

Open Table Worship – Leader’s Sheets Pentecost Service

A service interwoven with story and verse
inspired by scripture & conversation
Theme: Pentecost – Alive in the spirit!
Written & compiled by Ana Gobledale

Set up:

- Items in centre of each table: ‘flames’, perhaps paper cut-outs in reds, oranges and yellow, about 6 inches (12 cms) long; word ‘spirit’ in large print on strips of paper.
- Place a Bible marked at the readings on each table.
- Bible translations: Suggested are *The Inclusive Bible: the first Egalitarian Translation* 2007 by Priests for Equality; *New Revised Standard Version*; or *The Message*. Ideally, have all three available. NRSV provides the scholarly translation and TM provides an interpretation in modern vernacular. *The Inclusive Bible* provides a ready-to-read inclusive language translation.
- Candles to light (one lit candle to use for lighting others)
- Communion elements: juice – or grapes - and bread to be shared (gluten free and non-alcoholic, so no one is excluded). These might be set out before the service on each table, or set aside to be brought forward later in the service.
- Make multiple copies of Acts 2 reading and the interview, and other items to be read, as needed.

Coffee & Chat

Have a look at the flames on your table. Hold one, if you’d like to.

Questions for discussion around the tables:

- When you hear the word ‘spirit’ what comes to mind?
- What does ‘spirit’ mean to you?

Gathering –

Purpose: to establish as a group; to each fully arrive, moving from the outside world to being fully present here; to get to know names; to affirm one another as God’s creation.

All: We are here. We are who we are.

Introduce yourself using only your first name, then saying either ‘I am here.’ or ‘I am who I am,’ or both.

Alternatively: Introduce yourself using your first name. Then say, ‘I am here.’ Then everyone responds with the affirmation, ‘You are who you are, created in the image of God.’

Sharing a greeting of peace

Whoever we are and wherever we are on life’s journey, we are welcome here. I invite you to turn to those near you, greeting one another saying, ‘Peace’ or ‘Shalom’ or ‘Salaam,’ whichever you are comfortable with.

Sing a familiar song/hymn related to Pentecost and the Spirit

All over the world, the spirit is moving

Consider adding verses referring to your specific situation:

e.g. All over Britain, the spirit is moving...

or All over St John’s...

or All over Warrington . . .

Colours of day dawn into the mind

For I’m building a people of power

God’s spirit is deep in my heart

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me

There’s a spirit in the air

This is the day that the Lord has made,

When the Spirit of the Lord is within my heart

Looking into the Bible Acts 2:1-21 Dramatised

Readers/actors: Storyteller, Peter, Disciple 1, Jew 1, Jew 2

Readers need not memorize; merely distribute the script for reading.

If you are including the interview of Andrew and Peter, you might simply read the Acts story at this point, rather than dramatise it. The interview will provide ample drama to bring the Pentecost event alive.

An interview

What about inviting Andrew (Andreas) and Peter (Peter) to visit your congregation and be interviewed? Here is a complete script for an interview in which the disciples, Peter & Andres, relate their experiences of Pentecost, the church’s birthday.

Pentecost prayers

Read the prayers and choose one that speaks to you. Ask someone to read it, prayerfully.

- Pentecost Prayer, by David Alan, Australia

- Pentecost, by Steve Garnaas-Holmes, USA

Or read this Pentecost poem/reflection:

They all understood, by Ana Gobleale

And they all understood
 No missed messages
 No mixed messages
 Confusion moves to clarity
 Discord moves to harmony
 Cacophony moves to melody
 Agitation transformed by peace
 Individualism transformed by community
 Nationalism transformed by neighbour-sighting
 Flags waving to declare identity move to tabletops
 holding a common cup
 Strangers move into relationship
 And they all understand
 Message received.

Conversations (You may want to choose only one or two questions so participants have time and do not feel rushed.)

- To what in the Pentecost story can you relate? To what in the story do you find it difficult to relate?
- When have you witnessed or experienced fresh understanding in a situation, seemingly arising from the Spirit?
- When have you experienced the presence of the Spirit?
- How might you open yourself to be more receptive to the Spirit?

Looking in the Bible: Romans 8:26 NRSV

‘Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.’

Conversations: going deeper *optional, if time allows*

Consider these questions:

- When you pray, how might you open yourself more to the help of the Spirit?
- Where are your ‘weak’ spots? How might the Spirit help you?

Sharing & Caring – Bringing light into our world

Considering the joys and concerns in our lives and in our world, we turn to God in prayer, trusting that the Spirit will intercede for us ‘with sighs too deep for words.’ It is written in the letter to the Romans: ‘Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.’ (Romans 8:26)

We light candles to symbolically illuminate our concerns and our joys with the light of God, to magnify our joy and diminish our worries. If you would like to share for whom or what you are lighting the candle, feel free to say the name aloud, or you may light a candle in silence.

A Prayer *(after everyone has had the opportunity to light a candle.)*

If you are comfortable starting the song, start singing and others will join in:

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me... (308 in Rejoice & Sing)

Pray with me.

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us. Thank you for filling us with your spirit. Thank you for molding us in your example. Thank you for using us to spread your light throughout our families, our work places, our sports clubs [add other common groups to which people belong] and our world. Amen.

A song to lead into communion

Choose a familiar reflective song/hymn on the theme of communion.

You might try new words to familiar tunes:

Invitation to the sacrament, by George Stuart, Australia

We are welcome, by George Stuart, Australia

Time for quiet reflection

As desired by the gathered congregation. Some groups appreciate times of silence; others are uncomfortable with too much silence. If you are not sure, ask those gathered.

Lord’s Prayer

Join me in the Lord’s Prayer (using an alternative version written by _____).

Use a familiar version (which many people will know from memory) or introduce an alternative version. Consider these:

- **A version of the Lord's Prayer** by Stephen Best, UK
Great Love; the root and sap of our evolving fullness...
- **The Lord's Prayer — interpreted** by Sam Alexander, UK
Those things that are good and right and true:
I acknowledge them with honour and love...
- **Disciples Prayer** by Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson, USA
Holy One whose name we honour and praise,
When we laugh, you laugh with us.
When we weep, your tears wash over the earth...
...By your creativity, the universe was born,
And in your love, we are sustained. Amen.
- **The Abba Prayer** by Rex AE Hunt, USA
- **Earth Maker**, a modern version from New Zealand
- 'Template for talking to God' in *The Word on the Street*, Rob Lacey (under copyright)

Invitation to Communion:

The table is set for our special meal. The bread, the juice, prepared and presented. Ready to be served and shared.

We remember Jesus sharing a meal like this with his disciples, his friends. He included and welcomed everyone, those he could trust and those he could not trust, those he felt close to in spirit and those far from his spiritual path. Today we are those disciples, those friends. Each one of us is welcome. How amazing it is to be loved and wanted even when we have not been perfect. How wonderful it is to be included as we are.

The bread is gluten free and the juice is non-alcoholic so that all may partake freely. No one is excluded from this meal.

Prayer of preparation

As we approach this meal of mystery in the hope and promise of reconciliation, we prepare ourselves in prayer. Pray with me.

Spirit of Life, as gentle as a spring breeze and powerful as a winter gale, thank you for breathing life into us and claiming us as your own. Encircle us in the whirlwind of your grace whispering your call to us afresh. Drive us forward, that we might move in confidence along the path you have determined for us. May this shared meal, the feast of love for the family of God, renew us and strengthen us to live in gratitude and joy. May it be so.

Words of Remembrance: the communion story

When Jesus shared the bread with his friends, he explained that he is the Bread of Life. As bread nourishes and strengthens our bodies, Jesus nourishes and strengthens our spirits and minds. When we eat the bread together, we are strengthened as a community to remember Jesus and to do the things Jesus would do in our world, to work for justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God.

Jesus also shared a cup of the fruit of grapes. Through this cup, we are nourished with the very spirit of life. Drinking the juice together helps us remember our responsibility to this suffering world, to be agents of healing where there is brokenness, of hope where there is despair.

God loves us so much that when we make mistakes, or when we make bad choices, God has agreed to forgive us and grants us a second chance, every time. This meal is a sign of that covenant.

This is ordinary bread and ordinary juice. But when we eat the bread together and drink the juice together, something extraordinary happens which brings us closer to Jesus and to one another. We become the 'Body of Christ.' Our eyes and ears are opened to see and hear what Jesus would see in our world. Our arms and hands are empowered to do Jesus's work to help others.

May this shared meal of mystery manifest the essence of the risen Christ in our midst.

Prayer to bless the meal

Pray with me. Spirit God, for this time together around this table, we give thanks. Bless this meal, this simple bread and juice, that it might renew and strengthen us, with the power and gentleness of your spirit. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread *Break bread as words are spoken:*

Sharing the broken bread, we are renewed and made whole.

Pouring of the cup *Pour our juice as words are spoken:*

Sharing the cup, we are reconciled with God and one another.

Prayer

Pray with me. Eternal Spirit, thank you for breathing your spirit into us, and gathering us at this table. May the grace of this special meal make us one body, one spirit, reconciled in Christ. Amen.

Sharing the meal

Ministering to you on behalf of Jesus, our host. All things are ready.

Sharing the bread

When you take a piece of bread, please hold it until everyone has a piece.
Then we will all eat together. [or: Please eat the bread as you receive it.]

When everyone has bread: This is the Bread of Life. Eat, and receive the Spirit of Christ into the depths of your being.

Sharing the juice

When you take a cup of juice, please hold it until everyone has been served.
Then we will all drink together.

When everyone has a cup: This is the Cup of Blessing. Drink, and receive the Spirit of Christ, flowing through you as forgiveness and renewal.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Pray with me. Spirit of power and life,
Transform us through this meal.
Empower us to serve your people and honour your creation.
Strengthen us to do your will.
May our very veins overflow with your Spirit, the Spirit of Pentecost.
Unite us as the living body and blood, we pray. Amen.

Sing *a familiar uplifting song/hymn*
 --see suggestions earlier in the service

Closing Prayer

God, your spirit,
like the wind, enables us to soar like eagles,
like fire, warms and empowers us.
Make us eager to share your power and magnificence
with all we meet. Amen.

Closing act

Have another cuppa?
Shake hands?
Slip away quietly?
Whatever is comfortable for the group and for the individuals.