

## **Gathering Prayer**

Holy Spirit you are welcome  
Come to us like the wind  
Like a fire, like a dove  
Come gently or boldly  
We are waiting for you.

**Praise:** Spirit of God unseen as the wind

<https://youtu.be/dy8AZ46GKqc>

Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,  
gentle as is the dove;  
teach us the truth and help us believe,  
show us the Saviour's love!

1.

You spoke to us long, long ago,  
gave us the written word;  
we read it still, needing its truth  
through it God's voice is heard.

Chorus:

Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,  
gentle as is the dove;  
teach us the truth and help us believe,  
show us the Saviour's love!

2.

Without your help we fail our Lord,  
we cannot live His way;  
we need Your power, we need Your strength,  
following Christ each day.

Chorus:

Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,  
gentle as is the dove;  
teach us the truth and help us believe,  
show us the Saviour's love!

We all of a range of gadgets in our homes these days. From mixers and juicers in the kitchen, to mobile phones, smart speakers that respond to your every whim. I borrowed this small drill from my neighbour Scott. Apparently it's a rather handy little drill and the battery life is really good.

The thing is, without electricity, none of these gadgets will ever work will they?

Emphasize that electricity is a natural force – it has been in the universe since the very beginning of time, it just took time for humans to become aware of and able to use it.

Tell the story of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to friends and followers of Jesus with great power, enabling them to do things they couldn't do before, to tell

people all about Jesus, to all sorts of different people, and gave them comfort when they were in trouble.

The Spirit gave them the ability to speak to everyone in different languages, so that people from different lands could understand their message about Jesus in their own languages.

Point out that the power of the Holy Spirit, in some ways, is like the power of electricity.

We know that the Holy Spirit had always been at work in the world, but came in renewed strength at Pentecost. The Bible tells us that the Spirit was active in the creation of the world, animals and humans, and inspired the words of prophets who taught Jews about God before the coming of Jesus.

We need to be open, connected, plugged in to the Holy Spirit in order to do the work in the world Jesus did and God now wants us to do.

Last week we asked you to record yourself saying the words “Welcome Holy Spirit” in a variety of languages which Janine has put together in a short video. Listen carefully to each language now, and see how many you can identify. Write down the answer as you hear them. At the end, all the languages will be revealed!

**Video:** Welcome Holy Spirit

**Praise:** Everywhere around me  
<https://youtu.be/5c2NigjJoNY>

**Prayer:**

When the day of Pentecost came there was a noise ... like a strong wind blowing. Wind to blow away the cobwebs of our tradition. Wind to freshen our faces and awaken us to the challenges of today. Wind to fill our sails and send us on a voyage of spiritual discovery. Wind of the Spirit, blow strongly through the Church and enliven us with the breath of God.

They saw ... tongues of fire ... Fire to burn away the rubbish in our lives. Fire for spiritual heat to ‘strangely warm’ our hearts. Fire to light a beacon of hope for the people in our communities. Fire of the Spirit, blaze away in the Church and set us on fire for the Gospel.

They heard the believers speaking in their own languages. Speaking in a way that people can understand. Speaking to real needs, having something to say on real issues. Speaking so that our neighbours want to listen.

Words of the Spirit, speak to us and through us, that we may preach the living Word. But others said: ‘These people are drunk!’ Perhaps they were: Drunk on the new wine of the Kingdom of God. High on the power of the Holy Spirit – celebrating the birth of the Church of Jesus Christ. Holy Spirit of God, inspire and excite us as we celebrate in worship, and empower the work and witness of your Church today. Amen

## Offering Prayer

### **Video Reading:** (based on Acts 2)

With the sound of a whirlwind it came, rushing into the house where the followers of Jesus were gathered. There was a commotion and flames as the Holy Spirit came, resting on each of the disciples like a tongue of fire.

As it whooshed into the room, the Spirit filled them all with foreign languages, and the disciples spoke in words they didn't understand. Inspired, and with words gushing out of them, they went out into the streets.

It was the festival of Pentecost and Jerusalem was full of Jews from all over the world. When the disciples came out into the street, the crowds heard them speaking the message of Jesus in their own languages. They were amazed. 'How can this be?' they asked. 'All the followers of Jesus are from Galilee, but we can hear their message loud and clear in words we understand.'

Not everyone was impressed, though. Some listeners sneered, 'These people are drunk.' Peter, still filled to overflowing with the Spirit's power, stood up in front of all the people.

'We are not drunk,' he said. 'It's only nine in the morning. No, you are seeing and hearing what the prophet Joel spoke about in the Old Testament.'

Peter continued: 'Joel said, "God will pour his Spirit on all people; children will prophesy and adults will see holy visions. The Spirit is for everyone, men, women and children; there will be signs in heaven and on earth, and these will be the last days. Everyone who calls on the Lord's name shall be saved.'"

Like a fiery whirlwind it came, and the Spirit breathed new life into the followers of Jesus.

### **Sermon:** It's party time!

I love Pentecost! It's just one of those services where there seems to be a lightness, an energy, an openness to the unpredictable nature of our God. We often introduce Pentecost as the birthday of the church. We always sing "Happy birthday" to those who have recently celebrated birthdays here at Emmanuel, but Pentecost is a time to sing Happy birthday to God's church, both here and around the world. Reflecting on this description of the church's birthday party, helps us to understand some of the meaning and relevance of this chapter from Acts 2.

The first and obvious question is, for just how long has God been planning this party? We have to go right back to the book of Genesis where we read about God's creative spirit blowing over the formless void, and Genesis 2 reflects on the life-giving breath of God.

Later, the spirit appears in times of darkness and distress. While the one group of people of YHWH sits in exile in Babylon and others gather the pieces of the shattered world of Israel, the prophet Isaiah (11:2) promises the coming of one upon

whom this spirit shall rest, the spirit of “wisdom and understanding,” of “counsel and might,” of “knowledge and the fear of the LORD.”

During the time of domination and abuse by the Roman Empire, oppression and judgment of the religious authorities, and elitism and slavery of the ruling classes, Luke records John’s promise of one who will baptize by the Spirit (3:16), and Jesus later agrees (Acts 1:2).

In the extensive planning of this Pentecostal party, the spirit of YHWH weaves together the generations through a Spirit that brings life out of death, hope out of despair. And we all recognise this despair don’t we? Perhaps now more than ever before do we recognise the darkness and distress of our world.

As we witness the growing gap between the rich and the poor, growing manifestations of poverty and unchecked disease, growing divisions between nations and within economies, and growing intolerance of any opinion or ideal other than our own, we celebrate small glimpses of the work of that Spirit, and we await again blowings of that fresh and life-giving Spirit.

After this long period of preparation, YHWH’s guest list to this Pentecostal party deserves our attention. Who are the “they” (2:1) who wait aimlessly in the upper room? Is the party limited to the eleven male disciples listed in Acts 1:13? Does the party also include “certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus,” mentioned in Acts 1:14? Might other men and women who joined Jesus throughout his ministry be present? What about children – are they too present in this group.

In essence, the question of God’s guest list raises the question of whether these Pentecostal disciples who become apostles are a fairly homogenous group of narrow representation or whether they are a larger group who embodies much more diversity in gender and culture.

These questions become important as churches and denominations continue sometimes heated and divisive conversations about who may and who may not faithfully worship and serve in leadership positions. Who indeed does actually belong to the “priesthood of all believers.”

Is it just us who normally gather together Sunday after Sunday, or does that gathering refer to a wider group of those listening to this message from their own homes, those who haven’t darkened the doors of the church for many years, but who now feel confident enough to listen, to share, to reflect on a message that perhaps for the first time ever, seems to be making sense?

As with many birthdays past a certain age, this one includes lots of smiles and joy, questions and regret by participants and observers. At the beginning of the story, one can imagine the disciples moping about being abandoned, and not for the first time. They walk with Jesus for up to three years before the evil powers nail him on the cross.

Then, through the miracle of resurrection he reappears and walks again with them, only to abandon them at the ascension. Now they wait, disappointed again.

As the story progresses, we can sense a feeling of jealousy and inadequacy creeping into the questions of the “devout Jews” (v. 5), who wonder why they are not invited guests at this party. We also understand the tension of the “crowd gathered” (v. 6), as they experience with awe and cynicism the sudden ability of these brothers and sisters to communicate in different languages.

By the end, the disciples face the uncertain future of ministry in an unwelcoming world separated from one another and from the physical presence of Jesus. In the midst of these amazing celebrations, these folks live the fear of transitions begun and changes realized.

We are know this fear don't we. Whether it be the change from the challenges of childhood to the teenage years, the transition from college to further education, from work life to family life and so much more. All this in a world full of unpredictable economies and unequal access.

Others sit in their church realizing that while their pew does not change, their world does. They mourn the loss of the church, the community, the family, or the constant stability they once loved. Times of life transition come with promise and hope, with fear and mourning, and we experience them all.

Finally, after the preparations and the guest invitations, after the mourning and sense of loss, we celebrate that at this party folks take away some incredible party gifts. Some of these disciples have been training for this time for up to three years! They have learnt by their mistakes and Jesus' example, through the challenge of parables told and crosses to be borne.

Now this birthday party has the feel of a graduation party. The promise of the Spirit is finally fulfilled, and they receive their authentic voices, with which they will enter an unwelcoming world preaching and living the love of Jesus.

This is our challenge today and in the days, weeks and months to come - to find the Spirit within and to locate, claim, and make use of our voices, gifts, and skills with which to love and serve. However, we cheapen the Spirit and her gifts if we reduce them to dwelling exclusively within the individual.

This Spirit that swept through the house gifted more than those disciples at Pentecost and the disciples with whom we minister today. That Spirit has been let loose into the world, and its creative and life-giving power is now the gift of families and communities, of churches, and of nations. The relevant question becomes not just “How will I respond to these party gifts of the Spirit?” but “How will we respond to these gifts?”

**Praise:** Holy Spirit living breath of God  
<https://youtu.be/8nbMfLQd2P4>  
Holy Spirit, living Breath of God  
Breathe new life into my willing soul.  
Bring the presence of the risen Lord  
To renew my heart and make me whole.  
Cause Your Word to come alive in me

Give me faith for what I cannot see  
Give me passion for Your purity.  
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within  
May Your joy be seen in all I do—  
Love enough to cover ev'ry sin  
In each thought and deed and attitude  
Kindness to the greatest and the least  
Gentleness that sows the path of peace.  
Turn my striving into works of grace.  
Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth  
Giving life to all that God has made  
Show Your power once again on earth  
Cause Your church to hunger for Your ways.  
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise.  
Lead us on the road of sacrifice  
That in unity the face of Christ  
Will be clear for all the world to see.  
Holy Spirit, Living Breath of God

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Come, Holy Spirit. Come, loving Jesus. Come, glorious God. Come among us and hallow our prayers: We pray for the places in our world where there is poverty, fear and war. May all who recognise your name hear you calling them to be peacemakers, God, in your mercy, HEAR OUR PRAYER. We pray for young Christians – young in years, young in faith. May the faith we pass on to them be a reflection of the work of your Holy Spirit in our lives. God, in your mercy. HEAR OUR PRAYER. We pray for our local churches. May all who meet together to celebrate this Pentecost experience your presence and be filled with power and joy. God, in your mercy, HEAR OUR PRAYER. We pray for those who are ill, or in trouble, or in any kind of need. We pray for those who have died, for those who are safe in your love.

God, in your mercy, HEAR OUR PRAYER. We pray for ourselves, our hopes, our questions, our needs, our dreams: Come, holy and life-giving Spirit, renew our lives with love. God, in your mercy, HEAR OUR PRAYER. Bright God of life, burn in our lives, blow us clean and holy, warm us with courage and joy, keep us in the mystery of your glory all the days of our journey home. Amen

### **Sending out prayer:**

May the power of the Spirit challenge you  
May the peace of the Spirit comfort you  
May the presence of the Spirit enable you to live in love  
And service in the name of Christ, Amen

**Praise:** These are the days of Elijah

<https://youtu.be/RYGtEs06yw>

These are the days of Elijah,  
Declaring the word of the Lord  
And these are the days of Your servant Moses,  
Righteousness being restored.  
And though these are days of great trial,  
Of famine and darkness and sword,  
Still, we are the voice in the desert crying  
"Prepare ye the way of the Lord!"

Behold He comes riding on the clouds,  
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call,  
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,  
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes.

These are the days of Ezekiel,  
The dry bones becoming as flesh,  
And these are the days of Your servant David,  
Rebuilding a temple of praise.  
These are the days of the harvest,  
The fields are as white in Your world,  
And we are the labourers in Your vineyard,  
Declaring the word of the Lord!

Behold He comes riding on the clouds,  
Shining like the sun at the trumpet call,  
Lift your voice, it's the year of jubilee,  
And out of Zion's hill salvation comes.