**A.M.D.G.! Pentecost Sunday Text: Acts 2: 2-21**

 **May 20, 2018**

**Acts 2:2-21**New International Version (NIV)

**2** When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3**They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4**All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tonguesas the Spirit enabled them. **5**Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6**When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7**Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?  **12**Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”**13**Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.” **14**Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15**These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! **16**No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: **17**“‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.**18**Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.**19**I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.**20**The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.**21**And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

The Spirit Fills the Inside and Overflows to the Outside

I believe that everyone here has studied The Visible Spectrum from your science teachers in the school. The range of different colors is red, orange, yellow, green, indigo, blue and violet. Among them, three colors - red, orange and yellow are put on the top of the list because of their longer wavelength that makes them have stronger penetration. You can see them easily even from far away. “The Color Code Personality Profile” created by Psychological Research tells us how personality traits are associated with color: Red is the color of energy, passion and action; Orange is the color of adventure and social communication; Yellow is the color of enthusiasm, confidence and optimism. This morning, Red, Orange and Yellow are together in the church, what does this mean? These three colors symbolize the personality of Pentecost - Energy, Passion and Optimism. Pentecost has a kind of power with a longer wavelength which allows it to penetrate from the inside to the outside, from the congregation to the community, neighbours and world.

Before we get into the story described in today’s scripture, let’s take a look at the origin of Pentecost first. From the book of Exodus, we know that the Israelites were led out of Egypt by Moses. Fifty days later, in their journey through the wilderness, they arrived at Mount Sinai. There God gave them the Law – Ten Commandments, through Moses. In memory of God giving the Law to them on the fiftieth day after the first Passover, the Israelites celebrate Pentecost every year. Hence the word "Pentecost" coming from the Greek *"Pentecoste,"* meansfiftieth day*.*

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Today’s scripture says that the Jesus people - 120 disciples were praying in a room. This scripture does not tell us what they were praying about. The scripture tells us in Acts 2:2 “*Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven…”* the first word ‘Suddenly’ tells us that the scary sounds, tongues of fire, and speaking in different languages were not in their list of prayers. The disciples did not know what the things were going to

happen. Suddenly, three miracles happened:

1. The disciples heard the violent wind or spirit, *ruach* in Hebrew. Here, I would like to hear the congregation say this word together – *ruach.* This lively pronunciation describes a very strong wind or spirit attacking you. The disciples knew God was at work. Because in the last supper Jesus told them:” *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. “(John 14:16)*

2. The disciples saw fire coming upside down from ceiling. They knew God was at work. Because one thousand and five hundred years ago, their ancestor Moses saw a supernatural fire in a bush. They knew this time God’s passion was coming down on them from heaven to earth.

3. The disciples opened their mouths and spoke. They spoke the language they had never learned. They knew God was at work. They knew God was using their mouths to praise the

LORD.

Normally, if a house was on fire, people would run away as quickly as they could and call 911 right away, but in this case, instead of escaping out of the room, the people in the outside were utterly amazed and excited and wanted to understand what was happening inside. They came in to watch the miracles.

Now let’s look at these people who were outside of the room. Who were these people? Where did they come from? What was their reaction? Probably there were three groups: 1) Jews who dwelled in Jerusalem 2) Diasporas who were living in a different part of the Roman Empire 3) Gentiles who were converted to the Jewish faith. They came from the east, south, west and north to Jerusalem for Pentecost to celebrate the wheat harvest of the year, to sacrifice and give thanks to God for the Law. When these people passed by the room, they were curious, surprised and amazed that these disciples spoke the other languages. Even some of the disciples from Galilee, who could hardly speak their own Hebrew language because of their strong Galilean accent, were speaking others languages with no difficulty. How could this have happened? They began to think that this was supernatural. *They began to ask each other: “What does this mean?”*

Let us go back to what Peter was preaching at the end of the scripture. Peter gave the following explanation of what happened in the room. He said that God poured out his spirit to the disciples. The Holy Spirit filled the disciples and overflowed through their mouths to become the channel of God - to praise God and share the word of God to people living in the larger community. This was the first event in the life of the church. Yes, it started within this room and was spread by the disciples all over the world.

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If we take this as a metaphor to describe present day West Point Grey United Church, I cannot help but see the comparison. Last month, all of us received copies of West Point Grey United Church Annual Report for 2017. I like the title “Together It is Possible” – which is printed on the cover of the report. In the past year, we had a variety of programs in the areas of spiritual growth, faithful discipleship and fellowship. When I showed the 48 pages making up the annual report to the people who just came to the church recently, their first reactions were just like the three groups of the Jews mentioned above: “How could all of these programs have happened?”. They told me that the reasons why they choose our church was because they feel that our church is full of energy and passion. Yes, the tongue of fire keeps moving from the inside of the church to the community and beyond.

As a Christian, I understand that it is our common faith that weaves us together and it is the Holy Spirit who guides us to make all things possible. Now,

I would like to use ‘2017 Annual Giant Book Sale, Yard Sale and Tea Room’ as an example. Let us read these numbers first:

 -12 people involved in the planning

 -6 months organization and preparation

 -10,000 books collected

 -7 people for sorting books/2 days per week, 4 hours per day from July to Sept

 -135 scones/ many preserves and baking

 -30 volunteers involved in the two days of the sale

 -20 volunteers from the congregation and neighbors to set up and clean up

 - $7500 revenue

When Elizabeth, Sharon and Trish gave me these data, I asked myself just like the three groups of the Jews mentioned in the scriptures: *“What does this mean?”* If you read this data literally, it tells you that this is a really Giant event. But behind this data, I see that the people involved in this event are full of energy, full of passion, full of enthusiasm, and full of love. They live out the way of life that God is calling us to live. Not only are the people in the congregation touched by what these people have done, but also the people living in the surrounding community and UBC campus appreciate what the church has done.

Every year, Pentecost reminds us of the movement of the Holy Spirit from the inside to the outside. The church is not a church if the Holy Spirit remains inside its four walls. May the Holy Spirit that is within our church, continue to be

shared among us and overflow to the community and world in which we live. May our prayers be accompanied with action, from our church to a world full of beauty, a world full of possibility. Amen