

“A CONGREGATION OF DREAMERS”

Acts 2:1-21

(05-31-20) Pentecost

By Rev. Victor Kim

On the first Pentecost our scripture reading from Acts 2 says that the Spirit came upon the followers of Jesus like the sound of a **rushing, violent wind**, and **tongues, as of fire**, appeared among them, resting on **each of them**. **Suddenly**, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as enabled by the Spirit. Some in the crowd were **amazed** and **perplexed**, but others were more cynical and accused the disciples of being drunk.

So Peter addresses those gathered. Listen, these people aren't drunk, no, this is what the prophet Joel said those many years ago, that in the last days, God will pour out God's Spirit upon all people. Sons and daughters will **prophesy**, your young will see **visions** and your old will **dream dreams**.

Dreams. I wonder about the kind of dreams that those men and women who started RPC 60 years ago must have had. Think back to 1960. Many of you will remember what Richmond was like back then, very different from today. You will remember what Vancouver was like, what Canada was like. What was it like to be here in 1960? What were the issues that faced Canadian society 60 years ago? What would a church look like back then and why was a church thought to be necessary? What difference would a church make in the society of its time? What did those women and men

who began RPC have in mind, what were their dreams for this congregation?

Well, I suppose I could speculate, but 60 years ago I wasn't even a gleam in my parents' eyes! They hadn't met yet and I wouldn't be born for another 5 years. So instead of my trying to speculate, let's hear from a couple of people who were there, who were charter members of RPC those 60 years ago. Earlier this week I spoke with Betty and Tucker Goodwin about their recollections of RPC and their experience of this congregation for the past 6 decades. Have a watch...

I want to thank Betty and Tucker for agreeing to share some of their memories of and hopes for RPC with us. Not everyone would agree to be recorded like this, but I thank Tucker and Betty for being willing conversation partners. Listen to their recollections, from Vi Mar signing Betty up to teach Sunday school on her very first day, the sense of welcome and acceptance that they both felt from the very beginning, this gracious hospitality and genuine friendliness has long been a trait of RPC that many have appreciated. I still remember Pat McKendrick showing up at the manse the day after we arrived for the first time in Richmond and bringing us a welcome gift of muffins and marmalade. That sense of welcome and friendship has been a gift of the Spirit that RPC has always had and hopefully will never change.

But 60 years later, a lot has changed, not only with the church, but with the wider world. Richmond is nothing like it was 60 years ago and neither is Vancouver or Canada. So what kind of dreams do we have now for RPC and for the church today? Are we still a congregation of dreamers? Would we be as open to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as those first disciples were? But be careful what you wish for!

Remember when the first disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit some people accused them of being drunk. I know we say that we want the Spirit to be in our midst, that we ought to be a Spirit filled people and church, but there are lots of reasons why **we wouldn't really want** the Spirit to fill the church.

When the Holy Spirit fills the church the results are **uncontrollable**. We don't get to **choose** who the Spirit comes upon; we don't get to limit **who** speaks or **what** is spoken. The disciples had no idea that what happened that day was going to happen. Jesus had told them that the Holy Spirit would come upon them, but they had no inkling of what was about to happen. **If the Spirit is in control, it means that we no longer can be.** Do we **really** want that?

Visions, dreams, prophecies. Words like these will shake us out of our **carefully crafted comfort zones**. And aren't dreamers **dangerous**? When the Holy Spirit filled the disciples they became a dangerous lot, whose speech and convictions **challenged** and **threatened** the pervasive religious

traditions of their day, what people **professed** to believe. Guided and equipped by the Holy Spirit, those dreams, those dreamers, changed the course of history.

Are we a congregation of dreamers? If we aren't, what would we be able to offer the world? The events of the recent past, the pandemic and the incredible challenge it presents to all of us now and going forward, the outbreak of racism here in the lower mainland, partly in response to the outbreak, the ongoing pain of race relations in the U.S. breaking out this week in the brutal death of Floyd George at the hands of members of the Minneapolis police department, the events in Hong Kong and so much more that's happening in the world tells us that the world as it is needs so much healing from the many ways it is broken. The church, RPC, must be a congregation of dreams who believe that we have something to offer a broken world, that God has something to offer the world through us.

Someone once said, **"Only those who can see the invisible can do the impossible."** Only those who dream can act upon the dream to bring about a **new way of being**, a **new way of living** as God's people. There is such a long list of dreamers within our faith tradition. Think of people like Martin Luther King Jr, who had a dream about the kind of society that his nation could ultimately uphold, a dream that is sadly still far from being realized, or Desmond Tutu who dreamt of a South Africa liberated from apartheid, or a Mother Teresa who may not have ever voiced it, but whose tireless work, in spite of all her inner doubts, surely was inspired by a vision, a

dream of what was possible for those who were the untouchables, the rejected, the discarded. Think about Oscar Romero, who was gunned down while offering Mass, for holding to his dream of justice for the people of El Salvador. There are so many more going back into scripture, the vision that Peter had on the rooftop in Joppa, the dream that told a frightened Joseph to wed his fiancée Mary, pregnant with the child of God, the dreams of Joseph and his father Jacob, **and all the way back to God the Creator, who created life with a dream of God's people living in love with their Creator and with one another.**

Pentecost is an invitation to dream, an invitation to us, to God's people, to **dream**, to be able to live **intentionally** in the world as those who love God and each other. And though we look up to those dreamers whose dreams have changed the world, **the truth of Pentecost is that the Spirit comes upon all people**, young and old, women and men, daughters and sons, free and slave, rich and poor, white and black, Christian and not. **All people are invited to dream, the Spirit is promised to all flesh.**

So what's yours? What's your dream, for you, for the church, for RPC? The Holy Spirit **is here**, resting on **each of us**. **There are more than enough visions, dreams and prophecies in our midst, by the indwelling and infilling of the Holy Spirit, to move our church into the future that God is wanting us to embrace. I cannot believe otherwise.** Our dreams may be small and may be slow to develop, but if we can share those dreams **and faithfully act on them, they will be revolutionary.**

Would we be a congregation of dreamers? Would we be willing to dream the dreams that God desires of us? And will we be **unafraid enough** to share those dreams with one another? Do we **really want to be** a church filled with the Holy Spirit?

I do hope that we can say without question, yes!

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Thanks be to God, Amen.