

“Waiting for What’s Next”

A reflection for Pentecost Sunday
by Greg Smith-Young (Elora-Bethany Pastoral Charge)

Acts 2.1-41

June 5, 2022

[Please read Acts 2.1-41](#)

Listen with me to the United Church Moderator Richard Bott's message for Pentecost.¹

In the book of Acts the storyteller shares that, after the resurrection, the risen Christ spent a period of time with the disciples speaking to them about God's kingdom. Just before he disappeared from their sight for the last time, he told the group he was with, "Do not leave Jerusalem. Wait there for the gift that God has promised, the one you've heard me talking about. John baptized with water...but you're going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit!"

And so they returned to Jerusalem, and they waited.

Now, I want to tell you that for the longest time I've had in my head this image of the immediate circle of Jesus' disciples going to the upper room and just kind of sitting and waiting. But as I read the book of Acts again I realize that idea really missed something. They didn't just sit around. As they waited, they prayed deeply and-even more than that-as they waited, having experienced the presence and teaching of the risen Christ, they made some decisions and took some actions. Through discussion and nomination (and some rolling of the dice!) they discerned that Matthias was to be part of the group that would now become known as the apostles.

And then came Pentecost. A sound like a violent wind from the heavens. What seemed like tongues of fire separating and resting on each of them...and then the Holy Spirit telling the story of Jesus Christ through them in a way that everyone who heard could understand, each in the language of their heart.

In that moment, in the sharing of the transformative story of Jesus of Nazareth, his death and resurrection, his teachings about the presence of God's reign-the church was born.

And here we are, over two millennia later still telling that transformative story, still wondering at his death and resurrection, still sharing in our understandings of his teachings, and about the presence of God, alive in creation!

¹ I've reproduced the first part of Richard's message. You can watch the whole [video here](#) and read the entire [transcript here](#).

II

It was after Jesus's death and resurrection. It was after those enchanting days when Jesus was with them — alive again! — telling about God's Kingdom that in him has come. It was after he'd left them into the heavens.

As Richard Bott reminds us, in those days they waited. Those first disciples of Jesus stayed in the city, as Jesus told them to, and waited for what was next. They did not know what was next. But they knew something was coming. The next move was God's.

Richard also points out that as they waited they were busy. From among them, Jesus had chosen a core group of 12 as the primary messengers of his good news. But now they were only 11. Judas had turned Jesus in. Then, overcome with remorse and despair, he'd killed himself. They needed someone new. They prayed, then picked Matthias.

They kept praying. They were busy at prayer. They attended to their life together with God. And waited for God's next move. Not knowing what, they did what they could to be ready, and waited.

III

We like to know what's coming next, what we're waiting for. How's that been lately?

Who anticipated that toilet paper shortage? Tiger King? Murder hornets? Fashionable Bernie? The saga of the stuck boat?

Many more serious things. Ugly truths. George Floyd. Children's graves. Insurrection in Washington. Ottawa occupied. Climate: floods, wildfires... derecho? Inflation. Invasion.

And, of course, how many variants? How many waves? Five hundred million infected. Six million and more dead. So many wiped out.

What's next? We hope! We have learned again, and again, and again that we don't know. We wait.

IV

Amalgamation! Elora, Bethany, Alma becoming whatever. I didn't see it coming. What's next?

Is what we're thinking about now part of our waiting?

Those first disciples were waiting and busy. Figuring things out. Realizing new things. Getting stuff together. Adding another apostle so they could meet quorum.

We're figuring things out. Can our three church communities be one, worship as one,

work as one, serve as one? Can we be this new thing? That would mean saying "good-bye" to who we are and have been, so we can be something new together. Who will we be? What will we be about? We are tending to all this. While we are waiting.

Like those first disciples, we need to be busy in prayer, and waiting. Open and available to God, and waiting. Transparent to God, receiving from God, relying on God, and waiting. Waiting for what God is going to do next. Waiting for what God is about to do among us. Waiting for what God will do through us.

V

Waiting, while Holy Spirit is stirring.

The dead-resurrecting, tired-invigorating, faith-creating, soul-shaping, gift-giving, power-filling, voices-raising, groanings-crying, prayers-ascending, truth-confessing, church-making Holy Spirit who is God.

Holy Spirit, the "white hot holy love of God," extravagantly poured out and never stopping.²

Holy Spirit, in whom Jesus is always doing the work of the Father for the sake of the world.

Holy Spirit who has been filling our congregation-communities. Not only for the past while. Not just since the date on the stone outside. For generations, and generations, and generations, and generations, back to that beginning community of Jesus, in Jerusalem at Pentecost.

We've got a lot to do. So much to be busy about. But let our busyness and let our doing all be about waiting.

Will Willimon has said that our waiting is our "humble realization that only God can give what the church most desperately needs."³

Wait. Wait well! It's God's move. *Come, Holy Spirit, come.*

Amen.

² Quoted in Jason Byassee, Trinity: The God We Don't Know (Nashville TN: Abingdon, 2015), 33.

³ William Willimon, Acts Interpretation Bible Commentary (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox, 1988), 27.