# Sermon: A Spirit Filled Community

## Bible Text: Acts 2: 1-4 and 43-47

#### ‘When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.’ **(Acts 2: 1-4 NRSV)**

#### ‘Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceedsto all, as any had need. 46Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at homeand ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47praising 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 2:43-47 NRSV)**

## Summary

When the Holy Spirit came into the lives of the believers, they were bound together, and the Church was formed. The Holy Spirit creates *koinonia* which is the foretaste of the new creation in the middle of the old.

## Preaching Goal:

* To clearly express the links between the giving of the Holy Spirit and the new community that emerges.
* To highlight the way in which *koinonia* as shared fellowship is central to the expression of the Holy Spirit.
* To challenge the congregation on what kind of community they share with each other.
* To call the Church to renew its dependence on the Holy Spirit to build a community which praises God and cares for one another.

## Technical Terms:

***Koinonia:***A Greek word which can be traced back to Aristotle who used it to describe communities, from small family groups up to the people who made up a city. It was later picked up by the philosopher Epicurus who used it to describe the ideal community. The early Church took up the term to describe the form of the church community called to assemble by the Holy Spirit. It has connotations of community, joint participation, shared working, a gift that everyone has contributed to, sharing, intimacy, and most especially communion. In Christian thought it is not something which emerges naturally, but which is dependent upon the Holy Spirit to form and enable and sustain and create.

***Shauvot:***The Hebrew word for the festival of Pentecost. It happened seven weeks after the feast of Passover. At Passover the Jewish people celebrated being redeemed from slavery and led out of Egypt. At Pentecost they celebrated when God gave them the Law at Mount Sinai. The Easter resurrection happens at Passover time. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost time. These two festivals are key for understanding how the early Church understood these events. The giving of the Holy Spirit at the celebration of the giving of the Law speaks to the understanding of covenant; Law given to one nation, Holy Spirit given to all. It also directs us towards the sense that the Holy Spirit is given to guide the disciples in how to follow Jesus, just as the Law was given to help the Jewish people know how to follow God.

# Reading the Text

* Draw out in the first block of Bible text that the disciples were all together when the gift of the Holy Spirit was given. It was not an individual experience; it was shared by everyone there.
* Highlight that in the second block of text you get one sentence on wonders and signs and an entire paragraph on meeting together, eating together, being glad and generous, worshipping and praising God.
* In each section of text, the subject is the group of disciples, not an individual – a group who are sharing something together, whether it is a divine experience or food in someone’s home.

# Opening

* Have you ever been to an awkward work party? Or to a gathering of friends where someone has recently had a bereavement, and no one is sure what to say or what to do? This is the kind of atmosphere we might expect from the disciples gathering together for Pentecost. Nobody is quite sure what is going to happen next.
* Why an upper room? Because they were probably meeting either in the living space above a shop (as was common with the early Church) or they were in someone’s guest room above their main living space in their home.
* Why were the followers of Jesus all gathered in one place? Explain what the feast of Pentecost was about and the link back to Easter.

# Context

* When the Law was given to the Hebrew people, they were given something to gather around, something to bind them together, a form of shared identity, the foundations for their community. When the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples a similar thing occurs – the Holy Spirit brings people together, uniting them around a shared relationship with God as Father.
* ***Interactive congregation*** – Invite people to turn to those around them. If God gave the Holy Spirit to the Church at the first Pentecost, why do we still celebrate it now?
* ***Question*** – Look at the second section of text – does this look like our church? Do we eat together and share together and worship together? Do we spend time together socially outside of our church activities? Is this something that is important to you?
* Pentecost is not just a memorial – it is an invitation.

# Development

* What is Pentecost an invitation to? Refer to John 10:10 and life in all its fullness.
* The promise of the Holy Spirit is that the person who receives it is transformed and renewed. The Holy Spirit opens the door to a fresh reality where we can see our neighbour clearly and know how to love them properly.
* It is easy to be fixated on the supposedly supernatural elements, but the focus is given on the way that the Holy Spirit brings people together in community. New life means new community. Learning to love the neighbour means learning to give space for each other, to eat together, to praise and worship together, how to share with gladness and gratitude of heart.
* Imagery – Use a picture of a table with people eating around it as a sign of what it looks like when the Holy Spirit comes into your life – you get together as a community.
* *Koinonia –* the Holy Spirit joining people together. This is what the Church should look like.

# Challenge

* What can you do to grow a community like we see in the second section of the text?
* Are there ways that you can do more to support each other, to share with each other?
* Do you know and spend time with each other outside of church? Is this the only place where you see each other? Or are you developing genuine relationships and friendships with each other, the kind of community which we see the Holy Spirit bring into life?
* If you have never known what it means to have the Holy Spirit in your life, then take this time to invite him to come into your life and see the difference. If you have been following Jesus for a long time and know what it is like to have the Holy Spirit in your life, then maybe it’s the time to ask for a renewal of God’s power in your life and a fresh opportunity to love as God loves.
* Interactive worship – Have plenty of electric tea-light candles on the mercy seat / holiness table / handy available surface. During a song or reflective piece of music, invite people to come and take a candle and then take it home with them. Ask them to put the candle somewhere visible at home, and when they pray, to take the candle out and use the light as a reminder of everyone else who has taken a candle away that day. It is a reminder that the Holy Spirit binds us together, dozens, hundreds, thousands, millions of lights all around the world burning with the light of the Holy Spirit.