

Pentecost Sunday - Last Service in current facility

Scriptures:

Acts 2:1-21

Romans 8:22-27

John 15:26-27; 16:4B-15

## **Spirit Moving**

When the Spirit is let loose, in our imaginations, our intuitions, and our churches, who knows what will happen. On this day as we celebrate the endings and new beginnings we ask “What has the Spirit been up to in this place? What does it feel like when the Spirit is present and working?”

In the reading from Acts that we began with this morning the reaction to the activity of the Spirit can be translated as confused, in an uproar, beside themselves, undone, blown away, thoroughly disoriented, completely uncomprehending. Or in John, guided (16:13)? Or in Romans, accompanied in your groaning, your sighs, your hopes, your prayers? That is the work of the Spirit.

When the Spirit has been and is at work it is often difficult to pin it down. It is hard to even speak to it. This is what happened for us at the beginning of all of our Memories and Dreams sessions but it was not long before the stories started to flow. We were quickly reminded in those gatherings that the church is not about a building it is about a community of people.

Squamish United Church has been a family for many. And so for many today this is a bit like leaving the family home. Some of you were married in this place either Trinity Hall or this sanctuary, others of you or your children were baptized here; memorial services have carried moments of grief and memories all in the presence of the Spirit. Today we celebrate that the spirit is moving us forward together with our faith family.

In her book “Praying Our Goodbyes” Joyce Rupp reminds us “The word goodbye - originally “God-be-with-ye” - was a recognition that God was a significant part of the going. When you dreaded or feared the journey there was strength in remembering that the One who gave and cherished life would be there to protect and to console. Goodbye was a blessing of love, proclaiming the belief that if God went with you, you would never be alone, that comfort, strength and all the other blessings of a loving presence would accompany you...the hurts and pains that accompany goodbyes need not destroy you but rather can lead to a better understanding of life, a greater wisdom and compassion, and a deeper courage to continue the journey that will eventually take us all home. Goodbyes will always be with us. So will hellos.

Praying a goodbye can bring us to the doorway of new beginnings. The seed of resurrection in our souls will grow again.”<sup>1</sup>

If Calvary is the deepest goodbye anyone has ever known, then the resurrection is the greatest hello that anyone has ever proclaimed... Looking back on the resurrection experience, the disciples could say, “Now we understand... this is the grain of the wheat seed that has fallen on the ground and died” This is the rejoicing that follows the mourning. This is the light after the darkness. This is the blessing of taking up the cross and following. Their understanding of the resurrection gave their world a different look. They could hold bread and notice how it was broken before it was shared: they could see the butterfly and awake in the morning, feeling the sunlight warm upon their faces and remember that dawn always follows the night. Jesus was transformed, his risen presence with them transformed their world. They were never the same again. The memory and reality of Jesus’ death and resurrection had put all of goodbye into perspective for them. Jesus risen is a proclamation of “hello.” He is a witness to us that when goodbyes do come that we can grow through them. We can be changed, transformed. We must take all our *goodbyes* and view them from the perspective of resurrection”<sup>2</sup> of new life, or the spirit moving us forward in a new way.

The spirit has moved in this place over the years in such a way that for many it has become a family home. Today we celebrate that the movement of the pentecost spirit that birthed the church in the days of the disciples chose to build this community of faith also, and with that spirit still present we move forward together in faith. Just as in the days of the apostles today the spirit moves us to have visions and dream dreams with excitement. Just as in 1963 folks held excitement and dreams as they built and moved into this place.

Over the years this building has provided space for you as a community of faith to enjoy church suppers in the fall and spring, you worked hard in this place as you prepared and worked on rummage sales and bazaars.

Squamish United Church always has and always will cherish the music ministry that has flourished here. Everything from our talented musicians that sometimes are sitting in our pews, to our choir and its variety of directors, to Tuned-in Christians and so much more. And although very different now the musical strengths are still so appreciated in this space. I often feel the presence and movement of the Spirit as we listen to our gifted musicians and as we sing hymns together as a congregation..

This building and congregation has journeyed with The holy even as we have cared for the community in the past through providing space for CGIT and scout groups, Wednesday night church schools and vacation bible school. If the walls of this building could speak they would

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<sup>1</sup> Rupp, Joyce “Praying Our Goodbyes” pg. 17,18,19

<sup>2</sup> IBID pg. 55

share stories of Weddings, Baptisms, Confirmations, Talent nights, Messy Church and more. This church even began the soup kitchen for Squamish and look at what it has grown to today.

At times we may grieve the way things have changed. As a minister I forever will hear the stories of the days gone by when the Sunday School was large. 4 groups in Trinity while another met in the kitchen. Days gone by when a massive 'rather scary' picture of Moses filled the back wall. We may grieve as we have lost programs and people along the way and yet we know that every step of the journey God is with us. And now more than ever we are reminded that God calls us to live and move and have our being within the presence of the spirit so that we might see where God is alive and well in our world today.

This building as cherished and beautiful as it is was actually never intended to be a sanctuary. It was built as a Christian Education building - The Holy had different plans for this space and today we celebrate how that Spirit brought us here, and what was created in this space. 50 years of life-giving worship in this make-shift sanctuary! Most sanctuaries have not carried the gift of being a multi-use facility. - perhaps the folks at SUC were ahead of the times because that is the way everyone is doing it now.

In these next few years as we share worship, and wait a little longer for the vision and dream to unfold let us always remember what brought us to this time. A spirit moving us forward as we care for community and world. When I think of our Christian story I imagine us to be in a bit of a Holy Saturday time. Imagine how the disciples must have felt after that horrific crucifixion Friday. They had seen the death of a promise, of a dream, of what they had come to know as truth. And now they waited and wondered - is it over, what do we do, how do we move on from here? Life will never be the same. They didn't know the resurrection was coming and they certainly had no idea what it would look like if it did. We know what it is to be in the unknown, in the waiting. We may dream and vision towards the resurrection, but we are not even sure it is coming. As we say this good-bye today let us remember that God is with us. Let us hold all of our goodbyes in the light of the resurrection and remember this is just as much a hello to a new life. Won't it be amazing to see what God creates in us in the next couple years, and beyond.

May our faith grow like a mustard seed planted in the ground. May our community flourish in such a way that we become a tree of shelter for all that surrounds us. May we burn with the fire of pentecost and let the Spirit blow us where it may so that a new something is birthed within and outside this community of faith that is Squamish United Church.