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Pentecost 2021

My brothers and sisters in Christ;

I was just looking over the letter I sent last year and we were scrambling to figure out what all of this meant, this pandemic, and we were looking longingly at when we would be able to gather again in person, and when (if?) a vaccine would be developed.

Here we are a year later and some things have not changed...we are still not gathering in our buildings. Couples are once again looking at whether they will be married this year (after postponing last summer). Porch drops continue, this year with a spin on a birthday party. Our commitment to coming together as we are able to Worship God, understanding in a very concrete way that Church is not our beloved buildings. We have learned that Church is the motley crew gathering from across Canada, the United States, and Great Britain with us folks from the Elk Valley to celebrate God in song, scripture and sermon.

What is new is that we now have a vaccine and I think it would be safe to say that most of us have received our first shots, or know when we will be receiving them. Some of us have received our second shot and we look, anxiously, to see when restrictions will be relaxed and we can once again travel. **What is new is that we are beginning the process to renew our Ecumenical Shared Ministry contract.**

The current contract expires on the 31st of December 2021. It's difficult to comprehend that we celebrated our First Anniversary while in lockdown with a very limited number of people in the Church building at Knox.

Since September, we have been blessed to be receiving Communion weekly, thanks to our United Church tradition of Communion the first Sunday of the month. The Anglican Church of Canada is still not ready to give permission for "virtual" or "spiritual" communion, however the Diocese of Kootenay is continuing in the conversation and we are hopeful to be able to offer Eucharist once a month which would then bring us to Morning Prayer twice a month and Communion or Eucharist twice a month.

In the second Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we read:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.
(Acts 2.1-4, NRSV)

The faithful were all gathered together in one place and with the rush of a violent wind, they saw divided tongues of fire descending, and suddenly they were able to understand each other, regardless of what language they were speaking.

Sometimes in the life of the Church it feels as though we are speaking different languages or we are not listening intently. We have been living in a liminal time of Good Friday waiting for our lives to change. We have been living in a time of yearning for how things once were and how we long to return to those days.

Here's the thing...we cannot go back to how things were. Many things have changed and will continue to change: that is the nature of Church and of society in the twenty-first century. We must continue to be safe, and be kind. We must continue to listen to the medical authorities and our governments to keep us safe. It's been a long time, yes, and it will be longer yet until we can return to our buildings. **We are now living in a liminal time of Pentecost...the birth, or re-birth of the Church.**

Trinity Sunday is the 30th of May. We are planning something special for our Fifth Sunday in that we will be gathering for outdoor worship on the lawn behind City Hall at 10:00 am. Please bring your lawn chair, sunhat, mask, and say seated in your bubble. Keep room between you and those outside your bubble. You will be required to wear your mask. There will be no congregational singing and no fellowship time after worship. This is disappointing, but right now, these are the rules. If the weather is very windy or yucky, please stay home.

Mark your calendar! Saturday the 19th of June we will be having a fabulous Mad Hatter's (Virtual) Party fundraiser for our Parish. The cost is \$10. More information will be provided.

I hope to be able to travel to Ontario in August to celebrate my Mam's 85th birthday. I'm still not certain if it will happen. But I am hopeful. I will be taking vacation and I do still have a bonus time of 10 days to use, which will hopefully happen soon...I'll keep you posted.

When the faithful gathered on that Day of Pentecost, the Church was born. As we gather 2020+ years later, the Church continues to grow. We have come together in ways that I would have thought impossible when I was at Seminary. And yet -- here we are!

Our Pastoral Team has been calling folks who are shut in and alone. If you have not received a call and would like to, please let me know, at (250) 430-7970. Let's keep in touch, as best we can.

In the words of St. Bonnie Henry, **Be Calm, Be Kind, Stay Safe!** Remember to breathe, say your prayers, and wash your hands (each for at least twenty seconds).

Your Servant,

Andrea+