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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.
God is ever present, around us and within us,
though separate let us worship together in God.

Story A surprise at the festival

It was Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover, and people had gathered in Jerusalem for the Festival of Weeks. Jews from countries all around had come for the eating, drinking and music that the Festival offered. First, they would hear how the Lord gave the Law to Moses, and then there would be the Harvest Thanksgiving Offering of two loaves of bread. It was a special day for everyone as even the servants were given the day off work.

The disciples were in Jerusalem for the festival. Early in the morning they gathered together in a house. Suddenly, the room was filled with a loud noise, like a rushing, roaring wind. At the same time, a strange light appeared, like flames of fire, and these flames seemed to hover over the disciples. All at once they began to speak, but not in any words they had used before, this was a strange language. In fear and excitement they went out into the street.

The noise they made, together with the noise of the wind, attracted a crowd, many of them visitors from other countries. What they heard amazed them for they understood what was being said, even though the disciples were not from their land. They began to get excited, but some others shouted out, "What is all the fuss, they are just drunk".

One of the disciples, Peter, heard them and stood up. He shouted out, in normal words, "No! We are not drunk; it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No! I'll tell you what is happening – this is the Day of the Lord. The prophet Joel, a long time ago, gave a message from God, *'In the last days I will pour out my spirit on all people. The young will see visions and the old will dream dreams. Everyone, man and woman, servant and master will receive my spirit. You will know this is happening because of the fire and misty smoke, there will be a strange light like the sun going dark and the moon will appear blood red. After this everyone who calls on my name will be saved.'*

Then Peter went on to explain how all this was happening because of Jesus. God had broken into history and nothing would be the same again.

Suggested Hymn Here in this place new light is streaming
Listen [here](#)

Prayer

Almighty God, we build our towers, creating idols, cherishing dreams and envying friends and in our hearts we know it is wrong. In the power of your Spirit, which binds us together, may we turn from our self-dependency and accept of your way of love and your gracious forgiveness. In the business of life may we pause to hear your voice, an ever-present nudge, not shouting but whispering gently, taking us beyond this moment towards tomorrow.

Sound is all around us, amplified by a million voices and listening is sometimes hard. Vacuums form in which we hover, another moment with you, and we long for these moments to become hours and days and weeks. May your love fill our hearts and nurture our care for creation.

Heralding your message, may we openly serve your Kingdom by loving all people and being catalysts of change in the world. May our voices blend in a song of love, rising amidst the babble of voices like a rainbow in a dull and lifeless world.

Eternal God renew us with your spirit, inspire us with your love that we may be your Kingdom come.

Lord's Prayer

Reading

Psalm 104 (Psalms for a quantum world)

Praise God, the source of all being, eternal and transcendent.

We wonder at the majesty of God seen around us in the world;
we sigh with awe at the splendour that is creation, that is God.

God is in the light, the water, the clouds, the wind, the sun.

God's creative order sets the world along its path;

the light of God is the power of all life,

the water of life crossing the earth like the thread of a tapestry,

a fine silver thread bringing to life the green of creation;

from mountain spring to valley river, from inland lake to ocean,

watering the land and giving life to all plants and creatures.

Living plants for living creatures, sprout and shrub to mighty tree.

Food for life, bread and wine, oil and balm, and a home for many.

Day and night, light and dark,

each creating an opportunity for life, a harmony of provision;

spring, summer, autumn, and winter, a harmony of creation woven in time;

land and sea, a harmony of environment.

God your creation is life and living.

The pattern of creation creating the pattern of our days,

the ebb and fall of creation mirrored in the ebb and fall of life.

An eternal song of love.

Let us praise God, the source of all that is;

let us live in harmony within the pattern of creation,

respecting and cherishing the foundation of all life,

loving and living in the power of God, forever.

Praise God for the glory of creation.

Suggested hymn

Praise my soul the king of heaven

Listen [here](#)

Pentecost remembered - imagined recollections described by different people

A Disciple

I was there that day. We had arrived in Jerusalem as Jesus told us to. It was Festival time and as always Jerusalem was packed to the seams with travellers from all around, and the languages, so many different languages. On that morning we had gathered together in a house. We had just finished breakfast and were wondering what to do next when this noise started, low at first and then louder and louder, like the noise of a mighty wind rushing through a small gap. Then a strange light appeared above our heads, flickering lights like the flickering glow of a campfire. If that wasn't strange enough, we all started talking at once, but the words were like no words I had heard before – I don't know where they came from. I was terrified and headed for the door and I think the rest followed me. We drew quite a crowd and I remember someone shouting we were drunk, but then suddenly Peter got his voice back – his real voice I mean, and he made this incredible speech. I was amazed, I didn't know he knew all that stuff – I'm not sure he knew he knew all that stuff, if you know what I mean! Nothing was the same after that.

A visitor to the Festival

I was there that day. I had been to the festival before, but I had never seen anything like this. There was a strange noise in the air and the light changed, it was dark and bright all at the same time, then this crowd of men appeared on the street talking away in some weird language. What was even stranger was realising that I could understand it – it was like they were speaking my language, but they weren't. I heard others say the same. I tell you I have never experienced anything like it before or since.

A local

I was there that day. I had opened my house to quite a few visitors for the festival and most of them had breakfasted and were on their way to the temple, so I had time to go for a wander and soak up the atmosphere. It's a good time, and I enjoy the buzz of the crowds and all those different languages around me, it's like being at the centre of the world! Anyway, I hadn't gone far when I saw a crowd gathering around a group of men, so I went closer. There was talk about a strange noise and lights, but I had not noticed anything, all I could see was what appeared to be a group of men shouting at one another, but the strange thing was that all the visitors, I mean all those who had travelled from far and wide for the festival, well they were standing talking among themselves about what the men were saying as if they could all understand it. I mean, how could that be, they all spoke different languages?

Then one of the Pharisees on the edge of the crowd, you can tell them by their clothes if not by their air of importance, well he shouts out something about them being drunk and to ignore them. I didn't think it was likely it being so early in the day, but then one of the men turned and as clear as day said they were not drunk it was the Spirit that had come upon them. Never heard the likes of that before, but then he goes on to talk about prophecy and that stopped the temple folk in their tracks.

A Pharisee

I was there that day. We get all sorts travelling here for the festival and sometimes trouble breaks out. I remember the time that Jesus from Nazareth made a lot of trouble, but we sorted that out. Anyway, I was on my way to the temple when I saw a crowd and at the centre were some men talking away in some gibberish – it wasn't a language I had heard before. Then I noticed that the crowd seemed to understand and were talking about what they were saying which seemed impossible. I looked at the men more closely then, and I thought I recognised one or two of them, they had been with Jesus of Nazareth.

Recognising trouble, I shouted out trying to break up the crowd, I think I said something about ignoring them as they were obviously drunk. One of the men turned and looked straight at me, I recognised him then, Simon Peter I think his name was. With a confidence I could scarcely believe, he opened his mouth and as clear as anything started quoting scripture at me, at me! Instead of dispelling the crowd it seemed to make it grow and all around were cries of wonder and talk of lights and loud noises. I don't know how they did it, but it must have been some magic show they put on.

A child

I was there that day. I couldn't see much as usual, so I crawled through the crowd till I was at the front. In the middle of the crowd was a group of men, which wasn't that strange but I suddenly noticed a noise like the wind but there wasn't any wind, and above the men there was strange lights. It was like seeing a campfire far away on the hills at night, only it was here in broad daylight, in the middle of the city. The men were laughing and talking in loud voices and everyone was listening, and it seemed that everyone could understand even though the words were like no words I had heard before.

Then someone shouted something from the back of the crowd and one of the men stopped and turned round, then he started talking in a very loud clear voice. It must have been important, because everyone was paying attention. I slipped away then, there are always people giving long speeches at festival time, but I remember the noise and the lights, they were strange.

Suggested Song This is the day

Listen [here](#)

Church life remembered.

Take a moment to reflect on your church and try to identify a pivotal moment in the last seven years of your church. What happened and what, if anything, has it led to?

Reflection

We all remember things differently, witnesses are often subjective, people's own experience influencing their interpretation of what they have seen. Very rarely are eyewitness accounts the same. As we think about the story of Pentecost, we will bring our own experience to the story and we

understand it differently. It is a part of the wonder of being human, and on our journey together we can learn from all the different interpretations and they can also help us to understand one another. However we look at this story it is a mystery but that is okay, for mystery in spiritual terms means to see beyond the material reality, to see the presence of the divine in everything and everyone.

Spirituality is of the heart rather than the head, and in our imaginings of the eyewitness accounts we perceive a sense of mystery, people could not make sense of it and that is true of any spiritual experience our heads struggle with the logic but our hearts know. Spiritual experiences happen more than we might think, the Bible is a record of human experience of God, of spiritual experiences. Jesus had such a vivid consciousness of God that he is recorded as referring to the experience as God-in-him, which we might refer to as oneness. It is worth noting that consciousness does not equate to brain but is a connection outside the body. A sense of connecting with something other.

Spiritual experiences can happen anytime and anywhere. Pentecost was exceptional in that multiple people experience the same thing at the same time, but it is more usual for a spiritual experience to be personal. Although, it is not uncommon to find others who have experienced something similar in the same place. George McLeod, founder of the Iona Community, referred to Iona as a thin place, somewhere where the experience of the spiritual was not uncommon, a place where the connection between here and eternity was so thin that people were filled with wonder, and sensed something beyond reality. There are many such places, and sometimes we find our own special thin place. For me, walking on Rodborough Common was a thin place. Rodborough Common sits high above Stroud, one of the six 'peaks' which create the Stroud Valley, common land with cows grazing freely in the summer, and with a view clear across the Severn to the Welsh hills beyond it is peace filled. Where is your thin place, have you found it and do you know it so well you can visit in your mind and find the peace it offers?

Often, although not always, thin places are where we are tempted to be still, to stop and gaze, to pause and allow the peace to surround us. stillness is greatly undervalued in our busy, instant world and yet there is evidence that more and more people are turning to meditation. The benefits are great, meditative practice done regularly moves our centre and makes us more aware of the world around us, we begin to see things differently. We can become so busy and task orientated that we fail to realise we are not seeing things as God created them, I imagine it is a bit like developing cataracts the detail slowly disappears without you noticing at first, then when they are removed suddenly the world is in technicolour again. When we make space for stillness, we begin to see the creativity of God in the diversity of our world, its cultures, traditions and religions all demonstrate the presence of God, and more importantly we begin to recognise the presence of the divine within ourselves.

Jesus, we are told, often went into the wilderness to pray, how often we go into our still places to connect with God? Jesus shared his experiences with the disciples, and I imagine encouraged them to find their still place. Sometimes, we are more aware of the presence of God in times of trauma and despair and perhaps that is why Pentecost happened the way it did. The disciples had certainly experienced trauma, despite his warnings they had not seen Jesus's death coming, and in it all their hopes and dreams were shattered. The resurrection experiences, spiritual experiences in themselves, had begun the healing process and their shared experience possibly opened them for this extraordinary spiritual experience. It changed their lives and empowered them to move out and begin to spread the message of God's love.

How might we build stillness into our life as church? We can be so focussed on doing that we forget to simply be together, so that while we may individually experience a thin place, we are not creating the opportunity to experience the presence of God in our gathering. I have spoken my belief that there may be many in our communities who have found themselves questioning, many who may have experienced a thin place during the pandemic, how can we create a space in which they can explore this more. It will be a combination of things, we could create a spiritual corner in a room, somewhere simply to sit, perhaps with some spirituality books available, poetry, and photographs on the walls, we could start a coffee drop in with little question cards and mindfulness quotes on the tables as well as a flower in a vase, but it will be our practising of stillness that will have the greatest effect. We have already noted that worship will be different when we return, rather than mourning the change could we celebrate the opportunity the change brings and embrace God's invitation to Be still and Know? It

may lead bring healing and hope not only for our neighbours but for us. We are God's people, and we are called to be spiritual people and mystics for our time.

Suggested Hymn (Tune Bunessen) Listen [here](#)

Praise God, creator,
source of all being,
present around us,
and deep within.

When we are open,
accepting and loving,
we find connections,
journeys begin.

Praise God in singing,
dancing and playing,
showing God's wonders
through every word.

Sharing ideas,
new paths revealing,
journeys continue,
Spirit is heard.

Praise God for journeys,
leading us onward,
leading us inward,
broadening sight.

Praise God for loving
all of creation,
sustaining living
providing light.

Praise God in all things,
never forgetting,
love builds and fosters
oneness in all.

We are together,
held in creation,
bound in the Spirit,
part of the whole.

Heather Whyte 2020

Prayers

I invite you to sit for a few minutes and listen to the sounds around you, then listen to yourself breathing. You might like to have a candle to focus on, or a photograph of a favourite place, your thing place.

Or you might like to listen to this [birdsong track](#), for a few minutes

Following this I invite you to listen to the song 'There is a longing in our hearts O Lord.' and use this as your prayer.

Listen [here](#)

Offertory

As we continue to worship apart but together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

Communion

Please have a piece of bread and a small glass of wine, cordial, or water.

When Jesus was on earth, he often enjoyed meals with his friends.

On the night before he died, when darkness was beginning to fall, he sat at table with the disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem.

At this Last Supper, he broke bread and took wine, and told his disciples to remember him by following his example and sharing his message by their words and actions.

Today, we are his followers, and we accept his challenge.

Though we are apart we are one in God, and the bread and wine we share are part of creation, as we are, and in sharing them we are sharing in the eternal oneness.

As the Jesus took bread and wine, we take this bread and wine,
set apart for this holy use, in this moment.

Sing	Gathered together within God,
Tune Old Hundreth	source of all life here and beyond;
Listen here	here we will share in bread and wine,
	gifts of great love for humankind.

Jesus gave thanks, let us give our thanks and praise

Let us pray:

Loving God, you created this world in all its wonder for us to enjoy.
In Jesus, we have discovered a new way to be,
a new way to see the world, and a new way to understand you.
In you we are one with all creation. In you is all love.

For the gift of your love we thank you,
and join with those who have gone before in a hymn of praise:
Eternal God of power and might, all creation is full of your glory

Praise be to you.

Your blessing is on all who gather in your name

Praise be to you.

For your gracious kindness to all your people, we give you thanks.
We thank you for Jesus and his message of hope, life eternal in the Christ,
the one who was before, is now and forever will be.

We thank you that Jesus has revealed to us our oneness within you,
challenging our false understanding of separateness.

We thank you that we are free to gather together,
strengthened by your love and encouraging each other in your love.

Take these your gifts of bread and wine,
that in them, we may know your presence,
and in sharing them be filled with your love. Amen

Jesus took bread,
and having given thanks, he broke it,
and said, 'This is my body, which will be broken.
Whenever you share together remember me.'

Loving God, we share the eternal oneness of this bread.

From seed to grain, from grain to flour, from flour to bread blessed by creativity. As we eat this bread,
we are blessed in its oneness with creation and our oneness with you and all people.

In the same way Jesus took a cup of wine saying, 'this wine is the new covenant, whenever you drink it
remember me.'

This is the promise of eternal life in the oneness of God.

Loving God, in this cup we remember the promise of eternal life in your oneness. As we drink this
wine reveal in us your Spirit that we may journey in love, remembering that the light of Christ gives
new life to all and helps us see things afresh.

Having shared together we commit ourselves anew to the way of Jesus, the way of love. May our lives
be witness to oneness, and our words and actions be witness to your love, in Jesus name Amen.

Sing (Old Hundreth) Listen here	Here having shared a holy feast, given in love for all to eat, now we will journey on in love, one with each other and with God.
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Suggested hymn Listen here	There's a Spirit in the air
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Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through
Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and
every day. Amen.