This short act of worship has been produced for you.

If you are well enough and able,

why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church

and pray for them as they pray for you.

**Opening sentences**

God declares:

I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.

Then everyone who calls on the name of Lord shall be saved.

Today is the day of Pentecost. It is the day that Jesus’ disciples experienced the dramatic infilling of God’s Holy Spirit. It is the day that the promises of God made known through the Old Testament prophets many centuries ago became fulfilled.

**Call to worship**

Come, Holy Spirit; fill us with your peace.

Come, Holy Spirit; unite us in our worship.

Come, Holy Spirit; raise us by your power.

Come, Holy Spirit, come now.

**Hymn Come down, O love divine (Singing the Faith 372)**

Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here:

<https://youtu.be/6HPKL1wOVXk>

Come down, O love divine,

seek thou this soul of mine,

and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;

O Comforter, draw near,

within my heart appear,

and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,

till earthly passions turn

to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;

and let thy glorious light

shine ever on my sight,

and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity

mine outward vesture be,

and lowliness become mine inner clothing;

true lowliness of heart,

which takes the humbler part,

and o’er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,

with which the soul will long,

shall far outpass the power of human telling;

for none can guess its grace,

till he become the place

wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

*Bianco da Sienna (c. 1434) translated by Richard Frederick Littledale (1833-1890)*

**Prayer of approach**

Lord, we believe that you have called us together

to hear the Word of life

and to respond to the truth of Jesus.

By your Holy Spirit, transform our act of worship

# into a joyous celebration of your love.

# May our praises overflow with love as on the day of Pentecost.

# In the name of Jesus, may our worship honour you now and every time.

# We pray that your Holy Spirit will empower our praises for your glory

# and infuse our discipleship with the presence of the living Christ.

# Amen.

**Prayer of confession**

God, your love is unconditional;

your gifts are offered with measureless generosity;

your peace is all-encompassing.

We are sorry for times

when we have put conditions on our willingness to care;

when we have kept what we have for ourselves and refused to share with others;

when we have failed to seek peace and have caused discord.

Forgive us; restore us; renew us by your Spirit of life.

There is no condemnation

for those who live in union with Christ Jesus;

for the law of the Spirit of life

has set us free from the law of sin and death.

**Amen. Thanks be to God**

**Today’s reading Acts 2:1-21 (NRSVA)**

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

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

“In the last days it will be, God declares,

that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

and your young men shall see visions,

and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,

in those days I will pour out my Spirit;

and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,

blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

**Time to reflect** ‘... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh ...’

Today, we celebrate Pentecost - a day that the expectant disciples had an ecstatic experience, an experience that inspired them to speak about God’s power in languages that everyone present could hear and understand regardless of where they came from, a day that the early Church was empowered to begin the work of making disciples of all nations.

God’s Holy Spirit was given to the disciples after Jesus’ ascension. Jesus, in Acts 1 after his resurrection and having spent 40 days with his disciples, **‘*ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”’ (Acts 1:4-5, NRSVA)***

The promised Spirit was not only going to be the *‘Paraclete ’*- the one who **guides, counsels** and **consoles them**, and **speaks up on their behalf** in crucial moments, as described in John 14, - but also the power of the Holy Spirit was also going to propel them into action as in Acts. **‘*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ (Acts 1:8, NRSVA)***

A few days after the ascension, the promise of Jesus became a reality. ***‘When the day of Pentecost was fully come’ (2:1, KJV)*,** the disciples’ experience of being empowered by the Spirit was like being caught up in an overwhelming fire or being whirled around by breath-taking gales. Terrifying! In John’s Gospel Jesus uses an analogy of water. So the Power as strong as this fire, wind and water was released onto the believers - and it was

indeed the power to transform the earth.

Pentecost indeed witnessed God moving in a new, active and dynamic way in the lives of the early believers. On that day, as the disciples had gathered together in one place the Holy Spirit descended on all of them at once. The result was not fear and trembling but communication - speech in many different languages showing that God has poured his Spirit upon ‘all flesh’. The use of the expression ‘all flesh’ underlines the universality and the importance of this moment. The people in Jerusalem at that time were witnessing the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel.

There was amazement and also a lot of confusion; some believers understood what was happening, but others couldn’t make head or tail of any of it and argued that that the only ‘spirit’ present was of an alcoholic nature.

Let us pause for a minute to ponder on these:

*When God chooses to do a similar thing in our church (perhaps in the way we conduct our worship, or engage with the community around us), are we as dismissive as those pessimists and cynics in Jerusalem?*

*Are we willing to encourage spontaneity and freedom of the Spirit whilst ensuring order and continuity in our worship and maintaining healthy balance in ways that enable God to work in the lives of all those in our churches?*

Peter full of the Spirit stepped up the mark and stood to explain to them what was happening ... This Peter was the same man who, with the others had been hiding in a locked room a while ago for the fear of the Jewish authorities - now being empowered by the Spirit could stand in front of a huge crowd ... and he knew what to say. Pentecost celebrates the vitality and gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers believers with knowledge, enthusiasm and confidence to witness and evangelise.

Pentecost also celebrates the unifying power of the Holy Spirit - bringing together people from different backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities. Those who heard the believers speaking in ‘other languages’ were from every part of the known world of the time. These may have included people seen as having lower status - such as daughters, women, and slaves. *Today, we speak of having diverse congregations in our Churches but there is still a struggle in practice to make the model of unity and equality a reality ... how might we overcome such barriers to ensure our churches are as inclusive and unified as possible?*

Pentecost is regarded by many as the birthday of the Church - the moment when many believers came into direct contact for the first time with the Holy Spirit - third person of the Trinity.

And this ‘first contact’ certainly stirred things up for the for the

early Church.

We are living through a unique and era-defining period. We cannot meet together in our Church buildings for corporate worship due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Life to some is like a balloon that you keep blowing up until at some point it just pops and there is nothing left. Many of our old certainties are gone ... The effects of this pandemic are perplexing and unsettling; and we are having to deal with this *new normal.* How do we begin to think it through - this new way of life - and cope with it? We desperately need the Holy Spirit in these times, and we need him more than ever to comfort us, heal us, lift us up and journey with us daily ...

As we Celebrate Pentecost, it is my prayer that the peace of the Spirit will comfort you; the power of the Spirit will challenge you; and the presence of the Spirit will enable you to live in love and service in the name of Christ. Amen.

**A time of prayer** (trusting that others pray with us)

Holy Spirit of peace,

we pray for homes and nations where there is discord and conflict.

Pour out your breath of peace, so that people may listen to each other, may respect one another, may honour each other.

Holy Spirit, hear us.

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

Holy Spirit of hope,

we pray for those who live in despair;

for those who can see no purpose in their lives;

for those who cannot see a way ahead;

for those who feel completely alone.

We lift up to you those who are sick, grieving,

those whose lifesaving treatment has been postponed.

We lift up to you those working at the front line to care for the sick and the vulnerable during this pandemic, and especially for health and care workers.

Give them hope amid the struggles of their day to day.

Make your presence known to those who are separated from friends and family and who are feeling the effects of not having hugs and someone to talk to.

Holy Spirit, hear us.

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

Holy Spirit of unity,

we pray for your Church,

for its ministry to the faithful;

for its mission to the world.

May the Spirit of Pentecost breathe upon us

that we may witness to the world

the comfort, meaning and love that you offer.

Equip us for mission, for a ministry of healing and prayer and for outreach to a world turned upside down by this pandemic, by war, and by climate change.

Support, guide and encourage our clergy and all seeking to help in this time of great need.

Guide us as we prepare for the day when our churches can open again: help us to serve; heal our differences and make us one in you.

Holy Spirit, hear us.

**Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

In the name of our Saviour we pray. **Amen.**

**The Lord’s Prayer**

*Please pray this prayer in your native language.*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours**

**now and for ever. Amen.**

**Hymn Breathe on me, Breath of God (Singing the Faith 370)**

*Sing / read / pray / proclaim the words or listen to it here:*

<https://youtu.be/M5keJHZdWYM>

Breathe on me, Breath of God;

fill me with life anew,

that I may love what thou dost love,

and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,

until my heart is pure,

until with thee I will one will,

to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,

till I am wholly thine,

until this earthly part of me

glows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God;

so shall I never die,

but live with thee the perfect life

of thine eternity.

*Edwin Hatch (1835-1889)*

**Blessing and sending out**

May the Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,

give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

and to proclaim the words and works of God;

and the blessing of God, Spirit, Son and Father,

remain with you always. **Amen.**

We go into the world in the power of the Spirit

to fulfil our high calling as Servants of Christ.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

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