

SUNDAY June 8, 2025 “The Spirit Comes and We Celebrate the Church”

Acts 2: 1-8, 12-21 John 14: 8-17

I am the church, You are the church- we are the church together!

All who follow Jesus All around the world, Yes we're the church together!

It has been 50 days since we gathered to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Fifty days since we stated “Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!” Fifty days during which time we looked beyond the empty tomb and asked big questions about what it means to believe, to have faith and even what it means to be a sheep which follows the shepherd our Saviour. All of these questions and more, ask us to reflect upon having faith in Jesus as the Risen Christ, the saviour.

Jesus ascended into heaven -to return to the Father from where he came. When he did he said to his disciples “I'll not leave you alone. “ Wait, watch be ready to receive the Advocate, the Spirit will come to lead and guide you always. The disciples did not know what this would mean for them but they knew something big was going to happen which again changed the course of their lives. They would not go back to doing what they did before Jesus had called them. They knew that they had been given a gift as a disciple of the Promised One. They knew that they needed to know who they were as faithful people of God. And so they listened to what Jesus said and waited.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples knew that in the Jewish faith tradition the feast of Pentecost Shavuot would be soon celebrated. They were in the city of Jerusalem when many Jewish people would be arriving to celebrate this special festive time. It was primarily a thanksgiving for the first fruits of the wheat harvest. But it was also associated with the reception of the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.

But what happened on that Pentecost day? Just as Jesus described- the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in the rush of wind and in balls of fire. People on the street heard them speaking in different languages. Some accused them of being drunk. Soon it became known that the Spirit had come== the Spirit of God. And with the coming of the Spirit, the mission of the Christian church to the world was begun. This is known by Christian leaders as the beginning of Christianity.

Now we move forward to Canadian history in the early 1920's. World War I has ended and the country is beginning to spread across the land as returning veterans marry and receive

settlements to begin their post war era life. The country is opening up with development of farms and villages nearby as deals with CPR and CN rails bring the young families west to settle in farm regions. Communities pop up and what is exciting is that those moving to establish themselves not only in the prairies but across the entire country recognize the need to work together in new ways.

Church traditions from England and Scotland were spreading across the known churches of the time. And when communities realized that they could not sustain three or four church buildings discussions of union or uniting churches began. The Social Gospel spread throughout the country. It took much discussion and time to reach consensus from coast to coast. But then finally The United Church of Canada Act was passed in the House of Commons (federal legislation) there was much joy and celebration. But what did this mean?

It meant that the three denominations of the Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist and Local Union churches came to agreements in how things were going to run using each of their various ways of governance and worship for the betterment of all. And in recognition of all this a special worship service and celebration took place in the Mutual Street Arena in Toronto on June 10, 1925. A scene of this is on the cover of the bulletins today. It was a day to celebrate for faithfulness, for being Canadian and to recognize the birth of a church. Pentecost took place May 31 that year, but this service in an arena marked the beginning of a unique partnership in faith. Men and women filled the arena to sing, pray and witness leaders make Declarations of Church Union. It was truly a day of celebration!

And in the intervening 100 years there have been many challenges controversies discussions and political statements which were seen as divisive for a church to make. But at the same time what was seen as controversial often led other Christian denominations to follow soon after. This included rights of people of different backgrounds and experiences to be included at Christ's table and leadership as well as raising awareness of climate change issues and the need to recycle and not using water bottles. All of these were reflective of the creed which tells us that we are not alone but live in God's world.

Pentecost celebrates the beginning of the mission God had in mind for the disciples. It is also the celebration that leads us today to understand God's presence with us now and how the Spirit is moving amongst us and leading us into the future.

Because the Spirit moves- so do we. We do not become stagnant because God is leading us and as we focus on the Bible's teachings and stories we in turn hear again our

purpose in living out our faith with the Spirit of Truth. Jesus spoke about the spirit of truth which is known by the disciples and those who believe and have faith. This Spirit of truth is known because the Spirit abides with you and is in us. But we must enable this Spirit to move us and guide us as individuals, as a church family and as a church. This is because God is making things new all the time.

The world is not the same as it was in 1925. Yes Chrysler cars were being manufactured. The book "The Great Gatsby" was published. The Great Race of Mercy was run with the famous dog Balto and Toldo bringing diphtheria vaccine to Nome, Alaska. Politically, the Liberal government under William Lyon Mackenzie King was elected in the House of Commons. The invention of the first alternating current (AC) radio tube by Edward Rogers, replaced noisy battery-operated models. And the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League was formed uniting veterans' organizations which (later became the Royal Canadian Legion). The Nobel prize winners for physics was won by James Franck and Gustav Lugwig Hertz for their electrical measurement of showing the quantum nature of atoms. And the first traffic light was installed in Windsor at the corner of Dougall and Chatham streets in 1925. These innovations also show our human nature to discover truth and seek fairness and justice.

The world continues to change and evolve and so does the UCC. Partnerships are shared worldwide and experiences like the pandemic have shown us what truly matters. The Spirit of God is with us; let us live, laugh and love. The Spirit of God will lead us but we must be willing to keep our history alive with thanksgiving and prayer but at the same time to listen, get up and walk into the future with hope in the Spirit of God.

PRAY

God we pray for your Spirit to move amongst us now. Enable us to hear feel and know that you are with us and guiding us always. Hear now the prayers of our hearts. Amen.