

## **Sermon preached at OCC, 24 May, 2026**

*O God, open our hearts and minds and souls to hear your word as if for the first time. Help us experience the surprise and joy anew that your presence in the world can bring us.*

Acts 2:1-21 and John 7:37-39

### ***Flow in the Spirit***

During the Camino walk, I met many pilgrims from all over the world. Some were young, others old. Some carried very large backpacks, while others travelled lightly. These differences became especially obvious when staying at Albergues — hostels where English was not the only language, but also French, German, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Korean, Spanish, Portuguese, and many more.

Yet despite all these differences, there was something we shared in common. Apart from the daily needs of sleep, shower, and food, we all had one goal: walking toward Santiago de Compostela.

In some ways, the readings today reminded me of that experience. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Jesus' words about "rivers of living water" both describe something that moves among people beyond language, culture, and background.

As we briefly explored through Christina Rossetti's poem *Who Has Seen the Wind?*, we can ask similar questions about Acts 2:

- What signs revealed the presence of the Holy Spirit?
- What changes in the disciples and the crowd showed that God's Spirit was moving among them, even though the Spirit itself could not be physically seen?

If we apply the same questions to us, what do we see and experience? Shall we have a brief moment, like five minutes, to discuss these questions and share?

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was dramatic. The disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem, hiding in fear and praying. Then suddenly, the Spirit came like the sound of a violent wind and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

What is remarkable is that the Spirit came first as God's gift, not as human achievement. The disciples were not powerful, organised, or confident. They were afraid. Yet God came to them.

### ***The Spirit and the Living Water***

Acts describes the Spirit as wind, while John's Gospel describes the Spirit as living water. At first, wind and water may seem very different images, but in the Jewish understanding they are deeply connected. Both represent life, movement, and the presence of God.

In John's Gospel, Jesus says:

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink.”

Then he says that rivers of living water will flow from believers. John explains that Jesus was speaking about the Spirit. Throughout Scripture, water is often connected with God's life-giving presence. In Ezekiel, water flows from the temple, bringing life wherever it goes. In Revelation, the river of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Both wind and water share something important: they flow freely unless blocked. They move. They bring life. They do not remain still. Perhaps that is one of the challenges for the church today.

### ***Flow in the Spirit***

Our church is living in a very different environment from the one many of us knew 20, 30, or 40 years ago. When I began serving OCC about three years ago, we were just emerging from COVID and trying to reshape church life while also preparing for the future. Since then, many things have changed rapidly — technology, society, and the wider world around us.

Not all changes are negative. We now have a Youth Group. Soon, Caleb will begin serving as our new Youth Worker. Eco Kids Church continues to be active. We are supporting the homelessness ministry led by Cathy. We are also reflecting prayerfully on the future direction of the church through the Day Away process. The Spirit is still moving. We flow in the Spirit.

On the Camino, one difficult lesson was that I could not carry extra things for tomorrow. My backpack already had enough weight. Like Israel in the wilderness could not store manna for

the next day, I learned to travel lightly and trust each day as it came. Perhaps churches also need to learn this.

If OCC is like a living body, then we need fresh energy, fresh imagination, and open hearts for what God is doing now. We cannot simply repeat the same patterns that once worked decades ago if they no longer serve God's mission today.

To live as rivers of living water means remaining open to the movement of the Spirit. It means being flexible, hopeful, and willing to flow where God leads us rather than staying only in past memories or past successes.

May God help us not to block the living water, but to let it flow freely through our life together — sharing the love, grace, and hope of Christ with the world.

Amen.