

## ***Remember what Love looks like***

A Message shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church

June 5, 2022

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In the Jewish faith, Jesus' faith, there was a festival called Shavuot. A harvest festival. Children of God came together at this time in Jerusalem to give thanks to their Creator, bringing fruits of their harvest to Jerusalem to give thanks for the Covenant that God made with God's people. This was not like the usual celebrations focused on a particular event, but instead, just a time to remember to be thankful – an excuse to say, "Thanks God!"

Edgy theologian Nadia Bolz-Weber – if you haven't heard of her, I suggest you Google her – brings a fresh and challenging perspective to faith.<sup>1</sup> She spoke at the recent Festival of Homiletics – I attended one of these huge events a few years ago in Washington – she reminded folks of Pentecost Sunday 2021, *which for her congregation was the first time in nearly two years they were all together in one place.*

For many others, this year's Pentecost Sunday service may yet provide the same experience. Some have begun to gather, as we all must, for family events: smaller – distanced, everyone having taken a rapid antigen test – birthdays, delayed weddings, reserved memorials. But this time, this year, they were all together.<sup>2</sup> Don't think "hallelujah" when we hear those words – "this year, we were all together three years of primarily online events.

How happy we are to see one another. There is even a comfort in being together to mourn the absence of those whose lives on earth ended since our last gathering. The familiarity of returning to a holy habit both affirms our identity and confirms our endurance. We are here. From all over the earth, we have survived. We keep holding on.

The commotion surrounding the original Pentecost didn't go unnoticed. There was an undeniable display of unity and shared mission on that occasion that "Pentecost" is embedded in our collective memory.

I'll be honest, there is a lot going on in our world that might leave us feeling that we are divided. Sad things, even scary things, where the world doesn't look like it is very loving.

In the Pentecost story, all those years ago where the Roman Empire seemed in total control of the world. The Pentecost story was not ultimately a story about survival, but it was looking bleak. Jesus had died, the symbol of hope. The one who spoke constantly of God's love for God's children, and called those children to love each other. There it was, he was dead.

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<sup>1</sup> For a BBC feature on Nadia Bolz-Weber, visit <https://www.bbc.com/news/33377925>

<sup>2</sup> The core of this Message comes from the weekly blog "Dear Working Preacher" on [workingpreacher.com](http://workingpreacher.com). May 31, 2022), Joy J. Moore, found at <https://www.workingpreacher.org/dear-working-preacher/a-glimpse-of-what-god-yet-will-do>

In all that, the story of that Pentecost was not about just surviving; it was not about a call to revolt or to *do* anything. The Pentecost story was and is about what God is going to do among us, and it is far from just getting by. What God can do is awe-inspiring.

In the moment where it might have seemed like God was gone, maybe God had given up on the children who had done terrible things, God didn't give up at all. In fact there was bedlam in that time and space – people all spoke in languages they had never heard about how God was powerfully acting in human history. In that commotion, Spirit swirling like fire, God's children proclaimed in strange languages of the unimaginable things God was doing, even in tragic times.

We carry on that tradition, of celebrating how our Creator is still here. Even when we see people being mean to one another, our Creator God gives us what we need. Not Lamborghinis or magical powers, God instead gives us love to share with us. God gives us food and money – not a lot – but enough to share with those who desperately need it.

If ever there was a moment when we need to remember how loved we are, and how we need to share that love with others – this was the day long, long ago.

This is the day to say “Thanks God” and “Happy Birthday Church”.