

# Spirit for All

There are several accounts of the giving of the Spirit in scripture. In Acts we read how the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost transformed the disciples into a community of faith that was bold to witness publicly about what God was doing in their midst. We also are given Spirit's gifts of life, empowerment, vision, and strength as we proclaim God's message of love to all people.

## Focus Scripture: Acts 2:1–21

In Israel's tradition, Pentecost was the celebration of the Feast of Weeks, the spring barley harvest. When the Jews were no longer an agriculture-based society, the rabbis gave the festival a new meaning – a commemoration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. God shaped a new people through the establishing of a covenant.

Luke is the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Acts 2, in the second part of Luke's story, describes the celebration of the festival of Pentecost after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. Jews have gathered from around the known world in Jerusalem. Acts tells how the disciples – including not only those included in "The Twelve," but many other men and women who followed Jesus – have continued to meet since the day of the Resurrection. They are gathered in once place, and then an amazing thing happens. There is a sound "like the rush of a violent wind" (an echo of the wind of the Spirit blowing over the waters of creation). Divided tongues "as of fire" (symbols of God's presence) appear and rest on the head of each disciple. All are filled with the Spirit and begin to speak in many languages, telling the story of Jesus the Christ in ways that all can understand.

The disciples speak confidently to all who will listen. After some accuse the disciples of being drunk, Peter addresses the crowd, telling them that the prophecies of Joel have been fulfilled. God is pouring the Spirit upon all. Once again we hear an inclusive message. All who call on God's name will be saved. The Spirit is for all.

As we celebrate Pentecost today, it is important to keep in mind that we are telling the story of a particular day. It is not that God's Spirit had never been given before. Throughout scripture, we hear the story of how God

has come near to humankind, strengthening and encouraging those who walk in God's ways. But in this instance, the community has been empowered in a new way. The Christian community begins with an event celebrating God's Spirit, present with the people. This community is empowered by the Spirit to move out into the world, doing God's work and telling the good news to all.

Ezekiel 37:1–14 speaks of new life and power in a valley full of dry bones. God's Spirit breathes into the bones, and they are given life and flesh. This vision was a message of hope for the people of Israel in a time of exile and despair.

Psalm 104:24–34, 35b is a song of praise to God who creates and sustains by sending forth the Spirit.

In Romans 8:22–27 Paul describes what life in the Spirit is like. God's Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us. Faith in Christ does not mean that our doubts and fears are gone. The Spirit can speak for us at a level we cannot speak for ourselves, and continues to work in us as we live into our calling as God's children.

John 15:26–27, 16:4b–15 offers more metaphors for the Spirit – the advocate who speaks on our behalf, the helper, the one who comforts, strengthens, and empowers. The Spirit will illuminate Jesus' teaching for believers and propel them to tell of God's love and care.

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As we enter the Season after Pentecost, we will explore further what it means to live in the Spirit and to celebrate our place in the community of faith. What is the message you are called to proclaim? How is the Spirit guiding you and your church as you learn what it means to be a disciple?

May 31, 2009

Focus Scripture  
Acts 2:1–21

Additional Scriptures  
Ezekiel 37:1–14  
Psalm 104:24–34, 35b  
Romans 8:22–27  
John 15:26–27;  
16:4b–15

Living God, as you sent your Holy Spirit upon the disciples, strengthening them to preach the gospel to all people, transform us that we may witness to your love wherever we are, drawing all people to you. Amen.

If you have Internet access, visit [www.spiritseasons.com](http://www.spiritseasons.com) to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

