

Moderator's Reflections on Pentecost Sunday and Healing and Reconciliation Sunday -- May 20, 2018

On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came in wind and fire and people heard the word of God in their own language – their mother tongue. Mother tongue is the language that speaks most directly to the human heart. As God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, living among us as a human being, on the Day of Pentecost the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ became incarnate in the languages of all people. Pentecost sends the church on a mission, that all people everywhere might hear the word of God in their mother tongue.

The Spirit's action at Pentecost declares that all people should have the word of God in their own language. Chaske Hanska, an elder at the Birdtail Church, Birdtail, Manitoba, wrote to the Missions Committee of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1902 asking the church to send a Dakota speaking pastor to the reserve, "When the Holy Spirit was given as Jesus our Saviour promised, the disciples have been spoken to with lots of different languages. Therefore we knew it from the beginning that having the gospel spoken with native tongues was the work of the Holy Spirit." The gospel being proclaimed in mother tongues is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The gospel being proclaimed in mother tongues is Healing and Reconciliation work. Call to Action 61 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls upon the churches who signed the Settlement Agreement (including the PCC) to support "language-revitalization projects." Bible translation projects, which are "language-revitalization projects", are welcomed by Indigenous nations in Canada, as evidenced by the positive reaction to the publication of the recent Mi'kmaq New Testament translation and the request by a collection of Oji-Cree leaders for the New Testament in their language.

This Pentecost we celebrate the Word of God getting into the mother tongue of all people, including the Indigenous Nations of Turtle Island, so that everyone like the Dakota people of Birdtail can know the work of the Holy Spirit in their community.

A PRAYER

On this Pentecost Sunday, O God, we rejoice that in the power of the Holy Spirit the good news of Jesus is proclaimed in many languages, the mother tongues of many peoples.

We thank you that by the Spirit's action we have heard the good news in our mother tongue. By your Spirit's power open the ways so that all the people of the earth will hear this good news in their own mother tongue.

Call us as a church in Canada to work, to give, to pray towards the goal that all Indigenous people will be able to hear and read your Word, the Bible, in their mother tongue. These things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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