# Church Together

Celebrating The Holy Spirit 19th May 2024



### Welcome

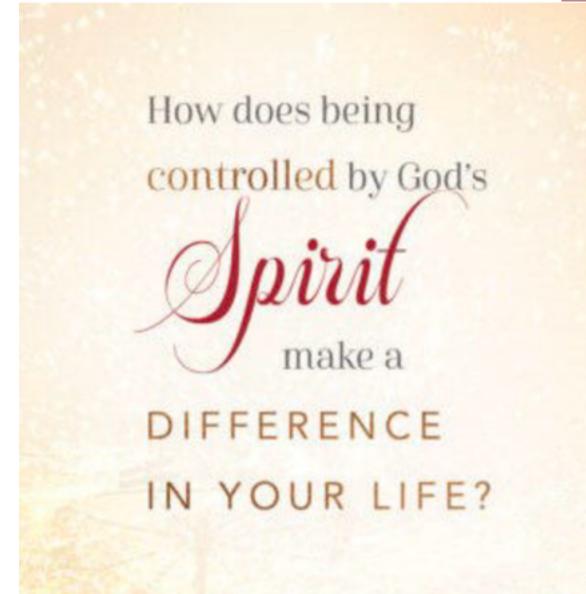
In today's Service we will be looking at: Mark 1 v. 1 - 13

#### & Acts 2 v. 1 - 41

The theme for our service today is: **Celebrating The** Holy Spirit

Today our service also includes: **Communion** We hope that you will be able to engage with everything that has been produced for today's service and that you would be able to **Be Blessed By** 

The Power And Presence Of The Holy Spirit In Your Life!



## What Is Pentecost?

Pentecost is from the Greek word '**Pentekostos**', which means '**fifty**'. It's the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week and in Judaism is called the Feast of Weeks (**Leviticus 23 v. 16**).

The word Pentecost has become more common in the UK, but traditionally the Church celebrated it as **Whitsun – 'White Sunday'**. It's believed that this is because it was a day for baptisms and those being baptised would wear white. Another explanation is that it derives from the Anglo – Saxon word '**wit**', which we still use for verbal cleverness but which meant 'understanding' – Pentecost was when God poured out the wisdom of the Spirit. Pentecost is the fulfilment of two promises. One promise is in the Old Testament – **Joel 2 v. 28**, which says 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people', and one in the New, where Jesus says he will send another Counsellor, the Spirit of truth (**John 16 v. 5 – 15**).

It is said to marks the beginning of Christianity as a purposeful movement and a new community. When Peter preached immediately afterwards, around 3,000 people believed and were baptised.

## **Call To Worship**

#### Psalm 93 v. 1 - 5 NLT

The Lord is King! He is robed in majesty. Indeed, the Lord is robed in majesty and armed with strength.

The world is firmly established;

It cannot be shaken.

Your throne, O Lord, has been established from time immemorial.

You yourself are from the everlasting past. The mighty oceans have roared, O Lord. The mighty oceans roar like thunder;

The mighty oceans roar as they pound the shore.

But mightier than the violent raging of the seas,

Mightier than the breakers on the shore - The Lord above is mightier than these!

Your royal decrees cannot be changed.

The nature of your reign, O Lord, is holiness forever.

## A Prayer For Pentecost

Spirit of God, you are the breath of creation, the wind of change that blows through our lives, opening us up to new dreams, and new hopes, a new life in Jesus Christ. Forgives us our closed minds which barricade themselves against new ideas, preferring the past to what you might want to do through us tomorrow.

Forgive us our closed eyes which fail to see the needs of your world, blind to opportunities of service and love. Forgive us our closed hands which clutch our gifts and our wealth for our own use alone.

Forgive us our closed hearts which limit our affections to ourselves and our own.

Spirit of new life, forgive us and break down the prison walls of our selfishness, that we might be open to your love and open for the service of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray.

#### Amen

# Song Suggestion

O God Of Burning Cleansing Flame, Send The Fire!



# **Bible Reading**

#### Mark 1 v. 1 – 13 NIV

#### John the Baptist Prepares the Way

1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, 2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you, 3 who will prepare your way"

"a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord,

make straight paths for him."

4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

#### The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." 12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, 13 and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

# Song Suggestion

#### Spirit Of The Living God



Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38

# Church Together Thought - Part A

During a radio programme back in 1998 a group of people who were registered as being blind were invited to stand beside an elephant and to touch it. They had all heard about what elephants were like and had tried to piece together an idea of what they were like from what they had been told. Yet they were all astonished when they were faced with the reality of the animal: its sheer size, the texture of its skin, the shape of its ears, the flexibility of its trunk, the relative smallness of its eyes and tail. The reality only related vaguely to what they had heard. Piecing it all together happened only when they stood beside the elephant and touched it. Today is Pentecost Sunday, a time when the church remembers and celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit as outlined in the passage from Acts 2 v.1 - 41. A passage that invites us to think about the Holy Spirit and which give us some understanding of who the Spirit is. Like the elephant to the blind people, the Holy Spirit is unseen, but the Spirit is also inaccessible to any of our senses and so can be hard to understand and even comprehend. Yet God has given us a way in which we can learn about the Spirit, through the pictures given to us in the Bible. Some examples of this is seen in the Holy Spirit being like: water when we're thirsty; like wind when we need stirring up and sending out; like fire when we need power to serve God; like breath when we are

spiritually lifeless; like a dove symbolising power, wisdom and holiness; like oil to set us apart for service. Each of these pictures gives us an insight into the character of the Spirit, but only when we look at all these ideas and at each idea in depth can we begin to grasp the whole picture of who the Holy Spirit really is.

The amazing thing is that it can take a lifetime and more to exhaust the meaning of a symbol and yet we can grasp something profound, even when we are very young or very new to faith, by encountering a Bible picture for the first time. Imagine a blind person standing beside the elephant suddenly realising with awe and wonder how huge an elephant really is!

If you read various passages from Scripture, The Holy Spirit is described in many ways, but all are to do with the way in which people are empowered for service. The Spirit is the life - giver and life is never static. Being alive in the Spirit means action.

Jesus in **John 7 v. 38** described the Spirit as water which was flowing out; the wind and the fire experienced on the day of Pentecost moved the church from the upper room in Jerusalem into the whole world as described in **Acts 2 v. 2, 3**; the oil on Aaron's head set him apart to serve Israel as a priest as we are told in **Exodus 29 v. 7**; the Spirit appeared as a dove when Jesus was about to begin his ministry; Jesus' breath that is recorded in **John 20 v. 21, 22** commissioned his disciples to bring news of forgiveness and new life to the world.

As Christians we can be certain that we have the Spirit of God. However, Jesus did not command us to receive the Spirit once and for all, but to receive the Holy Spirit continually as we read in **Ephesians 5 v. 18** so that we can serve Christ in the church and the world not for a limited time only, but throughout our lives.

As we have already noted, the Spirit of God, his presence in today's world, is invisible, inaudible, intangible — and yet no Christian can help but be aware of the Holy Spirit in action. The only language we can find for the Spirit is in symbols.

Mark 1 v. 1 - 13 helps us glimpse the Holy Spirit at work by reference to three of those symbols.

#### HOLY

What kind of spirit is the Spirit of God? He is a Holy Spirit as referenced in **Mark 1 v. 8**. 'Holy' meaning 'set apart'. For example, in the worship of the Old Testament, there was a Holy Place consecrated as God's, into which only the priest could go under exceptional conditions as we can see in **Exodus 29 v. 29, 30**. Holiness was the attribute which made something chosen and special for God. Holiness was the condition under which God revealed himself to humankind.

**Mark 1 v. 8** tells us that it is this kind of Spirit with which Christians are to be baptised. When the Bible calls us to be holy as we can see in **1 Peter 1 v. 15, 16**, it is calling us to be people of the Spirit — behaving with an awareness that we are special to God, committed to seeking his revelation and direction.

#### ANOINTING

The word 'Christ' as referred to in **Mark 1 v. 1** means 'anointed one'. Anointing with olive oil was (and still is in some circumstances, for instance a coronation) a symbol of the Spirit of God being given to someone for a particular service. For Aaron it was preparing him to be a priest (**Exodus 29 v. 7**). For Elisha it was preparing him to be a prophet (**1 Kings 19 v. 16**). For David it was preparing him to be king (**1 Samuel 16 v. 13**). Priest, prophet, and king all seem to come together in Jesus, and in **Luke 4 v. 18** he speaks of the Spirit anointing him in a way which fulfilled Old Testament expectations of the Christ.

Watchman Nee (Ni To - Sheng), who was a twentieth century Chinese evangelist, once said: 'Think! We who are mere nonentities can have the same Spirit anointing us as anointed Moses the friend of God, upon David the beloved king, and upon Elijah the mighty prophet'. We recognise at Pentecost that the Spirit has come to us so that we can be enabled to continue Jesus' work in the world. Filled with the Holy Spirit, we are now the hands and feet and voice of Jesus in the world today.

#### DOVE – LIKE

In a culture where spirits could be charged with violence and evil, as seen in **Mark 1 v. 26**, the Spirit of God was seen by all to be of a different kind of 'spirit' altogether. Elizabeth Stuart, a prominent theologian, said: 'God's Spirit is no tame dove but a wild goose, free of ecclesiastical attempts to control and confine it, that makes his home in the most unlikely places. The Spirit comes not in quiet conformity but demanding to be heard'.

In **Mark 1 v. 10**, the Holy Spirit comes with gentleness and with him come reassurance and tenderness as illustrated in **Mark 1 v. 11**. This is surely the same brooding quality with which the Spirit hovered over the potential of the yetto-be created world as referenced to in **Genesis 1 v. 2**. There is nothing to fear in the coming of the Spirit of God – his concern is for our good. What a wonder that the Spirit of the creation of the cosmos is one-and-the-same Spirit of the commissioning of Jesus and is one-and-thesame Spirit who enlivens you and me!

In **Mark 1 v. 12** we read that The Spirit did not leave Jesus where he was — he sent him to work. Equally, the Spirit comes to us not just to make us feel good, but to prepare us for service for the Lord.

John V Taylor, in his book, The Go-Between God, says: 'My own attempt to understand the Holy Spirit has convinced me that he is active in precisely those experiences which are very common — experiences of recognition, sudden insight, an influx of awareness when you wake up and become alive to something ... Every time a human being cries, 'Ah! I see it now!' that's what I mean by the Holy Spirit'.

# Song Suggestion

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty



## **Bible Reading**

#### Acts 2 v. 1 – 41NIV

#### The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking9 Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" 13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Peter Addresses the Crowd

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions,

18 your old men will dream dreams.

Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

19 and they will prophesy.

I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below,

20 blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood 21 before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. 25 David said about him:

"'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; 27

my body also will rest in hope,

because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, 28 you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

29 "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "'The Lord said to my Lord: 35 "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." 36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

#### **Come Holy Spirit**

Come Holy Spirit, enter our silences. Come Holy Spirit, into the depths of our longing. Come Holy Spirit, our friend and our lover. Come Holy Spirit, unmask our pretending. Come Holy Spirit, sustain our weakness. Come Holy Spirit, redeem our creation.



# Church Together Thought - Part B

As we continue to think about celebrating the Holy Spirit on this Pentecost Sunday, we can see in **Acts 2 v. 1 - 41**, that Luke, writing a sequel to his Gospel probably in the late 60's A.D. conveys the message about The Holy Spirit being given to the early church.

In **John 14 v. 15 – 31; 16 v. 5 – 15** we see Jesus promising that the Holy Spirit would come and give the disciples power, and that in this power they would tell others about him. Now in this passage that we read in **Acts 2** we see that promise being delivered. Luke's account of the coming of the Holy Spirit is a remarkable story. It is full of sound and action, all of which testifies to the Holy Spirit's power.

It is a timely reminder to us that though the Spirit is with us and is our helper, he remains part of the Godhead and should be honoured as such. The fact that the disciples immediately began to talk of what God had done in languages that the members of the crowd could understand reminds us that the Spirit's power is given to us for a purpose – that of continuing the work that Jesus has entrusted to us.

#### **POWER FROM ON HIGH**

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples waited in Jerusalem just as Jesus had told them to. Suddenly the Holy Spirit manifested his presence by sound, in the form of wind, sight in the form of fire, and speech in the form of new languages. The believers were filled with the Holy Spirit, and God's renewing power began its work of transforming them from the inside out.

This marked a new era in history and time as God's powerful presence entered the lives of all believers. The Holy Spirit still works in the lives of believers today, transforming them, healing their wounds, empowering them to be witnesses of Jesus, and equipping them to do God's work in the world.

Our familiarity with the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost can blind us to the awesome power that was on display that day. Have you ever wondered at how you might have felt if one of the church worship services or gatherings you were in was suddenly blown apart by the sound of a mighty wind, and what looked like tongues of fire that began moving around in all directions?

Maybe panic and confusion would be our most likely responses — would we instinctively recognise that we were in the presence of something much more powerful than us. To a degree that might be an appropriate response, because on the day of Pentecost it was someone rather than something that burst in on the disciples – the Holy Spirit. He comes to equip us to live as God's people. This is power with a purpose.

#### **POWER WITH A PURPOSE**

When the Holy Spirit came in power, the results were immediately apparent in the apostles, especially Peter. It was Peter who had previously denied that he even knew Jesus as we are told in **Luke 22 v. 54 – 62,** who was now confidently preaching and helping others to discover this new power for living.

After asserting his sobriety, Peter told the crowd about the power behind his transformation. Luke makes it abundantly clear that the languages the Spirit enabled the disciples to speak on the day of Pentecost were the established languages of other parts of the ancient world. Those visitors to Jerusalem from those different places recognised what the disciples were saying. And what they were saying is crucial!

The amazing power of the Holy Spirit had been promised by the prophet Joel, many centuries earlier. It was by quoting **Joel 2 v. 28 – 32**, that Peter was able to stress the universal impact of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would be given to all God's people – young and old, men and women, masters, and servants.

Acts 2 v. 21 tells us that God's power for living is for everyone – regardless of their race, gender, or social class – who recognize his or her helpless state and who are prepared to ask for God's mercy and help. No one with a humble heart is beyond the reach of God's powerful help. When we experience God's power in our lives, we will never be the same again, nor will we be able to keep the Good News to ourselves. The Spirit is given to us that we might be empowered to fulfil God's purposes for our lives and for his world.

#### **POWER TO GOD'S PEOPLE**

Peter's preaching led the people to examine their lives for themselves, and to ask the apostles what it was that they had to do. They readily recognized their need for salvation in Christ and went on to receive God's powerful help. Peter assured them that by turning from their sins and surrendering their lives to God, that they would be forgiven, and that they would receive the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit.

We too can expect the same blessings if we bring our own failings before a holy God. His forgiveness of our sins will set us free. For the presence of the Holy Spirit will give us the perseverance to carry on as we follow Jesus. Then we can fully experience the transformation and blessing he longs to bring into our lives.

As we are living in the post - Pentecost era, we can be assured that the same Holy Spirit is working in and through us, and it is the responsibility of each of us to open ourselves up to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. He may or may not come to us with the sound of wind and tongues of fire, but he will undoubtedly change us and enable us to proclaim Jesus afresh to our generation if we are willing to let him have his way amongst us.

#### CELEBRATING THE HOLY SPIRIT

"IT'S NOT DIFFICULT TO LIVE THIS CHRISTIAN LIFE WITHOUT THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!"

## Communion

As we gather today we come to share in this act of Communion together, remembering the love and sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the Cross. We remember the price that he paid for our sins and for our forgiveness. We gather together here in Church as the body of Christ in order to share the bread and the cup together. We come in faith, conscious of our weakness, seeking to renounce our sin, humbly putting our trust in Christ, and seeking his grace, as we look forward to the day when he will come again.

#### A prayer of Thanksgiving:

Heavenly Father, we offer you this day our praise and thanksgiving; we thank you for raising Jesus to life again and exalting him so that we might call him 'Lord', as we offer our faithfulness to him and seek to share in his ways. Loving Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, powerfully present in your people and your world, for the fellowship of your church, and for all the means of grace and the hope of glory. Living God, fill us with your Spirit, that as we share this bread and this cup we may feed on the body and blood of Christ, and be empowered for service in your world. Heavenly Father, accept our prayers and thanksgiving in the name of Jesus, the light of the world and the life of your people.

#### Our normal practice is to say these words:

For I received from the Lord what I also pass on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

#### 1 Corinthians 11 v. 22 - 26

After all have received the bread and the cup and after a period of silence, we end with these words in a Prayer of Thanksgiving for the blessings received at the Table:

**Leader**: Your death, O Lord, we commemorate. Your resurrection we celebrate. Your final coming we await. May the glory be to you, O Lord.

**Response**: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Loving Gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all who know you as Lord and Saviour. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your eternal kingdom, and that our love may be your love in the world where we find ourselves., through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray these things.

#### Amen

## Prayers Of Intercession

Lord God, today we celebrate the birthday of the Church. The followers of Jesus waited behind closed and locked doors, yet your Spirit came to them in power and authority, changing them from bewildered individuals into a proclaiming people.

We pray today for ourselves and for your whole Church, that we might be open to the empowering presence of your Spirit, open to the gracious gifting of your Spirit, and open to the adventurous leading of your Spirit. Holy Spirit, as you filled those first Christians with an enthusiasm for the gospel of Christ, so enthuse us we pray, that we would go to the places that we so often visit, and enable us to share and preach the Good News to others.

Holy Spirit, all who heard the apostles' preaching understood their own language. Fill us we pray, with a vision of the whole earth filled with your glory. Send us out to all people, of every race and colour, rich and poor, powerful and oppressed, that we might be messengers of the gospel and servants of your kingdom.

Holy Spirit, that first Christian community began a life of sharing in worship and in living. Fill us with a generous spirit we pray, ready to share what we have and who we are with others. Break down we pray, our pride that we might have the grace to receive from the riches of others. Holy Spirit, God with us, fill your people with power and love, vision and purpose that we might be agents of your gospel for the whole world. We ask these prayers through the mighty name of Jesus.

#### Amen

# The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in Heaven Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, On earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power And the glory, forever and ever. **Amen**  you will receive power when the HOLY SPIRIT comes on you and you will be my WITNESSES in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria & to the ends of the EARTH

**ACTS 1:8** 

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# Tithes, Gifts & Offerings

No matter wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you are, together we can grow as Church Together here at Salendine Nook.

If you feel that your are able to, then please keep on giving with a cheerful and grateful heart, praising God for all that he has given to you and share in the finances of the church.



#### Pentecost People

Come, Holy Spirit, and make us Pentecost people. Let your wisdom and right judgment guide our decisions and temper our impulses. Let knowledge and understanding increase our capacity for empathy and compassion. Let reverence and awe fill us with gratitude and respect for all of creation. Give us the courage to witness boldly to our faith in word and deed. Through and with and in Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

# Song Suggestion

My Jesus, My Saviour



## Blessing

We go from here, Lord, with you to guide us;

may friends and visitors enrich us,

May what you have revealed to us teach us,

May the Bible and our prayers direct us, And so may every step of our journey please you.

Amen