**Bishop Patrick Streiff - Video message for Pentecost 2020:**

We celebrate Pentecost - the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the Church in the world. And we do so at a time that is still marked by the serious consequences of the Corona pandemic. In some countries of the Episcopal area, believers are allowed to gather again for worship, while in other countries it is not yet permitted. As I said in the message for Good Friday and Easter: the aftermath of violent fevers always lasts longer than is first assumed. In similar ways, the aftermath of the Corona pandemic will continue to be felt for a long time. But God has not given us a spirit of fear. In my first pastoral letter at the beginning of the pandemic, I reminded us all of this promise from the Second Letter to Timothy, that God gives us his Spirit, who wants to boost our acts of love and a calm prudence in our behaviour.

On the Feast of Pentecost, we remember the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus. This has opened up two completely new possibilities: Thanks to this outpouring the presence of God remains with them, even though Jesus, as the Risen One, has disappeared from them. God gives them his presence in a very personal way. And the second: thanks to this outpouring of the Spirit, the presence of the Risen One can now shine out simultaneously in very different places. The mission of the Church in the world can begin. On the feast of Pentecost, we celebrate both: that the Spirit of Christ remains active in the lives of the believers and that they are sent out into the world with the message of Christ.

The first Pentecost was a feast of communication. Differences of origin, personal history, religious expectation, culture, and language were overcome. Different people understood each other and formed a new community. What united them across all differences: that they entrusted their lives entirely to the crucified and risen Jesus. Since the first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been efficient as a communication agent of the Jesus story and as God's team builder.

The Spirit of God wants to involve you and me in this task. We thus become a *letter of Christ*, as the apostle Paul once said. We become a letter, written neither with ink nor by computer, but with the Spirit of God, not set in stone and rigid, but with a heartbeat that makes visible traces of God in divers situations, but always fresh. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth that they were recognizable as Christ’s letter. Bear in mind that he wrote it to the Corinthians who were arguing about many things and were far from an ideal image of a church.

We Methodists also argue about many things. We are not the ideal church we would like to be. Nevertheless, I consciously call out to you: You are Christ’s letter. Give people a chance to recognize the goodness of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God has given you the Holy Spirit to carry the presence of Christ in you and to build up community. Many of you have not let the corona virus prevent you from remaining open to the needs of other people and doing good in many ways. A heartfelt thank you for being a letter of Christ in such times as these.

In difficult times, it proves that we can do much more together than if each and every one of us looks only to himself or herself or only to his or her own local church. Together we are stronger, even across national and language borders. At the same time, however, it is also true that our common strength is measured by our concern for the welfare of the weakest. The feast of Pentecost and the experiences of the early Church remind us of this double action of the Holy Spirit as a communication agent and team builder. I rejoice in all Methodists who are Christ’s letter, helping to care for those in need and building up our communal network so that good radiates into this world. May the Spirit of God fill you with joy and peace and bless you as a letter from Christ! Happy Pentecost!