**The Spirit Blows**

Winds can be very powerful!

Put your hand up if you have ever been caught in a windstorm?

Perhaps some of you were caught in the most recent storm on the May 24 weekend that spread quickly through Ontario?

I was at the cottage near Kingston at the time, and the wind came through fast and furious.

* The water on the lake whipped up into a frenzy.
* Trees were knocked down across the road – one landing just in front of Blair!
* It brought down powerlines, cutting off electricity and running water.
* And it knocked out the phone lines and telecommunications towers.
* And in Ottawa, the devastation from this storm was even more severe and widespread.

A wind is a powerful force!

But when we harness that force, then the power of the wind can have positive rather negative impacts.

Wind turbines have become increasingly popular in the last 10 years. They are designed for use in homes, farms, and small businesses, either as a source of back-up electricity, or to reduce electricity bills by providing alternative power. And while there is some controversy about wind turbines in local communities, there is no denying that it recognizes wind as a local and renewable resource; it reduces carbon emissions; and it harnesses the powerful force of the wind.

When the Holy Spirit came to the disciples in the upper room, it is described:

*“like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building.”* (Acts 2:2)

Now the disciples could have chosen to duck and take cover – I imagine that it was pretty frightening after all. Or, they could choose

* To allow the Spirit to move them into action.
* To transform them in ways that they never thought possible.
* To break down the barriers and unite all the people from Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia ... and all the others on the list from the story in Acts. The Spirit could unite them all, so that they would all speak one language – the language of the Divine.

And – if the disciples were willing to give way to the Spirit – then wonderful things could happen. That’s why we hear the disciples’ reaction described with verbs like ‘surprised’, ‘excited’, and ‘amazed.’

The disciples did not know where the Spirit was going to take them, but they did not fight it, and they did not run away. They allowed the Spirit to blow through them and lead them forward to create the Christian church.

I have seen the Spirit has blowing through Grace in this last year during my time of ministry with you – maybe with ‘gale force’ sometimes!

Even though we have been in pandemic since I joined you in March 2021, I have felt the winds of the Spirit blowing through this community of faith with inspiring results.

Here are just a few results of the Spirit in this last year:

(insert video – 2.20mins)

Yes, it has been exciting and amazing – but I also know that allowing the Spirit to lead has not been easy.

When a wind blows in nature, it clears out leaves and debris; it causes branches to bend; it even knocks down weak limbs and old trees.

It can be devasting.

But it can also be renewing because it makes way for new growth and new shoots.

It is the same in the church.

When the Spirit blows through a community of faith sometimes things bend and make way for new growth.

Some traditions are let go, and it might require old ideas to give way to the new.

But it’s hard.

Because when we allow the Spirit to lead, then we are no longer in control – and if we are honest with ourselves, no one really wants to lose control. I am sure the disciples felt that way too.

But when we are willing to lose control to the Spirit, then truly amazing and exciting things can happen.

I believe that is true for Grace United.

As you seek new leadership, you are at the cusp of a new beginning.

God is doing great things here, but I encourage you to take time to stop, to listen, and to pray about God’s vision for your future.

As you move forward, ask yourselves, do you choose to fight the Spirit wind, or are you willing to let it lead you?

In the United Church newest Statement of Faith – the Song of Faith, we say:

*We sing of God the Spirit,*

*faithful and untameable,*

*who is creatively and redemptively active in the world.*

*The Spirit challenges us to celebrate the holy*

*not only in what is familiar,*

*but also in that which seems foreign.*

As I leave you today – I encourage you to keep singing of God the Spirit.

Keep moving and dancing in the Spirit.

Keep allowing the Spirit to challenge you.

And remember ***to always*** keep celebrating all that the Spirit is doing here at Grace United.

Amen.