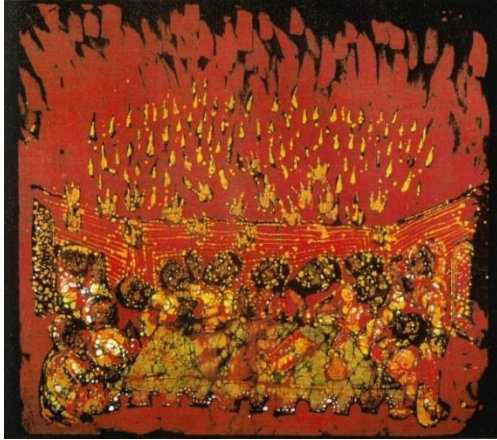


Pastoral Perspective

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 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. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other



languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.5 Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans

and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” - Acts 2:1-2

The book of Acts records the coming of the promised power from on high, the Holy Spirit. It arrives on the day of Pentecost. The word *Pentecost* from its Greek roots means fifty and the coming of the Holy Spirit is celebrated on the 50th day after Easter. This year we will celebrate Pentecost also referred to as Whitsunday on Sunday, May 28.

The Biblical word for spirit is *ruach* or *pneuma* meaning moving air or breath or wind or even storm and in this last sense of the word, *spirit*.¹ In other languages the word is translated as follows: in Latin *spiritus*, in French, *esprit*, in German, *Geist*, in English at first *Ghost* then later *Spirit*. The Spirit comes to the disciples in the sound of loud, rushing, violent wind and with divided tongues of fire resting upon them. It is a much different image than that of the dove descending at Jesus’ baptism.

Lutheran Indian artist, Pulidindi Solomon Raj (1921-2018) captures this moment in his art above.² The wind and fire imagery describing the presence of the Spirit emphasize movement, energy, and power. The sound of the Spirit’s presence draws them together and unifies them amidst their diversity. The gathered disciples all understand one another in their own languages and they are united in hearing about God’s deeds of power, which in turn brings amazement and perplexity.

Through God’s amazing Word and through holy baptism, we too receive the gift of the Spirit. God’s Spirit unifies us with other disciples of Christ around the world breaking down the

¹ Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963, p. 53.

² Pulidindi Solomon Raj (1921-2018) painted this painting entitled *Pentecost* in the 1980s. This work was completed in batik (a wax-resist method of dyeing cloth). He was a Lutheran pastor and theologian of the Protestant Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church headquartered in Guntur, India. The AELC was founded in 1842 by General Synod missionary John Christian Frederick Heyer.

barriers that separate us including language, race, ethnic heritage, and gender. Together we are part of the Body of Christ, the Church, and the Spirit energizes us to share God's deeds of power with the world. The Spirit leads us to witness to the love and grace of God for all and guiding us to share messages of hope and new life rooted in God's triumph over sin and death.

As we approach the summer may the heat of the sun and wind of summer storms remind us of the Spirit's presence and power. Filled with the Holy Spirit may we embrace our calling to be messengers, witnesses, and agents of God's faith, hope and love to all the world. May the Spirit be with you always!

Your servant in Christ,
Pastor Stephen Herr