

Activities: Our activities focus on Acts 2:14-41

The following may help you pray. You may wish to do some, all or none. You may wish to come back to these at a later date.

1. Lectio Divina. Acts 2:14-35

Read this passage.

Read it again slowly. Write down any words or phrases that stand out for you.

Read it again and ask God what he wants to say to you through this passage. Write down words or phrases that come to mind.

Read the words/phrases you have written down. Prayerfully consider how you will respond to this passage. Ask the Spirit to lead your thoughts and your prayers.

2. So, what does that mean to me?

Read Peter's speech in **Acts 2:14-35** and consider what happened. Consider the effects of the Holy Spirit on Peter. He was transformed and he:

- Spoke boldly; he challenged misperceptions
- Explained fulfilment scripture and told the Gospel story
- Explained Jesus was pouring out his spirit and what that would mean -
 - Prophecy and visions
 - Dreams, signs and wonders

Stop for a moment and consider what each of these means to you?

Ask yourself -

- What does/would it mean for me to prophesy, to have visions, to dream dreams?
- What does/would it mean for me to experience signs and wonders?
- Do I speak with boldness, challenging and explaining when necessary?

Think about this. Pray about this. Write down your thoughts.

Allow God to speak to you.

Read Acts 2:36-41

Consider the effects of the Holy Spirit on those around Peter:

- Hearts were stirred; people responded, repented and were baptised
- Sins were forgiven and people received the Holy Spirit
- The numbers of believers grew

Stop for a moment and consider the effect of the Holy Spirit on you?

Ask yourself -

- Is your heart stirred and, if so, how will you respond?
- Do you seek forgiveness and want to be refilled with the Holy Spirit?
- Do you want to see the number of believers grow around you? If so, what part do you play in that?

Pray about this. Write down your thoughts. Allow God to speak to you.

3. Keep being filled

Does God ever make you smile? For me, it is usually in those moments where I think I have everything sussed and, low and behold, God has very different ideas! This week, I have found myself pretty tired and empty and God has pointed out to me that is a pretty good place to start recognising a need to be filled! Do you want to be filled or do you prefer to manage in your own strength? This is a serious question. For years, I was brought up to be independent and most of us like to think we can manage ourselves but God requires us to be focused on Him and not ourselves.

If I ask the children to explain to me who God is, who Jesus is, and who the Holy Spirit is, they can answer the first two much better than the Holy Spirit. I think that reflects many Church goers as well. Yet the Holy Spirit is the encourager, the guide, the strength and the power. Jesus recognises what we need. So why are we less aware or more wary of the part of God that is most present for us but we can be reticent to access?

Two Reflections of Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

Read John 14:15-31

When I reflected on all the times God has enabled the Holy Spirit to fill me up, I had to learn to stop, focus and wait on God. We need to find our own way but here are some that have helped.

1) Imagine you are on a beach.



How much of your “to do” lists can you achieve on a beach; it is difficult to read, to write, to eat. Just take time to let go of all the clutter and demands on daily life and stop. Make yourself comfortable, lie down or sit down and allow your muscles to relax. Enjoy the view, listen to the sounds of water washing up and down, give thanks for the beauty and offer yourself to God for His purpose. Let your mind go and allow God the chance to speak, or touch you. Ask God to fill you. Spirit of the Living God Fall Afresh on Me

Listen to the waves washing up on the shore; they are constant, sometimes bigger than others but always there, just as God is always there. The Holy Spirit will always wash over you and fill you if you trust.

In all of these activities, be prepared that you may fall asleep, you may cry, you may laugh. Just let what happens happen. Trust and be free to what God offers.

2) Soaking Prayer

I have most enjoyed soaking prayer lying down on a comfortable bed or mat. It is very simple but very profound. The more you make time for God the more benefits you will feel.

God so desires we spend time in His presence: *“You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.”* (Psalm 16:11, NLT).

As we sit quietly and rest in the presence of Jesus, we are able to “soak” in the living water that is the Holy Spirit: *“Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”* (John 7:38-39, NLT).

‘Soaking Prayer’ is an encounter with God that frequently results in greater awareness of His love, in renewal of our faith, and in healing areas of brokenness in our lives.



Simple steps for Soaking Prayer:

- Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down.
- Allow your thoughts to quiet down (don't fight them).
- Invite the Holy Spirit to pour over you and soak you in His presence.
- Offer your whole self – mind, body and soul – in surrender to the Holy Spirit.
- Focus on the Lord's presence within you and around you.
- Rest in faith, believing He is working in you.
- Take as much time as you can. Get up refreshed and full of the Holy Spirit.
- Watch as God transforms you and the world around you.

During these times, you may feel the weight of His presence hovering over you, touching you. The more you soak in His presence, the more encounters you will have, the closer you come to the Lover of your soul.

4. The Pentecost Cake - a recipe for success. Read Acts 2: 37-41

Often Pentecost is viewed as the 'birthday' of the church. In the last session we will 'make' a cake. In the meantime, think about the church as a cake.

We (the church) are like a birthday cake in God's hands.

When we make a cake, we choose our ingredients from the cupboard: For God, we are the ingredients. God chooses us. Although we are all different (different backgrounds, talents, personalities), God takes us and sets us apart for his special use.

We put our ingredients in a bowl. God puts us together and calls that 'church' – a community of believers.

We mix up our ingredients. God mixes us together – asking us to work and pray together and to be with one another.

At this stage, the cake mix is raw and not much use. It needs the heat of the oven to bake it and bind it together. God sends his Spirit (fire) to bind us together. On our own, we do not achieve

much but the Spirit transforms us into one body.

We set the oven to the right temperature and wait patiently for the ingredients to bake and come together. Taking the cake out too early, means it won't be ready. Spiritually we have to be patient as we wait for God to do his will. We wait patiently as we grow together as a body of believers (the church).

Eventually we end up with a lovely cake – a delight to see and partake of. We are all united as one through Jesus. By working, praying and being together we are the body of Christ. We are a delight to God.

We decorate the cake and put a birthday candle on it. It's time to celebrate. Today we remember the events of Pentecost and celebrate the fact that God continues to pour out his Spirit on us and His church.

Usually, we would share our cake with others. God wants us to share what we have as well as our faith and ourselves with others.

Activity:

If you are able and have ingredients, make a cake. As you do this, think about the church:

- how God puts us together through the power of his Spirit and transforms us
- how God is changing your church at the moment
- think and pray about areas in your church that you think need to be changed.

Decorate the cake. If you have one, place a single birthday candle on it. In the last session, light it and celebrate the coming of God's Holy Spirit.

Alternatively, you may have a cake in the cupboard or something equivalent e.g. scone, tea loaf.

If you don't have a cake or a candle – don't worry – just get a biscuit or something to eat for next session!!

5. Ponder upon these words

Some words from Sue

Persevere. I grew up in a Christian tradition that dismissed or side-lined the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a drunk, whom I met in a brief encounter in a Church we both visited for the first time, who prayed that I might experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The Church rejected both of us, I helped the drunk become sober; he helped me know the full joy of the Holy Spirit through His prayers. How blessed I have been as a result of His prayers.

A poem from Joyce

We live in a world of uncertainty; times of lockdown and of stress.
We look to see the way ahead but all we see is mess.
We know that we are not alone; we journey on together,
but sometimes it is hard, Lord, when we are at the end of our tether.
But we come in faith this afternoon, empty and ready to be still.
We offer open hearts and hands and ears on this special Pentecost.
Fill us with your Spirit Lord till we are overfull,
that we may go from here and tell of you to others who are lost.