

# **Pop Up Pentecost Family Service**

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## Notes and preparation

This service can be done without any preparation or rehearsal, or you can ask a few people to help ahead of time. It can be done without props using the imagination only, or it can involve some slides or video as you wish. You could have one person do all the 'Say' parts or share them out between several people. Children can contribute into every part of this service through participating in or leading a section.

## What you will need

- Before church: decorate for a birthday party (streamers, bunting, happy birthday sign, etc). This could be in the worship place or wherever you have refreshments afterwards.
- A plate with a small birthday cake or cupcake with a trick candle on top that relights when you blow it out (you will want to practise this) and a means of lighting the candle. You could have a child or young person hold the plate for you.
- Another cake to share with everyone after church.
- Chart paper and stand with a thick felt tip for writing down as people call out what Jesus did here on earth.

**Temple:** It is important to set the stage for what happened on the day of Pentecost. Have a slide, picture or video of the layout of the temple in Jerusalem available to show. The temple wasn't just a building, it was a huge complex or campus. We have written a brief description of the temple into the service, but you may want to find a short video tour of the Herodian Temple (which is from the time Jesus was alive on earth) online to help people visualise it or show an image of the floorplan of the temple.

Here is a video to help you paint a picture of the temple for people: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wm7DLUPS9kY>

**Wind:** You could have the congregation make the wind sound effects together or have a recording of a 'strong wind blowing.'

**Fire:** You can have people make pretend fire with their hands by holding their hands together and wiggling their fingers or you can have pre-made paper flames for each person to hold up at the appropriate time. You could also have a video of a crackling fire come onto a screen and play at the right moment ... or any combination thereof.

**Speaking Parts:** On the day, or ahead of time, ask a few people who have strong voices to take part in prayers, readings, etc. For the flow of the service and to make the service more interactive, you may want to have people stand and read from where they are, instead of coming to the front. But keep in mind that you want everyone to be able to hear.

**Print:** Six or so copies of Acts 2.9-11 and highlight two or three different places named on each printout until all are covered. Ask a cross-section of people to stand and read the part highlighted on their paper when you get to that part of the reading. Make sure they are comfortable with the pronunciation of the place names they are saying. You may want to have a practice before you begin.

**Prayer:** We have just closed prayers with 'Amen' but please add whatever prayer closing is appropriate to your church.

**Bible:** All Bible passages in this written service are taken from the Good News Bible. Feel free to substitute the Bible translation that works best for you.



# Welcome

**Say:** Our service is going to be a little different because we are celebrating a very special birthday today as a church. There will be plenty of places in today's service for everyone to take part and join in.

## But before we begin, we need to practise a few things.

1. **Wind** – let's make a sound like the wind ... a strong wind ... a strong wind blowing that fills the whole church/room. Listen for when we say wind.
2. **Fire** – using your hands, make them look like a burning fire (hold hands in front and wiggle fingers). Listen for when fire comes along in the service.
3. And one more thing, before we begin, we need to get an idea of what the temple was like in this time period. It wasn't just a single building like where we meet for church. It was a huge complex with many different sections that sat high on a mount in the city of Jerusalem. The whole complex covered 37 acres of land (over 150,000 square metres) and had a giant wall around it that was several stories high. People entered into the temple court by gated openings in the walls, north, south, east and west. Once people passed through the gates, they were in a vast open area where people gathered to chat and discuss and spend time listening to new ideas. And then, rising up from the middle of that large open court, was the actual temple where people went to offer sacrifices and pray to God. On the day of Pentecost, the temple and the outer court would have been teeming with people from all over the world who had come to celebrate. Keep that picture in mind as we read today (or show a video and describe it).

**Opening Prayer:** Dear God, be with us today as we remember the day you poured out your spirit onto your church. Help us understand what that

meant to those first disciples who received it, what it meant to the early church, and what it means to us today. Be with us as we celebrate and worship today. Amen.

### **Hymn/song**

**Read:** Acts 1.1–5

**Say:** Today is the day of Pentecost. What is that? Well, long before Jesus, back in the Old Testament, it was a day when the Jewish people from near and far, gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the first wheat harvest of the year. And that is where our story begins. Jerusalem was buzzing with excitement as people from every country in the region were there to thank God and to bring some of their harvest to the temple. It was part of the Jewish calendar, sort of like Christmas and Easter are for us. This particular Pentecost, it happened to be 50 days since Jesus had risen from the dead and 10 days since he had ascended to heaven. The disciples were in Jerusalem, waiting, just as Jesus had told them to. What were they waiting for?

**Read:** Acts 1.8

**Say:** So, they were waiting for the Holy Spirit to come. And Jesus said that they would be filled with that Spirit and that they would be filled with power that the whole world would see.

**Read and discuss:** John 14.12

Jesus told them that they would do what he had done and even greater works! Who can remember some of the things Jesus did? (*Take answers from the congregation and write on chart paper or type into an on-screen display for all to see. Read back all that has been written.*) Look at the amazing things Jesus did. Wow! Jesus said those with the Holy Spirit would have the kind of power he had ... and even greater.

And so, the disciples waited in Jerusalem as Jesus had told them to do. While they waited, they met together, and they prayed together, and they waited ... and waited ... and waited. About ten days later, something amazing happened.

**Read:** Acts 2.1–8 (with involvement)



When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place.

Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing (*have people make wind sound effects*).

And it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. (*Have everyone make fire symbols with their hands, or put a pre-made flame on their head or maybe a video of a large crackling fire.*)

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

**Say:** But remember, this is the day of Pentecost. There are people in town from all over the world at that time. These people all spoke different languages. And suddenly ...

**Read:** There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious people who had come from every country in the world. When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because each one of them heard the believers speaking in their own language. In amazement they exclaimed, 'These people who are talking like this are all Galileans!

'How is it then that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? We are from all over (*have pre-selected people stand and shout the places highlighted on their sheet from Acts 2.9-11*).

'And yet we hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!' Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other, 'What does this mean?' But others made fun of the believers, saying, 'these people are drunk.'

**Say:** 

This day of Pentecost that we've read about, 50 days after Easter when Jesus was raised from the dead, was the day God poured out his gift of the Holy Spirit on the followers of Jesus. If you continue reading Acts 2, you will see that Peter – remember him? The one who denied Jesus three times before the cock crowed and who was hiding behind doors after his crucifixion because he was afraid – stands up in that court of the temple full of people who have heard these simple uneducated people from the countryside, Galilee, speaking in their own languages.

This miracle has everyone's attention and so, Peter stands up and preaches a mighty sermon, and we know that about 3,000 people were added to the church that day. Three thousand people decided to follow Jesus. And each of those 3,000 people went back to their home countries. Remember how Jesus had told them that they would have power that all the world would see?

That day of Pentecost all those years ago was the day that the Church was born and today we celebrate the birthday of the Church.

**Pass the Peace:** Today when we pass the peace, instead of our normal blessing to each other, we encourage you to say to those around you a great big celebratory, 'happy birthday!'

**Say:** 

(*Take out small cake with trick candle and light it*) Many have tried to stop the Church and snuff it out over the years. (*Blow out trick candle and then wait for it to relight.*) But they can't stop the Church.



Through the centuries there have been times of great persecution where people have been beaten or killed for being Christians, (*blow out candle and wait for it to relight*) but that didn't stop the Church.

There are places this very day where it is illegal to be a follower of Jesus (*blow out candle again and wait for it to relight*) but the Church still lives.

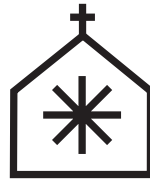
There have been times of apathy when people didn't believe or seem to care about church anymore. Times when people stopped reading their Bibles and praying and coming to church. (*Blow out the candle and wait for it to relight*) But the Church still lives on.

Even a world-wide pandemic, where people couldn't attend church for months and months on end (*blow out candle and wait for it to relight*) didn't bring an end to the Church.

Why is this? How is this? What is this? The answer to all of those questions goes back to that day of Pentecost many, many years ago. The answer is, the Holy Spirit. And the answer to our questions today about life, and our troubles, and our world is the Holy Spirit. May we use this gift God gave to our church.

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. We may feel we don't know much about this gift. We may not know how to use it or how to receive it. But we pray for courage, time and ways to learn more about the Holy Spirit and we offer ourselves, to do your work here on earth. Amen.

**Closing Remarks:** Please feel free to join us after church for a slice of birthday cake as we celebrate this special day.



**Sing: 'Happy Birthday'  
(dear Church)**

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