READY TO USE ALL-AGE SERVICE

# Pentecost

MEETING AIM

To explore how the coming of the Holy Spirit transformed the lives of Jesus’ followers and the Church.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 2

BACKGROUND

This service is designed to be used with a congregation in a church building. However, with some adaptation, you should be able to use it on Zoom or other video-conferencing software.

It’s 50 days since the Passover festival and Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus has been taken up to heaven only a week or so previously, and here his followers (perhaps around 120 of them, see Acts 1:15) are waiting for the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus. What happens next changes their lives and the course of history. They go from waiting to proclaiming the gospel, from quietness to not being able to shut up. All because of the enabling of the Spirit.

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## WELCOME – 5 mins

As people arrive at the service, welcome them warmly! You might want to serve refreshments at the start, as this will ease people who don’t come regularly into an environment they may feel unsure about.

## OPENING ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

**OPTION ONE: Speaking different languages**

**You will need:** volunteers who can speak a language other than English; long sheets of paper and marker pens

Before the service, set up long sheets of paper and marker pens at different stations around your meeting space.

Invite your volunteers to come to the front and say something in a language they can speak. You could get them all to say the same thing, such as: “Welcome to church!” or “Jesus is risen!” They could also describe how they got to church. Ask them how they can speak this language.

Encourage the congregation to go to one of the sheets of paper and write down anything that they can say in a language other than English. Try to fill the paper with words from languages from all over the world!

Once everyone has finished, go around and see how many languages you can spot.

**OPTION TWO:** Testimony

**You will need:** volunteer to give their testimony

Before the session, find someone in your congregation or wider community whose life has been dramatically changed. They could have moved to your area from the other side of the world, they could have been miraculously healed or discovered that they had a long-lost sibling.

At the start of your service, chat to them about how their life changed. Was it dramatic? What was it like before and after? What brought about the change?

## BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** long strips of red, orange and yellow material; Acts 2:7b-11 written out on slips of paper (see below)

Before the service, write out these verses (from the CEV) on separate slips of paper and find volunteers to read them out:

1. Don’t all these who are speaking come from Galilee?

2. Then why do we hear them speaking our very own languages?

3. Some of us are from Parthia, Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya near Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia.

4. Some of us were born Jews, and others of us have chosen to be Jews.

5. Yet we all hear them using our own languages to tell the wonderful things God has done.

Ask for some volunteers to hold your lengths of flame-coloured material. (You could use ribbons, crepe paper or worship flags, if you can’t get long pieces of fabric.)

Challenge the congregation to make a sound like a rushing wind using their voices, hands and feet. Give them a moment to think about what noises they can make. Once everyone is ready, ‘conduct’ the sound effect from the front. Start of quietly, like the noise of a soft breeze. Then get louder and stormier, through a strong wind to a hurricane. Then, bring the noise level back to a breeze, and then stillness.

Split the congregation into two and ask one side to say: “What does this all mean?” and the other: “They are drunk.”

Read Acts 2:1-2 and then get the congregation to ‘perform’ their rushing wind, starting quietly and ending with a wild hurricane. Read verse 3 and ask your volunteers to run around the church trailing the coloured fabric behind them. Read verse 4 and ask people to shout out words of different languages, including words of praise to God if they know them.

Read Act 2:5-7a and then ask your volunteers to stand and read their line. Then read verse 12, asking one half of the congregation to shout “What does all this mean?”, and verse 13, with the other half shouting: “They are drunk.”

Explain that Peter stood up and told the whole crowd about Jesus, his death and resurrection. Read verses 27 to 39 and then say that about 3,000 people believed Peter’s message and were baptised!

## SMALL GROUPS – 10 mins

**You will need:** copies of the questions below; Bibles

Encourage people to discuss these questions in smaller groups. Give each group a copy of these questions and a Bible, if they don’t already have one:

* If you had been in the room with the disciples, what would you have thought?
* If you had been in the crowd and heard the disciples, what would you have thought?
* What do you think this all means?
* What do you know of the Holy Spirit?

Give the groups time to chat about these questions, referring to the Bible passage if they need to.

## REVIEW – 5 mins

**You will need:** roving mic (if needed)

Get some feedback on the questions from ‘Small groups’, using a microphone to hear people’s contributions if your meeting space is large.

## RESPONSE ACTIVITIES – 10 mins

Set these three activities up in different parts of your meeting space or in different breakout rooms.

**OPTION ONE:** Art

**You will need:** paper; art materials

Encourage the congregation to create a picture of the events of the Bible story or a response to what God has been saying to them today. You might want to encourage some discussion about the story as people work.

**OPTION TWO:** Discussion

**You will need:** volunteers to facilitate discussion; paper and pens

Gather people together in small groups, each one with a facilitator, and challenge them to think about the difference what they have discovered today will make in their lives. Help everyone share their ideas; the stories of mature Christians will build up those with little experience or knowledge, while the fresh ideas of those new to the story will inspire older Christians.

**OPTION THREE:** Evangelism

**You will need: Bibles;** paper and pens

Ask people in the group what they can do to tell others about Jesus, just as Peter does in Acts 2:14-36. They can read Peter’s message to help them reflect on what they might say. Help people to come up with a plan of what they might do at work, school or college. Then pray together, asking the Holy Spirit to help you.

## CLOSING – 5 mins

Bring everyone back together and ask if anyone would like to share anything from the response time. Thank everyone for taking part and say an appropriate blessing to close the service.

## CREATIVE WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

Use flame-coloured flags and ribbons during sung worship to echo the echo of the Spirit in the story. Leave art materials out for people to use to worship God as others sing.

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