

**Summerland United Church**  
**September 15, 2024**  
**All of my Days: Holy Spirit**

**Threshold** as we near the end of this series we come to the call of Holy Spirit. A fiery element in Acts, as light as a dove at Jesus' baptism, referred to as windstorms, gentle breezes and called Sophia, Wisdom by the prophets of old. In our hymn we sometimes sing – "Come, Holy Spirit Come" with a call to move in us, move through us, and enliven the gifts you've given us so we can give as freely in our daily lives. She is the most misunderstood aspect of our Trinity, but the one most fully present. This Sunday we celebrate the Spirit's movement in our lives together as a community.

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 1: 3 – 4,  
Galatians 5, selections 14 – 16a, 22 – 25 and  
2 Corinthians 13: 11 – 14

Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth metaphor or story, listen for the meaning it holds for you on this day.

2 Corinthians 1: 3 – 4

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and parent to Jesus Christ. God of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Galatians 5, selections 14 – 16a, 22 - 25

For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup> If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

<sup>16</sup> Live by the Spirit, I say.

<sup>22</sup> The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13: 11 – 14

<sup>11</sup> Finally, Siblings in Christ, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

<sup>12</sup> Greet one another with a holy kiss. <sup>13</sup> All God's people here send their greetings.

<sup>14</sup> May the grace of the Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Reader: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**Reflection**

The Holy Spirit, it the trickery part of the Trinity for us to understand. We know God pretty well, and Jesus the Son, we know his stories and his wisdom. But the Holy Spirit, or perhaps to some the Holy Ghost – well that's a little bit of brain wrinkle for some people, isn't it.

I think this is because in our sacred text, this concept of spirit has many descriptions. Wind, flame, breath, wings of a dove, it's not one definable thing, rather it seems to be something akin to some aspect of movement. It can be interpreted as the action, the active force of God. The concept of Holy Spirit often comes along with concepts like enliven, enkindle, inspire, create. In some Christian scriptures Spirit is referred to as Helper, and we know from our stories about Pentecost that Christians believe in baptism by water and baptism by Spirit. During communion the transformation from ordinary bread and cup happens when these words are said:

*Send, O God, your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts,  
that all who share in this loaf and cup  
may be the body of Christ:  
light, life, and love in the world.  
In this hope and as your people, we praise you.*

In some unseen and mysterious way the Holy Spirit infuses the common elements into something more. Just what that is one of the many things Christians around the world argue over.

So it would seem that the Holy Spirit is the active nature of God. The active force of God in this world, either through unseen mysterious ways, or in action through us as human beings.

We heard in scripture today, Paul speaking of the God of Compassion who comforts our troubles so we can comfort others – while he doesn't refer to the Holy Spirit directly, indirectly, I think, this notion of being able to comfort others as God has comforted us – is the Holy Spirit in action.

Paul says further in Galatians that we are commanded to Love one another – which we can do if we live by the Spirit. And then he gives us a list of the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If we live by the spirit we will be guided by the spirit.

And finally, Paul ends his letter to the Corinthians by calling for the grace of Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of Spirit to be with them.

Put together in this way, I think we get a very clear image of what the Holy Spirit is. It is relational, interactive, full of goodness and calls us to that same goodness.

Now, some of you may know, or have guessed that I tend to lean into post-feminist interpretations of scripture. And what I mean by post-feminist is that I look to enhance

and draw out the inclusivity and diversity that isn't always apparent in our sacred texts. I try consider texts from a lens beyond heteronormative and consider the stance of women, people of colour, people in the queer community. This isn't always easy, because concepts like sexual orientation and gender identity didn't exist 2000 plus years ago. The people did, don't get me wrong on that – there have always been gay, lesbian and trans people in the world – but the writers of scripture didn't have language or the concepts to talk about them.

All of this to say, that I cannot speak about the Holy Spirit without talking about Sophia. Which means wisdom, and in the Hebrew Scripture Sophia means God's Wisdom.

Proverbs 8 says:

Does not Wisdom raise her voice?

<sup>2</sup> At the highest point along the way,  
where the paths meet, she takes her stand;

<sup>3</sup> beside the gate leading into the city,  
at the entrance, she cries aloud:

<sup>4</sup> "To you, O people, I call out;  
I raise my voice to all humankind.

<sup>10</sup> Choose my instruction instead of silver,  
knowledge rather than choice gold,  
<sup>11</sup> for wisdom is more precious than rubies,  
and nothing you desire can compare with her.

<sup>12</sup> "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence;  
I possess knowledge and discretion.

<sup>14</sup> Counsel and sound judgment are mine;  
I have insight, I have power.

<sup>19</sup> My fruit is better than fine gold;  
what I yield surpasses choice silver.

<sup>20</sup> I walk in the way of righteousness,  
along the paths of justice,

<sup>21</sup> bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me  
and making their treasuries full.

God's Wisdom, the driving force that calls people to good action, to faithful ways of living is – Sophia. God is personified as a woman who for all intents and purposes is fierce – she stands at the high points and raises her voice. She takes her stand at the gates of the city and demands to be heard. She calls people to task when they are not living God's way, and both gently and forcefully leads people back. She is energy and life force, she was there at creation hovering over the waters of the formless deep, she puts a new heart in the prophet Ezekiel, the prophet Isaiah has the her spirit of wisdom, understanding, council, knowledge and might rest upon him.

I can't help but think of some of the intelligent strong woman, who refuse to be silenced. Ruth Baber Ginsberg. Elizabeth Warren, Rosa Parks, Kamala Harris. Viola Desmond, the woman on our \$10, Louise Arbour, Nellie McClung, Our own Carmen Landsdown moderator of the United Church.

So we have this thing in our Christian belief called the Trinity. We know it as Father Son and Holy Ghost, if we're a little bit old school. Father Son and Holy Spirit, if the word ghost makes us think of Halloween and not Sunday worship. We might use God, Christ, Spirit – if we want to drop the masculine. We might perhaps consider the trinity as Father, Son and the Woman who gets things done.

In the Song of Faith – The trinity is given a few different names: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer.  
Mother, Friend, Comforter.  
Source of Life, Living Word, Bond of Love.

And so here we have more ways of understanding Holy Spirit – as sustainer, comforter and bond of love.

Which I think are very important concepts we need right now. These last couple of weeks have seen a huge flurry of work happening at the church as we prepare to move. We need the sustaining energy of Spirit to help us see it through. As we empty out these spaces, sort items that have been beloved, we feel sadness for the loss and change in our midst, so we need the comfort of Spirit to help see us through. And most importantly we need to maintain the bond of love we have for our community of faith. It is this bond that will see us through this time of transition. And help us remember that Summerland United Church is the people – the people – not the place.

And so, this week, for our prayer practice. Our pause prayer word is Spirit or whatever word invokes the concept of the active force of the Holy One in the world for you. Perhaps it's a word heard today as part of the trinity or one of the fruits of the spirit words. Whatever the word is for you – remember, when you pause to touch your prayer beads, or pause to take a breath and prayer – you are connecting into the source of holiness that is the grace of Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of Spirit.

**May it be so.**