#

# Pentecost in Our Community

What would it look like to celebrate Pentecost by sharing it with our community? Probably not standing outside the front door of our building and preaching to thousands of people after they all heard us praying in their own languages. Although, you never know, it just might happen that way!

I love the image that the listeners thought the disciples were drunk because of how overflowing they were with the Holy Spirit. What kind of worship, what kind of experience, would it take today to get people to ask if we were drunk? It’s like the old story often told by Anglican bishops in a rather sorrowful but humble way:

*Whenever Paul went to a city there was a riot. When I (the bishop) go somewhere there is tea and cake.*

So what would it look like to do Pentecost in our community? Could it be more than tea, cake and some fun songs? If we look in the Scriptures, there are some examples of what the early Church did once they had received the Holy Spirit. Let’s have a look at one example.

‘They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.’ (**Acts 2:42-47 NRSV**)

After the disciples and followers of Jesus received the Holy Spirit, they spent time together. They worshipped and praised God. They had the goodwill of all people. They were glad and generous. They ate together in their homes. There were signs and wonders. They sold their possessions and gave to anyone in need.

What would that look like if we wanted to celebrate Pentecost in our community? Here are some examples of things you could do.

# A Pentecost Feast

Break bread together. Put on a community feast. Not just any old meal, but a proper celebration. Invest time and resources in making it as special and spectacular as possible. This is all about the wonder and amazement of the Holy Spirit at work when people sit across a table and share food and find in each other a fellow child of God. Use red and white and yellow decorations to remind people of the fire of the Holy Spirit. Use lots of candles (battery-operated ones are recommended) around the tables to fill the room with light.

Maybe do it instead of a normal worship service. Interspace the courses with songs, Bible readings and prayers. Instead of a sermon, have questions that people can discuss around their tables. Make the discussion starter questions as inclusive and relevant to your community as possible. Maybe there are things in your local community which need to be celebrated but aren’t. Use questions which encourage people to share their good news and the things that have gone well for them. Promote and encourage honest and open sharing of things which have brought joy to people’s lives. Ask about how God has brought people joy and wonder.

Put out invitations to as many people as possible (considering safe numbers to fit around the tables in the building you are using) – invite people you wouldn’t normally think of. Give the congregation invitations to hand out. Spread it on social media. Go door to door. Let everyone know there is a feast, and everyone is invited. That’s what the Kingdom of God looks like.

# Celebrations of Praise

What can you do to encourage an opportunity to focus entirely on praising and worshipping God?

Maybe put on a praise concert event in the run-up to Pentecost, or on Pentecost Sunday itself. Do you have musicians who can participate? Is there anyone in your congregation with a hidden skill that hasn’t been used before? Do you know people in the local community who would come and share something even if they don’t normally come to church? What are the congregation’s favourite songs?

If you don’t have suitable musicians, there are other things that you can do. Do you have any artists or creative people who can make something for Pentecost? Are there people who can perform a drama sketch or who can give a reading? Are there people who can write prayers, or who can knit or sew or weave or craft something which can be brought, and which represents the joy and wonder and creative majesty of the Holy Spirit in creating the Church?

What are the skills and talents in your community which can be brought together and shared as a way of praising God? This might reveal things which haven’t been seen before!

# Happy Birthday, Church!

Invite people to a birthday party for your church. Have a birthday cake, play silly party games like pass the parcel etc. Put up loads of decorations and provide party hats. Ask people to dress up in party clothes. Have a nice birthday buffet with old-school treats and fun party food. Maybe ask people to bring something to share as well.

This is a great opportunity to do some outreach to the local community. Put a birthday party invitation through people’s doors or hand them out in the street. Make it a bit quirky to attract attention. Don’t forget to put it up on social media to include as many people as possible.

Maybe invest in a birthday present for everyone who comes, something small but something which can help tie everyone together so that they feel connected and part of the church fellowship.

Talk about how the Church began at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came. Speak about the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to us to help us be the Church.

Finish by inviting people to think about what they can give back to the Church. What gifts do they have which can be used to help and support each other? Remind everyone that being together and using our different gifts and skills makes the Church what it is.

# Generous Hearts

What about putting together a generosity tree?

This idea provides an opportunity to share skills and abilities.

Put a tree up on the wall; not necessarily a real one – a picture will be fine. Then people can stick a tag on to it offering a skill that they have. Maybe knitting a scarf or some gloves. Writing a poem. Painting a picture. Baking a cake. Doing the gardening. Making a dinner. Doing some cleaning. Writing a letter. Sharing a coffee and a chat. All kinds of things can be offered. Then people can take a tag and claim that thing as a gift for themselves.

Try to make sure everyone offers something if they are able and feel comfortable doing so.

Think carefully about managing the safeguarding for this – especially if it involves people going into each other’s houses and those who are vulnerable.

# Gratitude Tree

This is like the previous idea, but here people can put up things they are grateful for.

It can be incorporated into worship as an act of response to the way that the Holy Spirit has helped, encouraged and supported people. What are people grateful for? By offering the opportunity to share what they are grateful for, there is a chance to help embed a culture of gratitude and focus on what God has given to us. This could feed into a ‘gratitude slot’ on a Sunday where people can say a sentence about what they are grateful for that week.

This is something that could be done with your local community through social media by making a gratitude post on a local social media group.

Using the corps Facebook page, put a post up on a community group explaining that at Pentecost the Church celebrates the gifts that God gives us and that we are encouraged to act with glad and generous hearts. So, to help spread some gladness, what are people grateful for that day?

Have some people standing by to comment so that it doesn’t sit empty and so it helps to attract attention. This could become a regular practice as a form of social media outreach, especially if it gets good traction when you try it the first time.