

## Day of Pentecost – Year A

### Day of Pentecost – 28 May 2023

The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank members of New Worshipping Communities who joined us in conversation to explore their thoughts on the Day of Pentecost.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

It provides liturgical material that can be used for worship in all settings. Our writers are asked to share their approaches to creating and delivering this material to equip leaders with a greater confidence and ability to reflect on their own worship practice and experience and encourage them to consider how this material might be adapted for their own context.

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

At the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2022, the Faith Nurture Forum were asked to: *Call the Church to pray, and instruct the Forum to produce prayer resources to encourage and equip people to pray for the future well-being, peace and revival of the Church.*

We have asked people from across the Church to write prayers to help us respond to this call. Their prayers reflect the range of different voices across the Church of Scotland, and offer a variety of prayer styles that can be used in public worship, church gatherings and meetings, or in your own personal prayer rhythm.

[These prayers can be found](#) along with the rest of the May Weekly Worship materials.

An archive of resources for daily worship can be found on the [Sanctuary First website](#).

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acts 2:1-21 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Numbers 11:24-30.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Psalm 104:24-34, 35b .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>John 7:37-39 .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Activities.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Prayers .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Musical suggestions .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Reflecting on our worship practice .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Useful links .....</b>	<b>18</b>

## Introduction

This week we invited people who are working within new worshipping communities to come together and discuss how they might creatively respond to the lectionary readings, draw together any emerging themes and imagine how they might use them in the different types of settings and contexts in which they worship with others.

Those taking part in the conversation were:

Rev Ruth Kennedy, Pioneer Minister with Under 40s, Dunblane and Sports Chaplain to Scottish Cycling Mountain Bike Racing;

Lynsey Graham, Pastoral Assistant to the linked charges of Inverkip, Skelmorlie and Wemyss Bay Parish Churches (schools chaplaincy and Café Church);

Callum Ross, Children's and Families Worker for Skene Parish Church;

Rev Stuart Finlayson, Community Pioneer Minister, Forres & West Moray;

Rob Rawson, Felicity Burrows and Phill Mellstrom, members of the Church of Scotland Mission Development Team.

The main themes and questions, sermon ideas and activities that emerged from our conversations have been drawn out and are presented below in note form.

## Acts 2:1-21

**Movement, inclusion and a universal language:** At Pentecost, through the disciples and the chaos, God was speaking a language that everyone could understand. What did it mean to the people outside the building?

Pentecost saw a revolutionary way of speaking to the communities, with the disciples being pushed outside and encouraged to go and engage with them, whilst trying to understand what the Good News meant.

The language of love is universal – how can we help people in our congregations relate to the love that's the good news? How do we demonstrate that love, speaking in a language that people in the community can understand?

There are plenty of people outside the building with a curiosity about God, and this awesome celebration of Pentecost should cause us to ask how will we respond? It is an opportunity to make a practical response and show the community how we can be alongside them.

As community pioneers we go out into the community. There was some discussion about ways in which the Church, perhaps at a national level, could do something similar to the way smaller communities respond to their local congregations. For example, a 'Tent of Meeting' that could move around the country – like a pop-up prayer tent but on a much grander scale, where we stand outside the tent and invite people and the Holy Spirit to bless and heal you.

**Mystery, beauty and chaos:** There is complete sensory overload in this story. The disciples wouldn't have understood the languages they were speaking and we don't need to know what's going on or understand everything fully before we go out into the community – the disciples allowed themselves to be overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, which led to amazing things happening.

As the Church we need to be comfortable with beauty and mystery and at times not understanding it. Perhaps if we were to step back from a place of saying we understand everything, and show our vulnerability, we could be more relatable to our communities and have deeper, more engaging conversations. We may well have had some training, but it is okay not to have all the answers. It sits well with the community if you adopt this humble position, and especially after everything we have all experienced in recent years. With many people fearful and in need of help, a more caring and open approach is welcomed.

Of course, there is always the opportunity to bump into the Holy Spirit! One member of the group shared a story of being out in the community and a man on a mobility scooter fell on the road. When they went over to him, his first words (reminiscent of the disciples in the story) were "I'm not drunk!". The man had been waiting for help about some health issues and it just so happened that the people who went over to help him were health professionals who were linked to the church!

The disciples were waiting for God to act but didn't know what it would look like – we need to look beyond ourselves and to remember that anticipation of God doing something new, to be confident. That's part of the message of Pentecost. In our New Worshipping Communities we work hard at trying to remember – don't box God in and trust God to act.

**Sense of community:** The disciples were hiding, worried, and scared that what Jesus had said was no longer possible – their spark had gone out. We'd like to think we are stronger and would not have been scared or hidden away. But God can send the Holy Spirit, wherever we are. It would be wonderful to read that the disciples were all gathered in one place and there was a sense of community with God and that they were watching and

waiting in expectation. That isn't exactly how it happened, but with the power of the Holy Spirit, they went out, and this is what we are called to do to.

It is perhaps a good idea to look at the verses that aren't included in the reading, vv43-47. These verses can really speak to the development of New Worshipping Communities, but also the wider Church. The new expression and birth of the church that evolved in Acts led to new communities forming to encounter God in new ways. They were imbued with 'generous collaboration' – sharing everything, no division, all together. As we seek ways forward in our new Presbyteries and local clusters, how can we be more generous with our time and resources?

The activity of Pentecost is reminiscent of a birthday party – we need to notice who's not joining in or is being excluded. The Church can be good at this and when we focus on inclusion (there was emphasis on the passage in Joel, vv17-21), we can see everyone involved in sensing God's purpose and being empowered by the Spirit in many exciting ways as we explore new ways of gathering and sending in our communities.

Some activities that people have used that relate to the inclusion and connection within the Acts reading.

- We decorated a prayer tree with prayer request at a community event. 75-80% of the requests were for healing and were predominantly from unchurched people. There's a massive desire for the Church to pray for healing for family members, friends, and personal stories. That's how the Church can lovingly respond
- Pop-up prayer tent at events / offers to pray for healing
- Re-light candles or hang prayer requests on the tree
- Make/bring a cake to events or opening the doors for tea, is a simple yet effective way of showing hospitality and speaking in a language that engages with many people in the community

## [Numbers 11:24-30](#)

**The whole community:** In this passage we see that God's power and gifts can be found in unexpected people and places.

In this passage there was something about trust in leadership and our vision of leadership – did Moses make a mistake by not selecting the two elders left behind in the camp? He

seemed to recognise the potential of those around the tent and was being inclusive, but there was a nudge from God, to say that God is already working in the world before we get there.

**Generous collaboration:** How do we respond as we see God working in the world with those who aren't part of the Church? Are we as humble as Moses was?

A member of the group that Moses had chosen exclaims, "Tell them to stop!" when they heard that Eldad and Medad were already prophesying in the camp. Moses challenges them and the judgment they made. How do we recognise and respond to the Spirit's intervention in our gatherings? How do we respond to people outside our understanding of church, who are engaged in work of building the kingdom? Are we working with community groups in the godly works that they are engaged in? Do we get on board and acknowledge the power of God in the situation, or are we jealous, like those in the tent?

Community pioneers go out into the community – where are we noticing and recognising God in our community? Who are the prophets being touched by the Spirit in the world that we might easily write off? How do we empower them? How can we help people to be expectant of God to show up in the midst of our worship, our community, our work, etc.?

**The Spirit is at work in the ordinary:** We don't know why Eldad and Medad weren't at the tent with Moses and the others, but God can work with anyone, not just the keen and organised ones. The Spirit came down in a spectacular way at the tent, but also out in the ordinariness of the camp.

**Encouraging potential:** The elders did not prophecy again (v25) – why not? Might we be guilty of writing off people's chances of leadership if they don't shine straight away? Are we holding people back from reaching their full potential and what God has in store for them? Do we have a preconceived idea of what a 'leader' should look like? How are we open to different people and styles in leadership?

### Activity

One of the participants in this conversation has been running a study series, where a group from the church gathered to look at gifts of the spirit and revival of the church. They read Tommy MacNeil's book, *The Sleeping Giant*, and discussed what they thought and how they might respond.

## Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

**Breath of God:** There are links to our recent journey through Lent, for example, vv29-30 talk of the breath of life which remind us of other instances, e.g. Ezekiel, and Jesus breathing on the disciples in the John passage. The breath of God, spirit, wind, ruach – we were reminded of other instances of the life-breath: H added to Sarai, Abram; Yahweh is the first and last breath.

**Everything looks to God:** This Psalm is full of praise God and is inclusive of all creation. God uses us and the Church to reflect God's glory and manifold wisdom. We are as much part of creation as any other part. While we can see ourselves as God's representatives on earth with the world looking to us for food – do we give the food in season that people need? And further, do we as in the previous passages for this week, speak the language that people understand?

**God provides:** Food in season. In Numbers, the Israelites were complaining / worrying about having enough to eat, but God meets our needs.

**Personal responsibility:** It's not always easy to sing to the Lord; we need to make a conscious effort. We're responsible for our response to the situations we find ourselves in, remembering that all types of worship are acceptable (lament, protest, joy, etc.) and we sing in the expectation of being heard.

**Responsibility for others:** In the Psalms we're given the vocabulary to pray and sing not just for ourselves, but with and sometimes on behalf of others. When voices are silenced we can use the vocabulary of the Psalms to raise up words in solidarity. Perhaps when there are issues of injustice, or when the pain of a situation is too raw. We are all partners in creation, sometimes we can neglect this common endeavour within our worship.

**Hidden potential:** What could the Church be if we allowed God to reach in and make us erupt like a volcano?

## 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

God was already initiating Pentecost in the earlier passages. There is a variety of expression, but all of this comes from God. Are we actively looking for and responding to the gifts we see in those around us in our communities?



**Why do we have these gifts?** Gifts are given for the common good, so we need to help people (and indeed ourselves) to share their gifts. Gifts of healing, inclusion, empowerment; this is about letting people flourish, experiencing life in all its fulness. Everyone is eligible – political or social status don't matter when it comes to God, and do not exclude anyone from receiving gifts from God.

**They are a mystery:** These things are hard to explain. They are supernatural, don't happen without God's intervention. We need to be like Peter and teach well, explain what's happening without overcomplicating it, but also, as with the passage from Acts, to be honest about not knowing, or understanding, but being open to God guiding us.

**Do we have the vocabulary?** Communities outside the Church are comfortable speaking about the supernatural, e.g., fortune-telling, astrology, etc. We shouldn't shy away from the basic elements of faith and spiritual practice, but as with the many languages present in the Acts text, find common ways of speaking and sharing about deeper ways of living and searching for God.

## [John 7:37-39](#)

**Timing:** Do we expect and recognise the gifts of God being activated in people we meet? It is God's timing and God's choice of who is included – therefore it is for all people and God is at work before we get there.

**Gushing streams:** The word used for flow is very strong – it suggests gushing. This is really exciting, it means we'll be filled to overflowing, there is great abundance and acceptance in God. This idea links to the woman at the well who we met during Lent. The living water will never run out.

**Thirst-quenching, life-giving:** Are we open to the gifts of the spirit? Are we praying for them? When we pray for the Spirit we get revival. The Spirit equals life – what does this look like in your worship?

**Holy noise:** Jesus spoke in a loud voice, which links to the noise of earlier passage in Acts. We should be bold and confident in our faith because we're moving in God's Spirit to transform the world. Sometimes we're too quiet in our worship, we often don't let the power in, or perhaps even flow out! Perhaps we need a fridge magnet that says – "Worship like nobody's watching"! Do we burst out of our services filled with something the community can see and want to know more about? This attitude applies to us both as the Church and as individuals in our daily lives. Do we speak the language of our communities?



## Activities

A member of our conversation group says that they primarily look for ways to present visual representations of messages that the texts present a family-friendly message. Below are some of the visual activities that they would use in their setting, based on the readings we discussed.

Example for the disciples' spark being reignited as mentioned during the call: <https://www.experimentarchive.com/experiments/traveling-flame/>

Thinking about being filled by living water – the air-filled balloon could be used to display how we go through life trying under our own steam, but the water-filled balloon is like when we are filled with the Spirit: <https://melscience.com/US-en/articles/how-make-fireproof-balloon/>

## Prayers

Members of the conversation group shared some prayers and the how they prepare to write them.

*As I think about prayer, a way that I often prepare myself is to simply listen/play worship music and see where the Holy Spirit guides me. I often feel my most connected through word and worship in the Spirit.*

*I keep half an eye on what is going on in the world – this can be tricky, having two under 10's who usually have control of the two tv's in the house! - but I do my best to keep up to date.*

*I also keep a keen eye on what is going on in our community through various social media platforms and through the conversations that I have when I'm out and about.*

## Gathering prayer

Loving God of Spirit and Truth,  
we have come to this place today to honour and worship You.  
We have come from different homes, places,  
communities, spaces, and paces of life  
and with Your help we choose to still ourselves in Your presence,  
seeking Your peace for our souls.

Father, we lay aside – as best as we can do –  
those things that clutter our minds  
and ask that You would enter in – by the power of Your Spirit,  
bringing the mind of Christ – abounding with His promised freedom and love.

Holy God, we come as ourselves –  
because we cannot come as anyone else –  
and we bring all our brokenness, our frailty, our faults,  
as well as those unknown things that surprise us too.

We seek Your goodness and Your mercy afresh  
as we pray and praise Your name  
and so we commit our worship into Your hands.  
In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

**Call to worship** *(taking inspiration from the John reading)*

Come all who are thirsty  
Come all who are hungry  
Come all who are weary  
Come and be filled

**Confession/Repentance**

Almighty God,  
we dare to come into Your presence today.  
We dare to come not because of anything we have done,  
but because we are confident in the assurance we have in the faith of Jesus –  
that by His death and resurrection we can come into Your presence  
and live a life reconciled to You in his wondrous and magnificent love.

Come Lord and pour afresh your life giving water into our hearts  
with such a gushing and generous torrent of grace.

And as You do, we will be ready  
with our hands and hearts spread wide open  
ready to receive Your forgiveness again  
and again  
and again.

For the sake of Jesus the Lord

and by promise and power of His Spirit. Amen

### **Thanksgiving**

Creator God,  
since the beginning of time  
You have been so good and so generous.  
You have given us the things that we would need to live well  
and You continue to bless us every day.

We are so thankful for Your goodness and provision  
and for the way that You are always present in our lives.  
We are thankful for Your guidance  
and for the way that You constantly remind us  
of what You have taught us.

We are thankful that we are connected to believers all over the world  
and that we all have our part to play in Your redemptive plan.  
We are thankful that You have given to us gifts for the benefit of all,  
and that with Your sending we go to those places where they are needed most.

We thank You for prayer  
because it is through prayer that we can communicate with You  
but we can also call upon Your power to minister to others.  
We are thankful for Your presence  
and pray that for the sake of Your Son  
our meditations and reflections are a blessing to You.  
Amen

### **Prayer of Confession** *based on John 20:19-23*

Father God,  
we come before You now  
to confess that we have fallen short of the standards that You hold us to.

These things that we want to hide away from You.  
We look to lock these things away in rooms of our hearts and minds,  
and hide them in fear.  
Scared of what might come next.

But You see all Lord.  
You know these things that we have done, said, and thought.  
Lord, break into those rooms of our own building,  
so that we can bring these things now before You,  
in penitence and faith during this moment of silence.

*[hold a time of silence]*

As we look up Lord,  
expecting to see condemnation and anger,  
instead, we see You standing there bringing grace and peace.  
For those things we have just confessed –  
You show us where the cost of those sins had been paid already.  
Your hands and sides, still scarred from the time spent on the cross  
for the sins of the world.

Breathe out on us today the Spirit of grace,  
And as we lift these things to You,  
standing in Your forgiveness,  
May we proclaim the redemption that is found  
in Your world-changing love.  
Amen

**Prayer of adoration and confession** (*you could read most of the psalm 104 to start with*)

God of creation  
Your wonders are never ceasing, Your love knows no bounds.  
The earth is full of Your creatures and when You open Your hands,  
they are filled with good things.

You made the sea, great and wide,  
And all the peoples of the earth.  
We look to You for our food in due season.  
You send forth Your Spirit and give life to all things.

We sing praises to Your glory that endures forever.  
We know that too often Lord we neglect to thank You  
for all that you have done in our lives.  
We forget to give gratitude for all that You are  
and how much You love us.

Worse still, we take credit ourselves when things go well.

Forgive us Lord, source of all things.  
Renew us with Your Holy Spirit,  
that we might reflect Your image.  
Help us to be humble and not self-seeking,  
just like Your son Jesus,  
In whose name we pray...

***[lead into The Lord's Prayer]***

Amen

**Prayer**

Almighty God,  
We thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit,  
Who brings the gifts of  
Breath to give us life,  
insight to inspire us,  
nature to disturb us,  
compassion to comfort us,  
kindness to equip us.  
We give You thanks for enabling us to do Your will.  
Amen

**Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession**

*You might take inspiration from the news or specific prayer requests, or things going on locally. It is good to give quiet time for personal reflection, but as our café church takes place in a train station, next to a ferry terminal it can be noisy – so we sometimes just allow space for people to “voice a prayer or a name aloud” during this time, which can be very effective.*

Father God,  
We thank You for the individual gifts and talents  
that You give to each one of us  
for use for the greater good.  
For those who have a heart for children's ministry,  
for our youth leaders and helpers.  
For all those involved with our mission and outreach  
and charity partners doing a great work in our community.

We thank You for our pastoral team,  
strengthen them in their work  
and may they continue to be a blessing to others  
as they seek to bring Your love to our most vulnerable.

We pray for our leaders (*you may like to name them*) and our worship team.  
We pray for all those in our prayer group,  
our duty teams and other roles within Your body the Church.

We are all one body and we all need each other,  
but most of all we need You Lord.  
We thank You for this new day,  
another chance to seek to be more Christ-like in our ways.  
We thank You for Your word,  
that reaches us anew in our time and place  
in a language that we understand.

Lord,  
we pray today for all those who are unable to be here in person,  
whether through ill health or caring commitments to another.  
Be with them Lord, and minister to them at this most difficult time.  
We pray for our villages here,  
for our neighbours and friends,  
our New Scots and our schools.  
We pray for those who do not yet know of Your redeeming love,  
let us be a light in the dark and that through our love in action  
we might lead them to relationship with You.

We pray for our leaders locally and nationally.  
Give them the gift of wisdom and of discernment for what is right.  
We know that those in positions of power can face all sorts of temptation  
and can become full of pride all too easily.  
Help them Lord to see clearly what is right  
and to advocate for what is just,  
even when it is not the easy option.

We pray for all those who are bereaved  
and all those who are ill or awaiting hospital results or treatments.  
We pray for the medical teams attending to their needs.

We think especially for those with mental health struggles,  
with addiction issues and the relationships and families that are affected.  
Lord our world is so broken,  
we are so in need of Your Holy Spirit to be in our lives.

Pour out Your spirit on us anew Lord  
and grant that we may speak Your universal language  
of repentance, forgiveness, acceptance, love and salvation  
to all who will hear it.  
In Jesus name we pray  
Amen

### **For the blessing for café church**

*It can be very noisy in the train station, so having all who are gathered sing a blessing to a well-known tune can be good. (We like to sing this blessing to the tune of Edelweiss)*

May the Lord, Mighty God  
Bless and keep You forever,  
Grant You peace, perfect peace,  
perfect in every endeavour,  
Lift up your eyes and see His face,  
and His grace forever,  
May the Lord, Mighty God,  
Bless and keep you forever.

### **Blessing**

Father God,  
amaze and astonish us with Your presence in the world.  
Jesus Christ,  
lead us to be Your hands and feet in the world.  
Holy Spirit,  
send us filled with Your resurrection power into the world.

Go into the world –  
take God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit with you,  
bring justice, mercy, and unmerited love to those around you,  
your words, deeds and the Spirit's power  
to live the gospel where you are.



And the blessing of God,  
Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,  
be within and without you  
always and forever. Amen

## Musical suggestions

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

- A [suggested playlist of songs for Pentecost](#) can be found online
- You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow
- CH4 241 – “I The Lord of Sea and Sky”
- CH4 533 – “Will you come and follow me”
- CH4 619 – “Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me”
- CH4 600 – “Spirit of God, unseen as the wind”
- CMP 151 – “For I’m building a people of power”
- “We are the church” ([The church is not a building](#))
- “Our God is a great big God”
- Youth Praise 221 – “He’s the comforter” – the chorus could be used as the framework for a prayer

## Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.

- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord's Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of 'holy chaos'.
- While singing in our congregations is still restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?  
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/  
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different "Spiritual Styles"?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?  
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?  
Did it function well as a whole?  
How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?
- How balanced was the worship?  
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?  
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/  
community?  
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?  
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

## Useful links

Up to date information for churches around Covid-19 can be found [here](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)

You are free to download, project, print and circulate multiple copies of any of this material for use in worship services, bible studies, parish magazines, etc., but reproduction for commercial purposes is not permitted.

Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.