

## A Reflection for June from Revd. Jimmy



It's that time of the year again!

At Christmas, we are reminded that God became incarnate in the Son.

At Easter, we reflect on Jesus' death and resurrection.

And now, at this time of year, we remind ourselves of the joyous account of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples at the first Pentecost.

Within the Methodists' calendar, we celebrate the effects of Pentecost on John Wesley with the Aldersgate anniversary. Near to Pentecost, 1738, John had a Holy Spirit encounter, which changed his life (and probably our lives as well). As his journal records on the 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1738:

*"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading [Martin] Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."*

When read by itself, this one journal entry seems to suggest that this God-moment happened unexpectedly. The same is true when we hear others report similar experiences. Most often, however, these special encounters with the Holy Spirit come to those who are seeking, those who have opened their hearts to receive something special from God.

For John and his brother Charles, the preceding years had been filled with attending Oxford University, forming the "Holy Club", diligently studying the Bible and acts of social holiness. However, in 1735, a missional trip led them to America and left their faith shaken. During their travels, they met a group of Moravian Christians. During a storm, this group displayed a peace and total trust in God, which John and Charles longed for. On their return to England, both sought out the Moravians, hoping to discover the secret of their faith.

On Pentecost Sunday, May 21, 1738, Charles had a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit... he experienced "a strange palpitation of heart" causing him to exclaim "*I believe, I believe.... I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ*". As mentioned earlier, later that week John "went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street" where his heart became "strangely warmed". It was a moment for which he had prayed, studied, and been prepared for.

The same is often true for us. While God can come to us at any time and any place, it is often helpful to prepare our hearts to be receptive to the Holy Spirit stirring within us.

Throughout his ministry, John Wesley taught about the means of grace, things we do regularly to put ourselves in a place where we are open to receiving the grace of God. Those practices include individual and communal works of piety and works of mercy, like private devotions, sharing in the sacraments, visiting the sick, and standing up for justice.

As you and I long to hear from God, it is good to follow the examples of John and Charles Wesley who prayed, studied, and sought the counsel of others. We cannot control when or where God will speak to us—it often seems to happen unexpectedly—but we can put ourselves in a place where we will be ready to hear and respond when it happens.

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may be holy.*

*Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work may be holy.*

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, to love what is holy.*

(A prayer from Lectio 365)