

Story used with the Children – May 20, 2018:

Peter the Pentecost Balloon (Adapted from story written by Jeeva Sam, 1988, as printed in *Worship for All Seasons, Selections from Gathering, Vol.3, edited by Thomas Harding*)

Once upon a time, there was a balloon ...his name was Peter. He lived in a house with many other balloons. Some, like Peter, were red; others were yellow, green, orange, blue ... some had letters or pictures on them ... and some were just plain.

Peter had been told that his was a special colour ... red for Pentecost, reminding people of the Holy Spirit ... and, along with the orange and yellow balloons, was the colour of flames that danced, just like God's Spirit danced in the world.

All the balloons who lived together, and especially Peter, hoped and wished that one day they would be able to leave their house and be part of some special celebration. The Birthday balloons often got to leave because there were many birthday celebrations. The same thing happened for the Anniversary balloons or the Get Well Soon balloons. But there weren't many people looking for Pentecost balloons.

Then one day, finally, Peter's wish came true. He left the house where he lived with all the other balloons. Someone grabbed him by the neck and held on to him tightly and put him up to their mouth. His heart began beating fast; and he could feel his body begin to stretch all over.

"Oh my gosh," he thought, "what's happening to me?" Whoever's got a hold on me is causing me to change in a big way. I've never felt this way before!"

Suddenly Peter felt the grip on his neck slacken. And before you knew it, he was flying all over the room. He was filled with such joy and excitement. But then, he came down.

No sooner had Peter landed than a hand picked him up and made him swell again. This time, whoever held him opened his mouth just a little bit, still holding him by the neck. And Peter the Pentecost balloon began to speak and sing, although he had no idea whatsoever what he was saying and why. All he knew was that it had something to do with the breath that was blown into him.

Soon the talking and singing came to an end as well. Once again, somebody blew more air into him. This time, though, after he had expanded, they tied a knot in his neck. Peter thought he would fly. But no, he didn't fly. Peter thought he might sing in a strange language. But no, he didn't sing.

Peter found himself in the hands of a child; a girl named Tracy, who had been sick and very sad for a long time. She touched Peter, threw him up in the air, caught him when he came down, and rolled him on the floor, chasing him around the room. Peter wasn't sure about all this bouncing about. Then he heard someone say, "Look how much Tracy is enjoying the Pentecost balloon. She hasn't been that happy in a long time."

And Peter began to smile. So what if he couldn't fly or speak in strange tongues. He was more useful here – bringing joy to this little child.

Peter stayed with Tracy that day and the next, and on Sunday he went with her to a strange place – where he'd never been before. There were lots of people there ... and more children, too. And what-do-you-know? There were also lots of other balloons. Red and orange and yellow – all Pentecost colours. "What could this place be?" Peter thought. "What would you call a place that is filled with Pentecost balloons?"

And then he heard Tracy whisper to him, "This is the church, Peter. These Pentecost balloons are filled with the Holy Spirit – the breath of God that brings life and joy, laughter and peace, and most of all – love.

And Peter the Pentecost balloon began to dance with all the kids and all the other balloons in the church.