

## **The Promise of Pentecost**

### **Worship Resources for Pentecost Sunday**

#### **The Promise of Pentecost:**

In the calendar of the Church, the day of Pentecost (the seventh Sunday after Easter) represents the birth of the Christian community. According to Acts, it was a day when some 3,000 were added to the community as a result of the preaching of the Apostles. Many had gathered in Jerusalem for the Festival of Weeks, the harvest festival which also recalled God's giving of the Law. The Holy City was packed with pilgrims from many lands, of many different languages, races, ethnic groups, and cultures.

The miracle of the day was that these strangers, of many different "tongues" were able to understand and respond to the proclamation of the Gospel. The story of Pentecost is the undoing of the Tower of Babel story in which human arrogance prompted God to "confuse their tongues" so they could not understand each other.

Within the Church, the image of Pentecost is the climatic vision of the hope for and possibility of racial, ethnic, cultural, and class reconciliation. It is an appropriate moment for congregations to recommit themselves to the overcoming of "walls of hostility" which continue to plague both the Christian community as well as the larger culture. At Pentecost, we celebrate the fact that "there is neither Greek nor Jew" (Galatians 3:28). Within the Body of Christ, we are "no longer strangers, but fellow citizens of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19.)

If Easter is God's resurrection *moment*, Pentecost marks the beginning of God's resurrection *movement*. With the dramatic appearance of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost came the power to restore right relationships with God, one another, and all creation.

Thus, the redemptive power activated at Pentecost is the power to mend the rips within our social fabric, to restore splintered relationships, to repair broken communities. Pentecostal power is the power to stand in the cracks, to face hostilities without fear, to confess, repent, and repair – to be agents of healing even as we have been healed.

#### **Invocation**

**We have come because you have confirmed to us the love of God that has touched the deep places of our lives and sustained us day by day.**

We have come because of one another, and the opportunity you give us to be brothers and sisters.

**We have come because we want to travel the pathways of God's Realm, learning to live in humility and trust, peace and reconciliation.**

We have come to pray and sing and share and hug and rest and act.

**We have come for the healing of the nations, and for the healing of our lives.**

We have come because we want you to lead us to Jesus.

**Litany:**

**They were patriotic, rebellious, sinful, destitute, thoughtful, impetuous, lovable, disagreeable, faithful, and doubtful – they all came to Jesus hoping, believing, wondering if they could be made new.**

And then one day the Spirit came to them, giving birth to a Church where Jew and Gentile, slave and free, men and women are called to be once in Christ Jesus.

**Listen, brothers and sisters, and look. Do you see it? Do you hear it? Is it possible the very same Spirit of God is with us today?**

Yes! The great mystery continues to unfold in this place, on this day, where we gather as sisters and brothers of the same promise – that God will make a church of us.

**Blessed is the Spirit who is a respecter of no person but gives gifts to all, so we might bring our lives and our passion to build the Church.**

Blessed is the Spirit who tears down walls that divide us and calls us to be God's ambassadors of reconciliation.

**Blessed is the Spirit who urges us to work and weep for peace.**

Blessed is the Spirit who still helps us to dream new dreams and to see new visions.

**As in days of old, so it is now: The Spirit of the Lord is upon us, because God has chosen us to bring good news to the poor.**

God has sent us to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and to announce the days of God's favor.

**Prayers:**

Holy Spirit of God, come to us with your fire; ignite our lives with faith and compassion.

Help us to know that you are our comforter and our confronter, our safeguard and our risk.

Give us thoughts better than our own thoughts, power beyond our own power, commitment beyond our deepest commitments.

Fill us today with dreams and visions that compel us to be followers of Jesus Christ and seekers of your Realm.

Help us to become the Church you birthed, help us to be the fruit of God's womb.

Precious Holy Spirit, come to us again and again and keep the flame of reconciliation alive. Blow the winds of justice and peace across our lives until we are discovered to be the Church. AMEN

Holy Spirit of God, we have come to this place with joy and wonder at your coming.

We have come because we want to be the Church, ready to join the saints throughout the ages in building the Church. AMEN.

### **Prayer of Confession**

Knowing God, there is nothing we can hide from you;  
not even those things we try to hide from ourselves.  
We confess our need for your love and forgiveness.  
But, just as important, we confess our need for one  
another.

We spend much of our time wondering where you are  
and why it seems so hard, at times, to find you in the  
midst of all that presses in on our lives.

But you are no farther away than our brothers and  
sisters no matter where they live, the color of their  
skin, or the language they speak. Help us to remember  
that the best place to find Jesus is in each other.

AMEN

### **A Meditation**

Jesus, the Risen Jesus, told them not to worry when he left them, but to wait for the  
promise. And the promise came as they huddled in fear. Tongues of fire leapt from head  
to head, Spirit-smoke filled the room. They cleared their lungs by running into the  
streets and proclaiming the Word of God.

And all the visitors heard of God's mighty deeds in their own languages: Medes and  
Parthians and Cretans and everyone else stunned and wondering what it could all mean.

We are stunned and in wonder ourselves. The same promise is ours. Is the undoing of the  
Tower of Babel at hand? Are the children of earth scattered and divided by nation, race,  
clan and gender to be brought together again to the glory of God?

Yes, the same promise is ours. We, too, can listen for God's Word in the voices of  
others. But don't only listen for your own language. Try to learn a language that is new to  
you, a language of torn down walls and surprising relationships. We need to hear God's  
Word proclaimed by different voices, in languages that are old and new to us. If we  
listen, we might be surprised by what we can learn.

The Spirit has given birth to a fragile child named Church. Nurture that baby. Raise it  
with care and intent. God has plans for that child. The call is ours. We can be Church. We  
can reach across barriers, we can love peace, we can walk in justice before God. It is not  
easy, but we can start with one another, hear God's Word in one another's language,  
and be the people of Jesus Christ.

The promise remains ours. Jesus did not leave us alone but entrusted us to the Spirit so  
we could build a new world. Now is the time to dream new dreams, to seek new visions.  
The Spirit has come, the Church has been born, we are heirs of the promise, and the  
whole creation awaits the day when all things will be new in Jesus Christ. So let's get to  
work and become the promise!

### **Prayers of Dedication**

Holy Spirit of God, ignite our imaginations so we might learn to be the Church. Blow the winds of your inclusive love across our lives, driving away those things that separate us from others. Help us, as we mark the birthing of your Church, to proclaim Jesus Christ, to learn from our mistakes, to walk in humility and hope to the future you have for us, to be faithful in seeking your Realm with one another. Come again and again into our lives, and bring us into the fullness of the God who has called us to be the Church which is the Fire of God's Fire, the Wind of God's Wind. AMEN

Beloved God, we set up kingdoms made by human hands and watch them crumble. We make gods of people and ideas and discover too late their inadequacies. Give us courage to continue the journey that Jesus calls us to make. Give us enough of the Spirit as we go forth as announcers of your Realm.

Perform a miracle over these pieces of paper and silver that we place into offering places. Perform a miracle over these lives that stand before you. Transform all our offerings into love, mercy, and reconciliation through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. AMEN