

Filled to overflowing

Acts 2.1-21

The Holy Spirit fills the disciples as they are gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Jewish Pentecost festival. The Spirit empowers the disciples to proclaim the gospel for all those assembled in Jerusalem to hear, even though they spoke many languages. Peter assures the crowd that this is a fulfilment of a prophecy from Joel.

Now read **Acts 2.1-21** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

The writer of Acts paints a vivid picture of this outpouring of God's Spirit, with echoes of the Sinai story where God is seen and heard as wind and fire. There is a clear indication of both diversity and unity as the Spirit rests on 'each of them' who are there to celebrate the feast of Pentecost together, and those from many nations hear the message in their own language. Peter's reference to Joel's prophecy also reminds his hearers that the Spirit is for all people.



Ask yourself: What do you see in this picture? When have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit?

FIND OUT



Investigate the power of the wind and how it makes wind turbines work by watching a YouTube video such as https://youtu.be/U5_cZ3IRUkU.

The wind generates the power to turn the blades, which in turn generates electricity, which powers our homes. If you can, watch it with others and discuss how this might represent the Holy Spirit – often described as a wind – working in our lives.

Breathing Prayer

Take 10 minutes every day this week for some quiet breathing prayers. If time is limited, set an alarm so that you don't keep checking the time! Find a quiet place to sit comfortably. Breathe slowly in and out, as deeply as you can. At first, focus purely on your breathing. Once you have a rhythm going, pray in silence as you breathe in: 'Spirit of the living God'; and as you breathe out: 'Fall afresh on me' (or other suitable words).



You will need: a paper plate, crayons, scissors and string.

Make a wind spinner. Make a small hole in the exact centre. Draw a spiral pattern on your plate, starting about 2cm from the edge. Decorate your plate in any way you choose. Cut out the spiral shape so that you have one long spiral strip of decorated card. Attach string at the marked centre, then hang the spinner somewhere (e.g. near a window, or in a porch) where the breeze will stir it. Watch how it spins and dances. Think about how the Holy Spirit makes us move and 'dance' in tune with God's breath.



PLAY

As we celebrate the Spirit pouring out to the whole of creation, have fun pouring some water! Fill a jug with water; pour it onto a dry patch of ground and watch it spread – how far does it go? Fill the jug to overflowing, and watch it pour over the sides. Watch some water run down a window pane. Or watch the water falling in a bathroom shower when you stand under it. Reflect on the different ways that God's Spirit refreshes, renews, cleanses and travels through the world.

WALK

Think about God's Spirit pouring out to the whole creation by making a 'creation collage' – ideally with other people (family or friends). Look in the garden, or go for a walk, to find as many natural flame-coloured objects as you can. How many different objects can you find? Who found the most? Arrange the objects on a table, or stick them onto a large sheet of card or paper. Challenge each other to say how each item might reflect the nature of God.

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

With the sound of a whirlwind it came, rushing into the house where the followers of Jesus were gathered.

There was a commotion and flames as the Holy Spirit came, resting on each of the disciples like a tongue of fire.

As it whooshed into the room, the Spirit filled them all with foreign languages, and the disciples spoke in words they didn't understand. Inspired, and with words gushing out of them, they went out into the streets.

It was the festival of Pentecost and Jerusalem was full of Jews from all over the world. When the disciples came out into the street, the crowds heard them speaking the message of Jesus in their own languages. They were amazed. 'How can this be?' they asked. 'All the followers of Jesus are from Galilee, but we can hear their message loud and clear in words we understand.'

Not everyone was impressed, though. Some listeners sneered, 'These people are drunk.' Peter, still filled to overflowing with the Spirit's power, stood up in front of all the people.



'We are not drunk,' he said. 'It's only nine in the morning. No, you are seeing and hearing what the prophet Joel spoke about in the Old Testament.'

Peter continued: 'Joel said, "God will pour his Spirit on

all people; children will prophesy and adults will see holy visions. The Spirit is for everyone, men, women and children; there will be signs in heaven and on earth, and these will be the last days. Everyone who calls on the Lord's name shall be saved.'"

Like a fiery whirlwind it came, and the Spirit breathed new life into the followers of Jesus.

Acts 2.1-21

Did you know?

- Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival.
- A prophet is someone who wrote down messages from God, a long time ago about the promised Messiah.

Acts 2.1-21 (NRSV)

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

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."