

## **Rev Rita Message May 23 2021**

First of all I want to wish us a ‘Happy Birthday!’ In the Christian tradition, Pentecost marks the birth of the Christian church. Just like Christmas and Easter, Pentecost is celebrated by Christians around the world. It always happens 50 days after Easter Sunday and comes from the Greek Pentekoste, which literally means ‘the 50<sup>th</sup> day’.

At Balzac United Church, our tradition is to wear something red because this color represents the tongues of flame in which the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples. There was also a mighty wind on that first Pentecost. Now wind is nothing extraordinary for prairie people. The wind blows a lot in and around Balzac. However, I do remember one Pentecost Sunday when the Sunday School was planning to fly kites for their Pentecost celebration and there was absolutely no wind. Good thing that the Holy Spirit is with us no matter what the weather conditions might be.

So today we remember that first Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit among the apostles and followers of Jesus. The events of the day are foretold by Jesus in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, just before his Ascension. While his followers were with the risen Christ, he tells them, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1:5). He goes on to say to them, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The followers would not have to wait long for that promised Spirit. The author of Acts, traditionally believed to be Luke, recounts how that happened in today’s scripture reading. As a result of that incredible experience, those early followers of Jesus were filled with encouragement and boldness to go out and share their experience with Jesus. Their message would spread beyond Jerusalem, where they had been hiding out after his death and resurrection, to the ends of the known world. Generations later, the Christian church continues to be empowered by the Holy Spirit because of that.

The Christian writer Henri Nouwen once wrote that “the Holy Spirit of God is given to us that we can become participants in God’s compassion and so reach out to all people at all times with God’s heart.” That is exactly what being a Christian and a faith community is all about. The Holy Spirit is God’s powerful presence that connects us with each other and provides us with strength, courage, and hope. God’s Spirit will always help us to be people of faith following the way of Jesus whether or not we are together on Sunday morning in our church building.

May the boldness of the Holy Spirit transform us, may the gentleness of the Holy Spirit lead us, may the gifts of the Holy Spirit be our goal and our strength, now and always. Amen.