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St. James', Mt. Airy  
6/9/19

Pentecost  
Acts 2:1-21  
Psalm 104:25-35, 37  
Romans 8:14-17  
John 14:8-7, 25-27

Gracious God, take our minds and think through them;  
take our hands and work through them;  
take our hearts and set them on fire.  
Amen.

Happy Pentecost!

The word Pentecost comes from the Greek word for fiftieth – as this is the fiftieth and last day of the Easter season.

Next week, with Trinity Sunday, we begin the nearly six months of the Season after Pentecost, sometimes called Ordinary Time.

If you look at how the calendar of the church year is split up, it's about half holy seasons (Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Eastertide) and half Ordinary Time.

Like a pair of lungs breathing in and out, the church alternates between these two movements – high holy days and everyday life, the joys of celebration and the grunt work of growth.<sup>1</sup>

And Pentecost is the hinge between these halves – the culmination of the journey we begin each year in Advent as we prepare for the coming of Christ – and all that follows: through Christmas with Christ's birth, Epiphany when Christ is made manifest, to Lent and the walk towards Jerusalem and the cross, and Easter when we celebrate the hope of the resurrection.

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<sup>1</sup> SaltProject Lectionary Commentary for Pentecost.

We are now on the cusp of the long season of every-days, where we are offered the opportunity to grow like the plants around us – putting down roots, raising shoots, blooming and fruiting, that we may harvest and collect seeds in due time to sustain our spiritual life.

But before we get there, we have this special day to raise our alleluias!

Pentecost is often called the birthday of the church, as it is the day we remember the promised coming of the Holy Spirit as told in our reading from the Acts.

It was from here that Jesus' friends, who at first had huddled in fear behind locked doors and then had had several mystical encounters with the risen Christ, finally get their act together to do the work they were given to do – to go and proclaim the Gospel, to teach and preach, to heal, and to reconcile.

And the event that kindled it was the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

I can only imagine what that first Pentecost was actually like. It is described as a sound like the rush of a violent wind that filled the house where they were staying, and that tongues, as of fire, appeared among them and rested on each of them.

However close that description comes to the actual experience, I have this image of them simply being bashed over the head with God's presence in such a way that they simply knew what they had to do, and nothing would stop them from doing it.

Thus, the Church was born, as they spread out from Jerusalem taking the Good News of Christ with them everywhere they went.

You can read about their adventures and how that ragtag group grew and planted churches all around the near east, Africa, and eventually Europe, as the Spirit kept leading them – it's called the Book of Acts and it's quite a read.

And it's also our inheritance. It shows us people like us, seeking to learn about and walk in Jesus' footsteps, trying to form communities and having to deal with the joys and frustrations that brings.

That's why it's also one of the days the church sets aside for baptisms every year.

On this day that we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit to those first apostles of the church, we call on the Holy Spirit to be present with us as we welcome a new member to this family of families we call the church.

On this day we celebrate the birthday of the church, we celebrate the new life given in the sacrament of baptism – when in water, we are buried with Christ in his death, by it we are share in the resurrection, and through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

On this day that is the culmination of all our holy seasons – as we prepare to step forward into the long green growing season – we give thanks for another member to grow alongside, to teach and to learn from in the days and years to come.

Happy Pentecost folks!

~ Amen ~