

Reflection for May 24, 2026 – The Spirit of Pentecost is Here Inspired by Acts 2: 1-21

That spirit of truth came on the rush of the wind on the day the Jews traditionally celebrated the festival of weeks, known as Shavuot. It is known today as Pentecost, the day of the coming of the Holy Spirit.¹ And it is regarded as the official start of the Christian Church.

When it came that day and it didn't come quietly. It was incredible. A violent rush of wind, tongues of fire. It must have been terrifying. And then all those that were gathered began speaking in languages they didn't know.

How is that even possible? I have heard of folks who have had such an experience, but I don't know one personally and I certainly haven't experienced it. It seems, unrealistic. Did you understand what Monika shared? Did you track what Louise offered? They were the same words Lynn spoke, but you didn't know that initially, did you? Imagine being in a large crowd and everyone speaking a different language. It must have been bizarre.

And tongues of fire? Really? Many said those affected must have had too much wine. I wonder if they were hallucinating? Perhaps they had snacked on some wild mushrooms.

No, they are not drunk says Peter. This is the fulfillment of an ancient prophesy, the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. The Spirit of the Lord was upon them.

Despite its strange and unusual text, this passage is a really important one for the church today. In particular for a church like ours who is trying to figure out what its future will be. The apostles in this time of history were trying to do the same thing.

Jesus had been with them for about three years until he was betrayed and given over to the empire. After his crucifixion he returns. The resurrection celebrated such promise, the people so filled with hope, only to have Jesus leave again in his ascension heavenward.

What will we do now, they must have wondered?

What they had forgotten is something Jesus has told them only a short while earlier. We heard about it ourselves a couple of weeks back in a reading from John's gospel. You might remember part of it, when Jesus spoke about an advocate coming after him, something that would be with and in them forever, it was the Spirit of Truth, a precursor to the Spirit of Pentecost.

He, (God), ***will give you another Advocate, [b] to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows***

¹ [What Really Happened at Pentecost? | Christianity.com](https://www.christianity.com/faith/what-really-happened-at-pentecost/), accessed May 22, 2026

him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be^[c] in^[d] you. (John 14:16b-17). That advocate is the spirit that came on Pentecost then and comes again today-

Still, I ponder, what does this all mean? Tongues of fire, violent wind, multiple voices all speaking what seems to be gibberish, that's an odd kind of God encounter isn't it? Isn't this a weird way for the spirit to interact?

Well perhaps it was not so odd to the early Jesus followers. They were the gathered community on the day the spirit arrived. Again, Jesus had just left them again, and this time they had no idea if and when he might be back. The promise that his essence, his spirit self, guiding, advocating, encouraging and pastoring would be with them, is realized on the rush of the wind on Pentecost, as it was destined to occur by the prophet Joel some 800 or so years earlier.

I might offer that there is as much uncertainty in the Christian Church today as there was when Peter raised his voice and addressed the crowd during that first Pentecost event. The followers were distraught. Leadership was uncertain. Jesus was gone. They were fearful for their very lives. What would be the future of their ministry which was then in its infancy?

It is no secret that we are experiencing many of the same emotions. Many of us are concerned about our church future. At the moment your search team is uncertain about future leadership, (because you are not sure you can get another crazy stand-up comic to replace me). Jesus is most definitely here but we are a little worried that too few recognize him. You are not fearful in the sense of being threatened, but you are fearful about getting enough derrieres in the pews. And you are worried about the future of this uniquely gifted, committed, pastoral community of faith.

Will it continue well into the future, and will there be enough volunteers to do the work you want to continue to do? Will you have a place to gather in community and a place to worship?

That my friends is a heavy burden to carry. And to diminish the risk of your collective implosion, I suggest you celebrate instead. Mark this Pentecost Sunday as a remarkable day where the spirit has come in again.

It arrived today as petals were cast among you in the spirit of joyful music and the sound of the rush of wind. It came in the brightness of our sanctuary as the late spring light warmed us physically and filled us with hope. It arrived today in multiple voices, an intermingling of emotions, greetings, and chatter, which we all understood but didn't really hear. Pentecost arrived as the spirit of compassion flowed down the aisles and around each pew. The celebration of who we are as a community of faith burst forth in song and raised each heart prayerfully.

A few of us went to Kelowna several weeks ago to hear a presentation on the United Church and its “vision, towards 2035.” I think most of us left a little disheartened, because we felt there might have been a bit more of a template for church growth. We hoped at least for a formula around church survival. Alas, that was not to be.

Suggestions were made specifically in regard to celebrating our gifts and doing well what we know best. But the reality is that more United Churches will close. There will be more amalgamations and more shifts in the kinds of ministry offered. I think those that attended would agree, it was a rather glum gathering.

But, as they say, don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. (If you want to know where that phrase originally came from ask me at lunch). I for one refuse to give in to the rhetoric and the doom predictions. I want to celebrate Pentecost today. And I want to celebrate it frequently.

Let’s celebrate the rush of the holy spirit coming into our midst each and every time we meet, whether it is during worship, at board meetings, or during a visit with a friend. Let’s celebrate the Holy Spirit in our pastoral relationships with each other. Let’s celebrate the incredible linkages that connect our will to serve the community through our outreach, especially that of our incredible Bargain Bin. And let’s celebrate you, called, chosen, gifted, incredibly humble, incredibly kind and generous Jesus folks who want to make a difference.

And let’s celebrate as we speak only one very common universal language, the language of love. It is heard throughout the world in acts of compassion. No interpretation is required.

Hallelujah, its Pentecost, a time to celebrate the spirit presence in the church. It is here. Welcome it, live in it, be it.

Thanks for listening this morning, Amen