter of other languages. There is much feeling in this. There *is* a high. There is a heightened intensity of Spirit. There were those among the

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<sup>1</sup> The song has been recorded by different artists. You can listen to one version [here](#).

witnesses to this intensity of Spirit who sneered – who said “...they are filled with new wine...” The disciples were not drunk, but they *were* hooked on a feeling. They *were* high on believing. High on faith and the Spirit that had been poured out on them, that overflowed from them as they spoke of God’s powerful deeds. There is an electricity in this – a feeling of power and energy and vitality.

I experienced a great many feelings as I found my way to living out this vocation of ordained ministry. Whisperings of the Spirit, peaceful, gentle feelings that made me feel wonder, made me question. It was anything but a peaceful feeling that descended on me when I knew that I had to respond to this call. When I knew that I *had* to live into this vocation it was a bubbling, electric, energized feeling. It was still wonder, still questioning, but that wonder was infused with an energy that I could not ignore. It was a Sunday morning, in January 2011. I was in the middle of playing the organ for the 10 a.m. Eucharist at Trinity Anglican Church. The Reverend Andrea Thomas was standing at the altar. When I looked across at her, I heard a voice say very clearly: “You should do this.” I had the briefest thought “Do what?” and then I thought “Oh...”, and a feeling of excitement began to bubble away inside me. I knew then that I had to do something – I had to slide off the organ bench and move over to the altar. Even though I was so sure at that point, I didn’t know how I was going to tell my

husband Randy, as “clergy spouse” certainly wasn’t what he’d signed up for when we got married! I used to walk to and from the church, and I spent six weeks letting the excitement bubble away, before I talked to Randy about it. It was as though I had a gift that I couldn’t wait to open, but I had to find the right time to open it. That feeling hooked me, and it did make me feel high. High on the love of God made known in Jesus. High on the potential and possibility in the Gospel. High on believing in the power of the Spirit urging me to change the course of my life by responding to God’s call. The Spirit is bubbling away in you, in all people, throughout all of creation. Pentecost reminds us to “be hooked” on that feeling.

We heard these same verses that we hear today from John’s Gospel on the Second Sunday of Easter. I spoke about feelings then, too. There are feelings of fear among the disciples, so they have locked the door. Jesus gets past that barrier, and he breathes into that fear. He breathes enough peace into that fear that the disciples can get out of that locked room and into the world.

I was reminded this week that the word “conspire” means to breathe together. You can hear the word “spirit” in there too – to conspire – to be filled with the same spirit, to be enlivened by the same wind. Jesus and the disciples conspired in that upper room – they breathed the same spirit, the same wind –

and we conspire when we come here to this place, through the prayers we pray, the hymns we sing, and the breaths we breathe together.

One of my favourite descriptions of “church” is this: Church is a place that has been gathered into being by God and gifted with Word and Sacraments. It is a “concentrating” of the work of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is happening throughout all of creation, but church is a place where the growing and working of the Spirit can happen most powerfully. Powerful and concentrated working of the Spirit. Powerful and concentrated working of the Spirit that gives us impetus and energy to go forth into the world. As we conspire here together this morning, may you breathe peace into your fears. And may you feel that powerful and concentrated working of the Spirit!

The last verse of our Gospel passage this morning says this:

“Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

This is also about feelings. Eugene Peterson’s translation of these verses invites us to see this:

“If you forgive someone’s sins, they’re gone for good. If you don’t forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?”

What are we going to do with feelings of anger or harsh judgement? What do we do with feelings of guilt?

When we gathered for Lectio Divina on Thursday, Lucy-Ann reminded us that in Aramaic the word translated as “sin” can also be translated “tangled threads”. There are many actions, many experiences, many feelings in this life’s journey that create “tangled threads” in us. The Spirit is with us to breathe peace into those tangles. To create energy to work through those knots. Fear, anger, harsh judgement: these things hook us in unhealthy and unhelpful ways. The Spirit is with us to hook us with love. To connect us with love, and energy, and potential and possibility.

Pentecost is an opportunity for us to plug into the energy that is God’s gift to us in the Spirit. Energy. Potential. Possibility. We don’t plug into the power of the Spirit just to feel that energy and leave it at that. When the Spirit descends on the disciples they receive that energy, that power, and they let it overflow out of them. And, as they travel and live out the ministry that Jesus called them to and sent them off into. I recognized the energy of the Spirit calling me. I let that energy bubble away, but then there came the moment when that energy overflowed and I had to speak it. I had to name that call, and I had to keep

speaking it as I applied to the theology program at St. Paul, as I put my name forward for ordination.

So, today is about recognizing Pentecost feelings. The energized, electric bubbling feeling of the Spirit, waiting for us to be hooked on that feeling, waiting to lift us high. Waiting to move us, change us. Today reminds us to feel and believe and move with the power of the Spirit.

Hooked on a feeling. High on believing. The next line of the song is “That you’re in love with me”. What if we change it to “That you’re the love *in* me”? Then this is our Pentecost song to God. Pentecost is our opportunity to be hooked on the feeling of God’s love in us. To feel the height and depth of God’s love that is in us. To feel God’s love made known in the gift of the Spirit in our lives. It is our opportunity to feel a high that comes from believing in the power of the Spirit in us, in our lives, in our world. May we all be hooked on that feeling of God’s great love in and all around us. May we all be lifted up, high on the power of the Spirit, high on the power of love. And may we let that feeling and believing, that love and energy, flow out of us and into the world. In Jesus name. Amen.