

Pop-up Pentecost

All Age/ Family Service

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 and give them one of the passages from the Bible. It can be done with no props and using only the congregation's imagination, or it can involve some slides or video. You could have one person do all the 'Say' parts or share it out between several people by handing out parts ahead of time. Children can contribute in every part of this service through participating or leading a section of it.

What you will need

Before church, decorate for a birthday party (streamers, bunting, Happy Birthday sign, etc). This could be in the worship space or wherever you have a drink afterwards.

A plate with a small birthday cake or cupcake that has a trick candle on top that relights when you blow it out (you will want to practise this). You could have a child or young person hold the plate for you.

Another cake for serving to everyone after church.

Chart paper and stand with a thick felt tip for writing things 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 or picture or video of the layout of the temple 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 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wm7DLUPS9kY>) to get you started thinking about how you can paint a picture of the temple for people.

Wind

You could have the congregation make the wind sound 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 fire made for each person to hold up at the appropriate time. You could also have a video of a crackling fire burning come onto a screen and play it at the right moment – or any combination thereof.

Speaking Parts

On the day, or ahead of time, ask a few people (adults, youth and children) 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 hear.

Print

Around six copies of Acts 2.9–11 and highlight two or three different places named on each printout until all are covered. Ask diverse (different ages, genders, places they sit in church) 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 places 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 version that works best for you.

Say

Welcome

Today 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 we need to practise a few things.

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 speak of wind.

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.

And one more thing – before we begin, we need get an idea of what the temple was like at this time. 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 hill 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 gates opening 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 sacrifice 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

Reading

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 all over 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 to us. On this particular Pentecost, it happened to be 50 days since Jesus had risen from the dead and ten days since he had ascended up to heaven. The disciples were in Jerusalem, waiting, just like Jesus had told them to. What were they waiting for?

Reading

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 things! 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, and 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 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 congregation involved*)

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 sound like wind*).

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 a fire symbol with their hands, or put a pre-made flame on their head or maybe show 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 his or her 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

(Address part 1)

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? He was the one who denied Jesus three times before the cock

crowd 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. We know that about 3,000 people were added to the church that day and 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.

Greet One Another

Say: (Address part 2)

Let's stand and say to those around us a great big celebratory, 'Happy Birthday!'

(Take out a small cake with the trick candle and light it.) Many have tried to stop the Church and snuff it out over the years. *(blow out trick candle-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 Christian, *(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 any more. Where 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 – Covid – 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 in God's gift of the Holy Spirit. God is with us, through his Spirit.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. We pray for understanding and courage as we offer ourselves, through your Spirit, to do your work here on earth. Amen

Sing

'Happy Birthday dear Church'

Closing Remarks

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



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Photography by Calie Kendall

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