



LUTHERAN
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INTERNATIONAL
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Pentecost

SEASONAL DEVOTIONAL AND PRAYER GUIDE

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Pentecost is often remembered for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the birth of the Church's public witness. It is also a reminder that God gathers people together in Christ. Across languages, cultures, nations, and generations, the Holy Spirit creates one people who confess one Lord and share one faith.

As we journey through Pentecost, this devotional resource invites us to reflect on the gift of unity that God gives to his people. Christian unity isn't something we manufacture through our own effort, structures, or goodwill. It is God's gift to the Church, won for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and nurtured by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout this devotional guide you'll read reflections from brothers and sisters in Christ from many countries, cultures, languages, and church contexts. Some serve as bishops, pastors, lecturers, mission leaders, educators, and church workers. Others serve as volunteers, committee members, or faithful members of local congregations. Their experiences and perspectives differ, yet together they bear witness to the same Lord Jesus Christ.

As LCA International Mission, we give thanks for the many relationships God has given the Lutheran Church of Australia and New Zealand through our international mission partnerships. These relationships remind us that the Church is far larger than any one congregation, district, nation, or culture. Through Christ, we've been brought into one body. Through the Holy Spirit, we share one faith, one hope, and one mission.

The reflections in this booklet are an invitation to listen to the experiences of fellow Christians, to learn from one another, and to celebrate the many ways God is at work throughout his Church. They remind us that unity is not found in sameness, but in our shared identity as God's people and our common trust in Jesus Christ.

As you read, reflect, and pray, may the Holy Spirit draw you more deeply into the life of Christ and into fellowship with his people. May these devotions encourage you to value the gifts God gives through others, seek reconciliation where there is division, and rejoice in the rich diversity of Christ's Church.

May God strengthen the bonds of faith and love that unite his people across the world, and may we together bear witness to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Come, Holy Spirit. Unite your people in Christ and equip us to serve as one body for the sake of your mission. Amen.

- Pastor Mark Schultz and Erin Kerber
LCA International Mission

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27

Let's start early. Not at day 6 when God creates human beings, nor day 3 when the plants are created. Not even at day 1 when God starts creating. Let's start before day 1, when there's no creation, only God.

Already then, there are relations. God isn't only relating to creation, but there is relationship within God. Our God is a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each is fully God, and yet they're actually distinct. So, even before creation, God isn't one isolated person. There's an eternal We, not just an I. The very nature of our God is relational.

Because God is relational, we're relational. God says 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' This is the starting point of God's relationship with us. God didn't create humans once at the beginning of the world and then left them to their own devices. Rather, every person is in a relationship with God at every moment of their life. Before we measure ourselves by achievement, ability, or social standing, we must receive the truth God declares: we belong to him. Our worth isn't earned; it's bestowed.

As God is a relational God, being created in his image means we're relational. 'We are created in God's image' means 'we are made for relationship' with God and other people. Being relational isn't only God's nature, it's ours as well. Though sin has broken this relationship and distorted God's image in us, in Christ we're restored and drawn back into right relationship with God and one another.

When we look at human beings, we see differences. No two people are alike. Genesis 1:27 says, 'So God created them in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.' Gender differences aren't to cause division, but rather to reveal the fullness of God's image through diverse perspectives and shared life. I think we may add other differences as well: differences in culture, traditions, language, education, personality. We humans are all different, and that is precisely why we can complement one another.

We find unity in this diversity by being made in God's image. When our identity is rooted in God's image, we stop treating other people as competitors or threats. We begin to see them as fellow image-bearers made for connection, dignity, and purpose. Being created in God's image isn't to separate us from others, but to draw us toward each other until our life becomes a sign that belonging is God's gift, and unity is His work.

- Dr. Stefan Gradl, Associate Professor (Missiology, Christian Education), Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong

Reflect: What does it mean for you to see others as people created in God's image? How might this shape the way you relate to those who are different from you?

Pray: that Lutheran Theological Seminary will continue to form leaders who are grounded in God's Word and equipped to serve Christ's Church in diverse contexts.

*Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."
...The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But
for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. Genesis 2:18, 20-24*

Why isn't it good that the man should be alone? What's the underlying purpose behind God's statement?

The creation of God is wonderful and good. The Master Designer declared each stage of creation "good" six times in the book of Genesis. Finally, Adam enjoyed the most intimate relationship with God in the garden of paradise, where he lived in dominion and harmony with the animals, reflecting the authority and stewardship God had given him. Yet, despite Adam's close relationship with God, something was still 'incomplete' in the Creator's divine blueprint. Therefore, God declared, 'It is not good that man should be alone.'

From the very beginning, God's design for humanity was never isolation, but relationship. Human beings were created to live in community, fellowship, and mutual support. This relational nature reflects the very character of God Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Triune God who exists in perfect unity and love. Humanity, created in His image, was therefore designed for meaningful relationships with both God and others.

God fulfils His purposes through marriage and family. God designed man and woman to work together, build families, and steward His creation. Marriage is one of the ways God provides companionship and mutual support in human life. Eve was created as a suitable partner for Adam, completing the relationship that God had intended from the beginning. The first wedding was ordained by God Himself, 'And He brought her to the man' (Genesis 2:22). Thus, marriage is a place where husband and wife serve one another and their neighbour in the roles God has given, becoming a testimony of His love, unity, and grace through a family that shines brightly within the community.

In the context of the church, Genesis 2:18 remains relevant today. Many Christians experience loneliness despite attending church and being surrounded by people. In Christ, God restores what is broken and brings His people into fellowship with Himself and with one another. Our life together is grounded in Christ, who gathers us through His Word and teaches us to care for one another.

Genesis 2:18 is a powerful verse about companionship, relationships, and God's care for humanity. Human beings were never meant to live in isolation, but were created to love, support, and strengthen one another in marriage, within the family, and in the church community.

Therefore, Genesis 2:18 calls Christians to reflect God's design by fostering loving, supportive, and Christ-centred relationships within their communities.

- Rev. Anthony Loh, Bishop, Lutheran Church in Singapore

Reflect: How has God provided companionship, support, or encouragement for you through others? Is there someone God may be calling you to support this week?

Pray: for the Lutheran Church in Singapore, that they will grow in the heartbeat of God and be a beacon of His light and a blessing for the nations.

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11:4

In Acts 2, two questions were asked by the people witnessing how the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles: "What does this mean?" (verse 12) and "What shall we do?" (verse 37). From what we see and hear to how we should respond, there might be myriad interpretations depending on background, context, and experience. Indeed, we celebrate the richness of humanity by our differences and diversity. However, what lies between these two questions points to what we believe, who we are, and in whom we trust.

What happens in Acts 2 might not make sense to some people (verse 13), but for those to whom God grants understanding through His Spirit, His will is revealed through His Word before our eyes. Peter and the Eleven stand together amidst the confusion and excitement to bring clarity and unity to the group by reminding them of what has long been promised through the prophets: Jesus is the Messiah who has conquered death and shown us the paths of life. This is a defining moment of the establishment of the Church, with a capital C.

Those who gathered were Jews from every nation, from different places, speaking different languages (verses 5–6), with one thing in common: they were God-fearing. As God called them and brought them to faith, they became witnesses to Jesus and the Church. Peter made it clear that God's promise and calling are for all whom the Lord our God will call (verse 39), no matter where you're from and what language you speak. The Church now lives in and from the promises God gave to Israel (Galatians 6:16). We've been given the same promise: God will pour out His Spirit (verse 17) and we'll be saved as we call on the name of the Lord (verse 21).

In the last days, in this already-but-not-yet time where we find ourselves, we should be assured that God's promise never changes, even amidst all the chaos of this world. Don't let our own emotions and restricted perspectives blind us from seeing the miracles, wonders, and signs that God has done, is doing, and will do among, in and through us. God is at work, gently and faithfully, through His Word, forming and renewing His people.

The fire that birthed the Church in Acts 2 is the same fire that birthed the people of God in Exodus 19. The different languages that seem to divide us (Genesis 11) can be used to manifest the power of God. As we stand in awe and wonder to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, our pride will be turned to submission and obedience. We're united by the same Spirit and our hearts are on fire for the same Lord.

- Charis Lee, Moderator, Mekong Mission Forum

Reflect: Where are you seeking security or significance apart from God? How is He calling you to trust His Word and His promises?

Pray: that through the Mekong Mission Forum, God will renew His servants, and equip His Church to faithfully proclaim the Gospel across cultures, languages, and borders, so that many may come to know and follow Christ.

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone." Deuteronomy 6:4

This ancient confession, known as the Shema, is both a declaration and a calling. God is one – and God's people are called to live under that oneness. Unity flows from knowing and trusting the one true God. The oneness of God is the foundation of a unified life. When Moses commands Israel to love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength, it's a call into a life where every part of their being is oriented toward the same one God (Deuteronomy 6:5).

At the first Pentecost, this ancient call to unity finds new depth. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples. They spoke in different languages, and people who were divided linguistically, ethnically, and culturally suddenly understood one another (Acts 2). What human efforts couldn't achieve (unity among diverse peoples) God accomplished through God's Spirit. This wasn't unity through uniformity, but unity through the one triune God made known in Christ and present by the Spirit.

Pentecost reveals that the oneness of God is dynamic and life-giving. The one God creates one people and breaks down separating barriers. Where there was confusion and division at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), Pentecost brought understanding and communion.

Human ways of seeking unity are through agreements, structures, or shared goals. But real unity flows from knowing and trusting the one true God. When God's words are written on our hearts and lived in our daily life, we're drawn closer not only to God but to one another.

The words of God are to be spoken at all times (Deuteronomy 6:7). Luther recommended that Christians study and meditate God's Word in the morning, at midday, and in the evening. The people of God are to be shaped by a constant remembrance of who God is. God's oneness binds together their thoughts, actions, relationships, and identity.

The first believers sought to live in unity: 'All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.' (Acts 2:44-45).

The Church is called to embody unity in love. Not by erasing differences, but by holding them together under the one God. Just as Israel was called to teach the next generation and order daily life around God's Word, so we're called to let God's truth shape our communities.

We're invited to return to this simple yet profound confession: The Lord God is one. Let God's oneness gather our scattered hearts and God's Spirit unite our divided worlds, so we live together as reconciled people. Our unity isn't self-made, but Spirit-given, flowing from the one true triune God, now and always.

- Rev. Dr. Risto Jukko, Director of the Office for Global Mission, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Reflect: What most influences the direction of your life? How can you make God's Word a more constant part of your daily living?

Pray: for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland with its mission societies, that God's Spirit will continue to unite its people in faith and love.

For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Ecclesiastes 4:10

About a month ago, I hiked up the side of a granite cliff in Yosemite National Park. This hike involved a significant incline and covered more than 20 km. For most of it I felt very weak, and I hate feeling weak! I would round each corner and wonder if I could ever make it to the top, if I carried enough water, or whether I would run out of light.

Then from in front of me came words of encouragement: "You're almost at the top." And from behind me: "I'm slow too; shall we walk together?" Strangers sharing life together (even briefly), making the hike easier and creating connection.

Finally, I rounded the corner to see my sister waiting for me. We did the final (and hardest) 100m together. There was no doubt that I would make it to the top. My sister (who is much stronger than me) had water to share. When I inevitably fell over, she helped me up.

God created us to live our lives in community. We were created to live together, support each other, and be stronger together. Because Christ has given His life for us and brings us together as His people, we're not left to walk alone.

On days when we feel weak or alone, God creates opportunities for unity and connection. There's space to be heard by a friend, to be hugged by family, or even to be helped by a stranger. Likewise, when we're strong, we have opportunity to sustain and strengthen those around us.

There's an overwhelming culture within our world that directs people to aim for the top, get higher pay, beat the competition, and prove we can do it on our own, with no heed to the people we use on our way up. Yet our world also has a loneliness epidemic. Some people make it to the top and realise there's no joy in being there when they're alone.

We're not called to do everything alone! Because God has brought us together in Christ, we're called to live in ways that support and care for one another. We're called to live together in God's Kingdom through His Holy Spirit and love. For two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil – a reward that's more than just worldly success, but instead connection with God, His creation, and His heavenly kingdom.

It's my prayer that we may recognise God at work through the people around us. I pray that we may feel God in every interaction, for where even just two are gathered and connected together, God is there also.

- Elsa Matthias, member, LCA International Mission committee

Reflect: When have you experienced God's care through the encouragement of others? Who might need your support or companionship today?

Pray: for the members of the LCA International Mission Committee, that the Holy Spirit will guide their conversations and advice as they support and strengthen the international relationships and partnerships of the LCA NZ.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. Isaiah 11:6-7

In my work with churches across countries and cultures, written agreements are important. They help clarify expectations, define responsibilities, and prevent misunderstandings. But agreements reveal their greatest value when disagreements arise. When tensions emerge, people return to the agreement in search of a path forward together.

Human history is full of such efforts. We negotiate treaties, peace agreements, partnerships, and constitutions because we know how fragile human unity truly is. Still, even our best agreements remain vulnerable. They depend on trust, goodwill, and continued willingness to honour them. Too often, they fail. Agreements can regulate relationships, but they can't create trust. They can settle conflicts, but they can't transform the human heart.

Isaiah 11 offers a very different vision of unity. The prophet doesn't describe a peace treaty between the wolf and the lamb. Instead, he describes a creation transformed by the Spirit of God. The Spirit rests upon the promised Messiah, who rules with wisdom, righteousness, and justice. Under his reign, old hostilities lose their power, and a new harmony begins to emerge.

Significantly, Isaiah speaks of judgment before he speaks of peace. We tend to think of judgment as punishment, yet in Isaiah, the Messiah 'shall judge the poor with righteousness' and 'decide with equity for the meek of the earth.' God confronts everything that distorts His good creation so that life, justice, and communion may flourish once more. The peace Isaiah envisions isn't merely the absence of conflict, but creation being renewed according to God's purposes. This renewing work is grounded in Christ's death and resurrection, through which God's already begun to put the world right.

At Pentecost, this promise begins to unfold. The same Spirit who rested upon the Messiah is poured out upon the Church. People from different nations, languages, and cultures are gathered and hear the mighty works of God proclaimed in their own languages. The miracle isn't that differences disappear, nor that people simply tolerate one another. The miracle is that the Holy Spirit creates a new kind of community.

Pentecost reminds us that true unity can't be secured through agreements and treaties. Agreements may help us live together, but they can't transform us. True unity is the work of the Holy Spirit, who puts things right and makes all things new. As we open ourselves to this transforming work, the Church is invited to become a living sign of God's coming future. A community shaped by justice, peace, and the knowledge of the Lord, 'as the waters cover the sea.'

- Sandra Bischler, Director of Department Europe and Brazil, Norwegian Mission Society

Reflect: Where do you long to see peace, healing, or restoration? How does Christ's promise of a renewed creation encourage you today?

Prayer: That the Norwegian Mission Society may be continually led by the Holy Spirit, so that true unity, trust, and reconciliation are formed through Christ's transforming work among people across cultures.

They shall not defile themselves anymore with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. Ezekiel 37:23-24

Is it possible for a relationship that has been shattered and divided for years to be restored? This question often comes to mind as we see broken relationships in today's world, from families torn apart to conflicts between nations. Selfishness, sin, and personal interests often lie at the heart of the divisions that damage unity. Yet these struggles aren't new. The history of Israel shows how God's chosen people also experienced division because of their disobedience to Him.

Israel was called to be God's chosen nation, but the people turned to idolatry and neglected God's covenant. As a result, the kingdom was divided into the North and South before both eventually went into exile in Babylon during the sixth century BC. In exile, God called Ezekiel to proclaim both judgment and restoration. God addressed Ezekiel as "son of man," reminding him of his human limitations, while showing that the power to restore belongs to God alone.

God revealed His promise of restoration through a prophetic vision. Earlier in Ezekiel 37, the vision of the dry bones symbolised Israel's hopeless condition. Yet God brought the dry bones back to life. This vision prepares for God commanding Ezekiel to join two pieces of wood representing Judah (the South) and Joseph, or Ephraim (the North), symbolising His promise to reunite His scattered people.

This promise of restoration included Israel's relationship with God and with one another. God promised to appoint one Shepherd, establish peace, sanctify His people, and dwell among them forever. This promise finds its ultimate fulfilment in Jesus Christ, the Son of David, whose death and resurrection reconcile sinners to God and to one another. Restoration was God's initiative. Israel didn't restore itself; God took the first step to redeem and restore His people. He then led them to live holy lives under His gracious covenant (cf. Ezekiel 37:25-28).

This Word remains relevant today. In Indonesia, cultural diversity is often challenged by conflict, division, injustice, moral decline, and other social problems that can weaken hope. Yet this passage reminds us that the God who restored Israel is the same God who restores individuals, churches, and nations through the Holy Spirit. Broken relationships can't be healed apart from God's grace, which comes to us through His Word and teaches us to love and forgive one another. No relationship is beyond His healing, no heart too hardened, and no situation too hopeless for His transforming power. As people who have received God's grace in Christ, we're called to be instruments of reconciliation, bearing witness to the peace God has established through the Gospel and reflecting Christ's love through lives transformed by His grace.

- Digna Manao, former student, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi BNKP Sundermann, Indonesia

Reflect: Is there a situation in your life that seems broken or beyond hope? How does God's promise to restore His people strengthen your trust in Him?

Pray: that God will use the students and graduates of Sekolah Tinggi Teologi BNKP Sundermann, to be peacemakers who bring the hope of Christ into their churches and communities.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24

The room went silent. A participant had openly challenged a presenter. In my Malaysian-Chinese world, public criticism and embarrassment cut deep, especially when the critic holds more power. My instinct was to let it fade but this would signal the behaviour was acceptable. I didn't voice it out then but later, I found the courage to reach out. We sat down, and I said: 'Your outburst wasn't right.' The conversation between us was uncomfortable. But paradoxically necessary. And liberating.

In Matthew 5, Jesus unpacks how conflict begins. It doesn't jump straight to murder. The battle brews within us: anger hidden in our hearts, the dismissive insult, then the word that cuts through: 'You fool.' Long before anyone raises a fist, walls go up one thought at a time.

After the damage is done, who must go first? Not the person who was hurt, but the one who caused the offence. And yet I wrestled with this: if the offender never goes, the burden falls on the one wounded. But here I was in a third position. I chose to comfort the offended first, then speak to the offender. Peacemaking is picking up broken pieces and making a mosaic.

At the recent Council meeting of the Lutheran World Federation, we began morning prayer by facing one another and saying: 'Forgive me, a sinner.' The reply came, sometimes with a sign of the cross: 'God forgives.' Then together, each in our own language, we prayed the Lord's Prayer, the words 'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us' rising in many tongues at once. Different languages, drawn together by the same Spirit who fell on the disciples gathered in prayer at Pentecost.

Many are hungry for reconciliation. In Malaysia, Malay-Muslim friends greet one another at their festivals with 'Maaf, Zahir Batin,' which means forgive me, inside and out. As Christians, we share that hunger but stand on this ground: we forgive because God has first forgiven us.

So who is going first? Perhaps you're the one who must initiate. Perhaps you're called to name how you've been hurt, or you find yourself in between. In the end, the offender did reach out. There was apology. Forgiveness. Some healing. I don't know if there was full reconciliation. But at least there was movement in the right direction.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Not because it's easy. But because when we go first, what was ugly can turn into something new and even something beautiful.

– Rev. Dr. Sivin Kit, Director for Theology, Mission and Justice, The Lutheran World Federation

Reflect: Is there someone with whom you need to seek peace? What step might God be calling you to take toward reconciliation?

Pray: for God to give the Lutheran World Federation leaders and members the courage to address conflicts honestly, the grace to seek reconciliation, and the wisdom to be peacemakers in a divided world. Pray that, across languages, cultures, and nations, the global Lutheran communion will bear witness to the reconciling love of Christ and reflect the unity created by the Holy Spirit.

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." Matthew 18:15-20

As someone who works with people from diverse nationalities, languages, and cultures, I've learned that unity isn't always easy. Differences can easily lead to misunderstandings. Even good intentions can be interpreted in different ways, and if left unaddressed, small issues can gradually grow into distance.

There are times when I feel tired, too tired to explain, too tired to speak, and unwilling to enter another difficult conversation. At times, I also recognise that I may be the one who causes others to stumble, whether through my personality or the way I communicate. Because of this, I sometimes choose to avoid facing problems directly, afraid of damaging relationships or making things worse.

Yet silence doesn't bring healing. In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus teaches us to go to one another not to accuse, but to restore. Through His death and resurrection, Christ has already reconciled us to God, and so we're called to seek reconciliation with one another. This requires honesty, humility, and the courage to speak the truth in love, even when it feels uncomfortable.

When I begin to see those around me as family, my perspective changes. In a family, a father desires his children to talk to one another. Siblings may argue, but they don't remain separated forever. They find their way back to each other. In the same way, we're called to live as one family in Christ.

Often, our conflicts come from the same desire: that the work may move forward and that what we do may honour God. When we remember this, it becomes easier to return to one another, to listen, and to seek understanding. Our differences of culture, language, and personality are no longer barriers, but expressions of the beauty God has created in each of us.

Jesus also reminds us that He is present among us when we gather in His name. This means that He is with us not only in unity, but also in the process of restoring it. Because Christ is already at work among us, unity is lived out through restoration. It calls us not to run away, but to move toward one another with grace. Even now, I'm still learning not to run away, but to stay and trust God in the process, and to believe that He can bring healing, restore relationships, and draw us together as one family for His purpose.

- Lydia Jarupong, Staff of Strong and Safe Family Project, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand

Reflect: Are you avoiding a conversation that could bring healing? How might Christ help you approach it with truth and love?

Prayer: For the Strong and Safe Family Project in Thailand, that the Holy Spirit will guide their work in strengthening relationships and restoring families and give their staff wisdom, patience, and courage to walk alongside others with grace.

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. Mark 3:23-27

In this passage, when Jesus responded to the accusation of the religious leaders, he defended his ministry, affirmed His divine authority, and emphasised the importance of unity. When the multitude came to Jesus, the scribes accused him of being possessed by Beelzebul and of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus responded by explaining that a kingdom or house divided against itself can't stand. Likewise, if Satan were divided against himself, his kingdom would fall. Jesus then revealed His authority over Satan by explaining that no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his possessions unless he first binds the strong man, with the strong man referring to Satan whom Jesus binds.

Jesus' words highlight the seriousness of division: a kingdom, a household, or a community that's divided can't stand. Division weakens and ultimately destroys. Yet Christ has already made us one through His saving work, so we're called to live out this given unity in love. This unity isn't something we create for ourselves, but is a gift that's created where the Gospel is proclaimed and the Sacraments are given.

Jesus' ministry established a new community composed of citizens of the Kingdom of God. As part of God's Kingdom, the Church is called to live in unity. The Church isn't merely a collection of individuals or separate congregations pursuing their own interests; rather, believers share in the mission of the Kingdom of God. Division, rivalry, and isolation weaken our witness to the world, whereas unity strengthens it.

In many ways, Sabah Theological Seminary provides a model of unity. Students and faculty from different denominations and cultural backgrounds study and serve across three language departments. Despite this diversity, they live, study, and worship together, care for each other, and celebrate one another's cultural festivals. This demonstrates that our identity in Christ transcends denominational and cultural differences.

The same principle can be applied to churches. Rather than competing with one another, churches can value and appreciate one another despite their differences. Churches can work together by sharing resources, encouraging cooperation, and supporting one another's ministries. A church that's strong in one area can help another church that has a need. A congregation gifted in a particular ministry can assist others. When one church is struggling in a certain area, another can strengthen and encourage it.

The Kingdom of God advances most effectively when all believing communities stand together. In this way, we become a powerful testimony to God's grace and love. May we seek unity not for our own success, but for the glory of Christ and the growth of His Kingdom.

- Rev. Dr. Calvin V. L. Chong, Principal, Sabah Theological Seminary, Malaysia

Reflect: In what ways can you contribute to unity within your community, rather than to division?

Pray: for the students, faculty, and staff of Sabah Theological Seminary, giving thanks for the many cultures and church traditions represented as part of the Seminary. Pray that students learn to serve together in humility and unity.

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbour to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise." Luke 10:36-37

When the lawyer asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?", he wasn't simply asking for understanding. He was searching for limits. He wanted to know where love and responsibility could end. Yet Jesus answered with a story that breaks through human boundaries and reveals the mercy-filled heart of God.

In the parable, a man travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho is attacked, robbed, and left half dead on the roadside. A priest passes by and doesn't stop. A Levite also sees the wounded man and continues on his way. Both were religious figures, people expected to act with compassion. Yet neither drew near to help.

Then Jesus introduces the Samaritan. To the Jewish audience listening to Jesus, this would have been surprising and uncomfortable. Jews and Samaritans lived with deep hostility and division between them. The Samaritan was considered an outsider yet he was the one moved with compassion. He approached the wounded man, treated his injuries, carried him to safety, and provided for his care.

The Samaritan didn't first ask whether the injured man belonged to his people, shared his beliefs, or deserved mercy. Compassion overcame division. Mercy crossed boundaries.

Jesus then asked, "Which of these three proved to be a neighbour?" The answer was clear: "The one who showed him mercy." Neighbourliness, according to Jesus, isn't determined by race, background, status, or familiarity. A neighbour is the person whom God calls us to love and serve.

This connects beautifully with the theme of Pentecost in Acts 2. The disciples were gathered together by God, waiting in trust for His promise. When the Holy Spirit came, people from many nations and languages heard the good news. Unity was created not by human effort or sameness, but by the work of the Holy Spirit through Christ.

The Church today is called to live in this same Spirit-given unity. In a world often divided by culture, politics, prejudice, and fear, Christians are called to reflect the mercy of Christ that reaches across barriers. The Good Samaritan reminds us that unity widens our understanding of neighbour. God often places before us people we may not naturally notice, understand, or welcome.

In His death and resurrection, Christ has shown this mercy to us, rescuing us when we were helpless and drawing us into His life. As those who have first received Christ's mercy, we're sent to become neighbours to others. The Holy Spirit continues to renew us so that compassion may become stronger than division, and mercy greater than prejudice.

- Rev. Kuan Poy Onn, Pastor, Lutheran Church in Malaysia

Reflect: Who is your neighbour? How can you show Christ's mercy through a simple act of care or kindness?

Pray: for the Lutheran Church in Malaysia, that the Holy Spirit will form hearts of compassion that cross cultural and social boundaries, so that Christ's mercy is lived out in their relationships.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” John 10:14–18a

Jesus' words, 'I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me' remind us that Christian unity begins with Christ's call. The Shepherd gathers the flock as one because the Shepherd is one. Jesus promises 'I have other sheep that aren't of this fold. I must bring them also.' Unity in Christ is the miracle of being known by Jesus and drawn into a community more diverse than we could imagine.

Across Southeast Asia I witness this truth in Christians who worship in languages I can't speak, sing melodies I've never heard, and live out their faith in ways shaped by their own cultures and contexts. Yet, I recognise the voice of the Shepherd. I see the flock who aren't identical, but united.

Often unity is tested in hardship. In Cambodia, where communities carry the weight of historical trauma, Christians gather trusting that Christ's unity holds them. In Indonesia, Lutheran communities in North Sumatra are strong, yet the church navigates the challenge of witnessing within a nation shaped by vast distances and rich diversity. In Singapore and Malaysia, Christians serve within multi-religious societies, practicing unity through care, humility, and grace. In Papua New Guinea, believers face challenges of geography, violence, and limited resources, yet worship is vibrant, and fellowship deep. And in my home country, political tensions and religious turmoil strain communities in ways unseen for decades, but I hold hope for unity because the global church continues to listen for the Shepherd's voice.

Unity in Christ is a gift of the Holy Spirit's work. Jesus gathers us and the flock is made one by a love that meets us in our differences and heals us in our wounds. The Holy Spirit creates a unity stronger than human differences, a unity grounded in the grace of Christ and His Gospel.

Pentecost reminds us that the Holy Spirit doesn't erase human diversity, but proclaims the same Gospel through many languages and cultures. The disciples were gathered 'in one place,' but the miracle wasn't that they were the same. The miracle was that God met them there, filled them, and sent them out to proclaim the Good News in many tongues with a shared purpose, a shared calling, and a shared Shepherd.

Jesus gathers one flock from every people, language, and culture. We're held together not by our similarities, but by the One who knows us, calls us, and lays down His life for us. May the Holy Spirit renew us to live this unity which is wide, generous, and centred in Christ alone.

- Pastor Jenna Bergeson, Southeast Asia Regional Representative, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Reflect: How has Christ used people from different backgrounds or cultures to strengthen your faith? What can you learn from their witness?

Pray: for those serving Christ among communities outside their home country, that the Good Shepherd will strengthen, encourage, and protect them, help them build relationships across cultures, and use their service to share His love and unite people in the Gospel.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:34-35

Through many years of playing country sport, I've watched many new players walk through the doors of a club. Some have moved and are new to the area, some are making the jump into senior teams, and others are simply looking for a fresh start. Rarely are they the star recruit. More often, they're trying to find their place, standing on the edge of conversations while long-established friendships carry on around them.

What I've observed is that the players who settle in best are generally the ones who are welcomed by others. A senior player invites them into a drill, introduces them around the clubrooms, saves them a seat after training, or takes the time to ask how they're going. These small acts rarely attract attention. There are no speeches, awards, or social media posts celebrating them. Yet they can make all the difference.

Over the years, I've heard players talk about why they stayed at a club and what made them feel connected. Rarely do they mention the facilities, the game plan, or even the success of the team. Instead, they talk about the people who made them feel welcome and included. They remember the moments when someone helped them feel that they belonged. People remember how they were treated long after they forget what was said.

Jesus showed us this. On the night before His death, He gave His disciples a simple but profound command: 'Love one another.' He didn't say people would recognise His followers by their buildings, programs, knowledge, or traditions. He said they would be recognised by their love.

As we reflect on Pentecost, we remember that the disciples were gathered in one place when the Holy Spirit came upon them. Their unity wasn't something they created through perfect agreement or shared personalities. They were quite different people. Their unity was a gift from God through Christ, who had called them together.

The same is true for us. Whether in our families, schools, workplaces, congregations, sporting clubs, or communities, we're united Jesus has first loved us and continues to give us His love. That unity becomes visible through everyday acts of love: noticing the person who is left out, offering encouragement to someone who is struggling, listening before judging, forgiving after conflict, or quietly helping someone carry a burden. These actions may seem small, but they often speak louder than words. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, our love for one another becomes a witness to Christ's love for the world.

- Josh Hein, Head of Pastoral Care, St Martins Lutheran College, Mt Gambier, SA

Reflect: Who in your community may be feeling unnoticed or unwelcome? How can you reflect Christ's love toward them?

Pray: for the partnership between St Martins Lutheran College and SD HKI 3 Pematangsiantar, Indonesia, that the Holy Spirit will guide students, teachers, and leaders so that this partnership reflects Christ's love, and provides a meaningful witness to the Gospel through acts of welcome, respect, service, and care for one another.

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17:20-21

Pentecost reminds Christians of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church. It brings a special message of unity, hope, and peace among believers in Christ. Before returning to his Father, Jesus prayed that those who believe in His name would become one, just as He and the Father are one. This prayer is still important for Christians today. Unity is a gift Christ gives to His Church which we're called to live out together.

We live in a world filled with uncertainty, struggles, and divisions. People experience fear, worry, misunderstanding, jealousy, and conflict. Even within families, churches, and communities, unity can be broken. Jesus prayed that believers would live in love, peace, and harmony. He wanted His followers to stand together in faith and show God's love to one another and to the world. This unity is a gift given through Jesus Christ.

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples who then proclaimed the Gospel in many different languages. The disciples were united in prayer and fellowship. The Holy Spirit gave them courage, strength, and understanding. As a result, believers shared their lives – caring, praying, eating and worshipping together. Acts 2:44–47 clearly shows the beauty of Christian unity. Because of their love and unity, many people came to believe in Jesus Christ and were baptised.

The Holy Spirit continues to work among God's people. Jesus promised that the Helper, the Holy Spirit, would come and remain with believers forever (John 14:15–31). We're never alone, God is with us throughout our journey. When we trust in God and walk together in unity, we experience peace, strength, and hope.

Unity doesn't mean that everyone is the same. It means loving forgiving and helping one another, and working together in Christ. When Christians pray together and support each other, faith becomes stronger and communities become more peaceful. Unity brings healing and hope to troubled hearts. The Apostle Paul reminded believers not to worry about anything, but to pray with thankful hearts (Philippians 4:6). Prayer brings people together and helps believers trust God in every situation.

This Pentecost, may we hold hands together in faith and prayer. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to guide our hearts so that unity grows in our homes, churches, schools, and communities, and the world will see God's love shining through us.

– Geoff M Narekine, Collaborator, Christian Life Studies Rainbow Curriculum, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea

Reflect: Where have you seen the gift of Christian unity in your life? How can you help strengthen that unity among God's people?

Pray: for the revision of the Christian Life Studies Rainbow Curriculum, that it will help young people grow in their understanding of God's love, and that the Holy Spirit will guide teachers and learners as they walk together in Christ.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. Ephesians 2:13-14

In the 1950s, the Basel Mission began evangelism among the Rungus people in Kudat. My grandmother shared a powerful testimony from this time. Heinrich Honneger was a missionary who travelled into southern Kudat. At first, Honneger walked alone among the Momogun people, but whenever the villagers saw him, they fled in terror, believing he was a ghost. His European features were completely alien. In those days, people living in the deep interior had never seen a foreigner, let alone a European.

Honneger decided to wear a 'Sigal' (the traditional Rungus headgear) and took Amai Majimil, a local evangelist with him. With this change, the villagers no longer ran away but welcomed him. Honneger affectionately became known as 'Tuan Sigal' (the Sir who wears the Sigal).

The Momogun people received the Gospel that Honneger proclaimed, and many accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. This story is a reminder to The Protestant Church in Sabah (PCS) of how God used missionaries to reach out to indigenous communities isolated on the margins of the world.

The indigenous communities were visited by people they never thought would 'humble themselves' (a respectful concept originally used for royalty stepping down to mingle with the common folk). No one imagined they would experience foreigners coming to dwell among them and share the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit used Honneger's words and actions to communicate the love of Christ.

The work of the Holy Spirit isn't something unfamiliar. In Acts 2, God enabled the apostles to speak in different languages. The listeners were amazed because, despite different languages, they understood that the apostles were glorifying God. They had probably never heard praises to God in any language other than Hebrew or Aramaic but on that day, God was glorified in their own languages.

I wonder if, like a Momogun person hearing the Gospel in my native tongue, I would have asked, 'What does this mean?' Ultimately, 3,000 people were baptised.' In the 1950s, 'Tuan Sigal' visited my grandparents' home and they joined the believers in following Christ. From them, I inherited my faith. Deep in my heart, I realise that I share the same faith as those 3,000 early Christians.

Today we're one family from every nation, united by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, in love. This love becomes visible in lives shaped by His grace in patience, kindness, humility, justice, and peace. Brothers and sisters, Christianity must never stop expressing this 'language'; the world needs it. Let us continue to express it, so that we may be united, wherever we may be.

- Rev. Mazly Sokudat, Principal, Protestant Church in Sabah (PCS) Luther Seminary, Malaysia

Reflect: Who has helped you grow in faith and know Christ more clearly? How might God use you to share His peace with others?

Pray: for Luther Seminary, its faculty, students, and staff, that the Holy Spirit will use the Seminary's teaching and training to prepare servants who can communicate the Gospel clearly to diverse communities, especially those who feel isolated, marginalized, or unreached.

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. Colossians 1:15-20

For centuries, the Church has struggled with division. Since the time Jesus told Peter, “On this rock I will build my Church,” Christians have divided over issues of doctrine. Human efforts, shared traditions and common slogans have not been able to help the church achieve true unity. The apostle Paul highlights that the only solid foundation to unity is for the church to be governed by the supremacy of Christ.

Jesus is ‘the image of the invisible God’ and ‘the firstborn over all creation.’ He’s the perfect character and glory of God. More than a teacher or a prophet, He is the Lord of lords and King of kings. As Christ is proclaimed as Lord, His Word reorders our priorities and places our lives under His rule. Unity is given as the Church looks to Christ, who has reconciled His people through His Word and the cross.

All things were created through Jesus and for Him alone. Every person, gift, and ministry exists for the fulfilment of God’s will. This truth guides us to live as fellow servants serving the same Master. The Church is united as it lives from the Gospel, giving all glory to the Lord Jesus rather than to itself.

Jesus is the head of the Church. Just as the body functions well when it’s directed by the head, the Church grows as it’s led by Christ through His Word. When individuals choose to go their own way, unity breaks down. But when believers seek God’s will and allow their thoughts, attitudes, and actions to be guided by Jesus, unity flourishes. Through His blood shed on the cross, he made peace and reconciled all things to God, restoring our relationship with God and breaking down the barriers that divide people. Because Jesus forgave us, we’re called to forgive and serve one another. We’re part of God’s family, and because of what our Lord Jesus has done for us, we ought to welcome and love our fellow believers.

Colossians 1 teaches that Christian unity is founded on the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, not on human efforts or achievements. True unity is God’s gift in Christ, as believers are gathered around the same Gospel, the same Lord, and the same confession of faith. Today, let’s examine our hearts. Where there’s division, resentment, or broken relationships, we’re called to repentance. We don’t look to ourselves for unity, but to Christ, who has reconciled us through His cross and continues to gather His people through His Word. Let us fix our eyes on His supremacy and remember His sacrifice, through which the Holy Spirit strengthens us to live in peace and unity with one another.

- Rev. Alec Ling, Pastor, Lutheran Church in Malaysia

Reflect: In what area of your life do you need to look again to Christ as Lord? How does His grace shape your relationships with others?

Pray: for the pastors and church leaders of the Lutheran Church in Malaysia, that they remain united in Christ, faithfully teach God’s Word, serve with humility and wisdom, and encourage unity, reconciliation, and love within the church.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts... Acts 2:42, 46

In Acts 2:42–47, we're given a window into the daily rhythms of the very first Christian community. Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the believers didn't simply agree on an abstract set of ideas; they shared a life. They devoted themselves to four essential pillars: the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. In these gifts of the Word, the Supper, and prayer, the Holy Spirit continued to gather and sustain the Church. This unity wasn't confined to grand, sacred events. Instead, it was lived out 'day by day' in the public temple courts and around ordinary dinner tables in their homes. Marked by glad hearts and radical generosity, their everyday commitment to one another earned them the goodwill of the community. It was within this practical, shared reality that the Holy Spirit moved, and the Lord organically grew their numbers.

Today, at our early childhood education centre in Malaysia, the Holy Spirit is weaving that exact same tapestry of unity. True Christian unity is rarely loud or flashy; it becomes visible in the quiet, ordinary moments of a busy school day. We see it when a child reaches out to hold the hand of a lonely classmate, shares a toy, or offers a kind word to comfort a friend who is crying. We witness it in our staff, who infuse mundane routines, like teaching, cleaning up, preparing meals, and changing diapers, with profound care and patience.

When the day grows long and the routines become tiring, unity becomes a verb. It looks like a teacher stepping in without hesitation to support an overwhelmed colleague. It looks like a director being granted the wisdom and grace to listen calmly, make fair decisions, and lead the community with compassion when things get stressful. These small acts of daily kindness are modern-day echoes of the early church's fellowship.

Living in this kind of deep community is beautiful, but it's also demanding. If we rely entirely on our own strength, human patience eventually runs thin. The miracle of Pentecost reminds us that unity is a gift given and sustained by God, not a milestone achieved by our own perfect behaviour. Christ has called us to this centre, and He equips us for the task. When we feel tired or overwhelmed, we can trust the Holy Spirit to give us the patience and love to listen carefully, respond gently, and create a peaceful environment for everyone.

– Alias Kurien, Lutheran Education Malaysia

Reflect: How are worship, prayer, and fellowship helping to shape your life in Christ? Where might God be inviting you to participate more fully?

Pray: for Lutheran Education Malaysia, that the Holy Spirit will sustain unity, patience, and love among the teachers and students, strengthening them to reflect Christ in both small daily moments and shared community life.

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Acts 4:32-33

The people gathered in Acts 4 weren't a naturally harmonious group. They were ordinary men and women from varied social, cultural, and economic backgrounds who'd been drawn together through Jesus Christ and transformed by the Holy Spirit. Among them were fishermen from Galilee like Peter and John, tax collectors such as Matthew, zealots like Simon the Zealot, widows, families, pilgrims from many regions, and wealthy landowners who possessed houses or fields. Jews from across the Roman world speaking different languages and shaped by different cultures, were present in Jerusalem during Pentecost.

The disciples themselves had previously struggled with rivalry, fear, misunderstanding, and self-interest. Before the resurrection, they argued about who was greatest. At Jesus' arrest, many fled in fear. Peter denied even knowing Jesus. The unity described in Acts was therefore not evidence of unusually virtuous people finally getting along. It was the result of God's gracious work among broken people.

Several things reshaped and reoriented them. Firstly, they were gathered by a shared dependence on Christ. They knew they had received mercy, forgiveness, and new life not because they deserved it, but because of God's grace. Standing together at the foot of the cross humbled them all equally.

Secondly, they were formed through waiting and prayer. After Jesus' ascension, the believers gathered continually in prayer and expectation (Acts 1:14). Their unity was cultivated not through strategy, but through shared attentiveness to God.

Thirdly, the coming of the Holy Spirit gave them a new identity. At Pentecost, the Spirit didn't erase their differences, but created a new community in which those differences no longer defined their primary belonging. They became one body in Christ.

Finally, the resurrection reoriented their understanding of possessions, security, and neighbour. If Christ had conquered death and inaugurated God's Kingdom, then material goods no longer needed to be clutched tightly. Their confidence rested in God's provision and in their shared life together. Generosity became possible because fear began to lose its hold. Unity wasn't uniformity or human idealism. It was a Spirit-created fellowship shaped by grace, prayer, resurrection hope, and a new understanding of belonging in Christ.

- Rev. Renny Khoo Lann Leay, Dean of English General Council, Basel Christian Church of Malaysia

Reflect: How has God's grace changed the way you view your possessions, your time, and the people around you? What opportunity do you have to share His generosity?

Pray: that the Holy Spirit would continue to strengthen the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia congregations in faith, prayer, and unity. Pray that through their shared life in Christ, the Church would be a powerful witness to God's grace and a source of hope and encouragement to the communities they serve.

“Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ... He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. Acts 10:34-40, 42

Every time I read Peter's words, I imagine how much God had changed his heart before he could speak to them with confidence. Peter wasn't simply learning a new lesson, he was experiencing a transformation. For most of his life, he had viewed the world through the boundaries of his culture and religious tradition. As a faithful Jew, entering the home of a Gentile like Cornelius would have seemed completely wrong. Yet God patiently led him beyond the limits of his own understanding.

Before Peter could bring the Gospel to Cornelius, God first worked within Peter himself. Through the vision of the animals, God wasn't only speaking about food but also confronting the assumptions Peter had carried for years. Little by little, Peter realised that God's love and grace couldn't be limited by human categories. His confession that 'God doesn't show favouritism' reflected a transformed heart that had begun to see people through God's eyes.

As a theology student from Indonesia, this passage speaks deeply to me. I live in a country rich in cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. While this diversity is a beautiful gift, it can also be challenging. It's often easier to remain within familiar circles than to build genuine relationships with people who are different from us. Without realising it, we sometimes build invisible walls that separate us from others. Sadly, these walls can even exist within the Church.

Peter's story reminds me that God's mission isn't only about reaching people but also about transforming those He sends. Before Peter could become a witness to Cornelius, he first had to allow God to reshape his own heart. There are times when I make quick assumptions about people or feel more comfortable with those who share my background and experiences. Acts 10 reminds me that God looks beyond labels and divisions and calls His people to do the same.

One of the greatest miracles in this story isn't only that Cornelius received the Gospel but that God changed Peter's heart. His transformed heart became the doorway through which others could experience God's grace. My prayer is that God will continue tearing down every wall within my heart so that I may love others as Christ loves them. I know I can't do this by my own strength, but I trust the Holy Spirit to shape and guide me each day. May Peter's confession also become yours: 'I now realise how true.'

- Berkat Telaumbanua, participant, Cultivate program

Reflect: Are there assumptions or barriers that affect how you see other people? What might God be teaching you through those who are different from you?

Pray: for the participants and leaders of the Cultivate program, that the Holy Spirit will continue to shape their hearts and deepen their understanding of God's grace.

For just as the body is one and has many members, ... so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, so it is with Christ. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. God has composed the body, giving greater honour to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together. 1 Corinthians 12:12, 14, 18, 24b-27

As a Papua New Guinean, I often find myself thinking about how diverse our country really is. We're a nation of many languages and cultures. Even a short trip can take you into a completely different way of speaking, greeting, and living. Every community has its own stories, customs, and way of seeing the world. Yet somehow, in all of this, we still belong to one people sharing the same land.

On Pentecost Sunday at Resurrection Lutheran Parish this year, that reality felt very close to me. During the service, Scripture was read in Kâte, Jabem, and Tuam Saveeng languages. I remember sitting there a little longer than usual after each reading. I didn't understand every word in Kâte and Jabem, but I didn't feel left out. If anything, I felt drawn in. It felt like God was speaking to all of us, just in different ways we could each understand.

Later, I kept thinking about Acts 2. The disciples were all together in one place, waiting as Jesus had told them. I don't think they were very confident. They probably still had questions and fears. But they waited. Then the Holy Spirit came. People from many nations heard the message in their own languages. God didn't remove their differences. He worked through them. I still find that amazing when I think about it.

That's why Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12 make so much sense. The Church is like a body. And within the body, we're not the same and we're not meant to be. Hands, feet, eyes, and ears all have different roles, but they depend on each other. It's not always neat. Sometimes we misunderstand each other. Sometimes things feel slow or difficult. But even then, we're still one body in Christ.

In church life some people are comfortable speaking and leading. Others serve quietly and faithfully in ways most people never notice. Some people hold the church up in prayer. And honestly, when one person is missing, you really feel it. For me, unity has never meant everyone being the same. It's more about being held together in Christ, even when we're different. Because the Holy Spirit is the one who creates and sustains this unity, not our own efforts. Maybe that's what the church is meant to show in Papua New Guinea and everywhere people gather in Jesus' name. It's not about being the same. It's about having a real sense of unity where we can be different and still know, 'we belong together.'

- Mathias Gesengsu, Parish President, Resurrection Lutheran Parish, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea

Reflect: What gifts has God given you for the good of His Church? How might you use them to serve others in Christ's body?

Pray: that the many languages, cultures, and gifts within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea will be used by God to strengthen His Church and enrich its witness.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 1 Corinthians 1:13

That distinct aroma of coffee and the bittersweet taste on the mouth forms one of those daily morning rituals that are shared by so many Aussies. I enjoy the quiet ritual of pouring near boiling water over freshly ground beans and waiting patiently as the hot water filters down. The steady drip of coffee into the cup below gifts me with that unmistakable bouquet that tantalises my senses. You can tell I love my coffee.

My family are all coffee lovers. I blame my children for my addiction. Each of them has their own particular approach to coffee and whenever we get together, coffee forms a part of the ritual of togetherness. Each of them has a specific way of making coffee, and of course this includes from whom they source their coffee and the actual coffee beans themselves. It's all a rather complex and tailored experience. So, there are those inevitable conversations around which aspect of the process is best. All for the sake of a 'good' cup of coffee.

The differences we bring to our approaches to coffee are a reflection of who we are; our particular tastes and inclinations. But these inclinations don't become the focus of our times together. There may be some playful banter and friendly quips, but the coffee is soon forgotten in the sheer joy of being together as we catch up on the most recent happenings.

Paul's first letter to the young church in Corinth reminds us that the early church wasn't without its challenges. They had quickly become embroiled in argumentation and disagreements over any number of things which Paul addressed in the structure of the two letters we have today. So, Paul's opening words promptly form a rebuke. He doesn't waste time in getting to the crux of the matter. The fledgling church, passionate in its desire to follow Christ, had stumbled into the realm of sectarianism. Factional loyalty had distracted them away from the focus of their reason for being. They had become centred on the coffee and all its unique characteristics rather than the reason for being.

Arguing over whether Industry Beans or Bare Bones or Campos is the best roaster or whether using a drip filter, stove top or espresso machine creates the optimal beverage is, at the end of the day, peripheral to the reason we drink coffee together. Our differences, in those matters, are nothing more than a source of banter. We're united as family and friends for a very different and far more essential reason.

Paul implored the church to remember its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11). The factional elements had arisen over peripheral matters. Paul pointed instead to the centre. Christ is the foundation, the focus, the reason we gather together and reach. Christ is the source of our life and in Paul's words 'Let one who boasts, boast in the Lord' (1:31). It's centred on Christ that we gather and we minister as the called people of God.

- Pastor Doug Fitzpatrick, volunteer, LCA International Mission

Reflect: What distractions or loyalties can draw your attention away from Christ? How can you keep Him at the centre of your life and service?

Pray: that LCA International Mission volunteers will remain focused on Christ as the centre of their service, finding their identity not in their role, gifts, or achievements, but in God's grace. Give thanks for the unique skills, experiences, and perspectives which each volunteer brings.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

In Cambodian society, people are often identified by their family background, occupation, level of education, or economic status. These factors can easily become the basis for how people value themselves and others, creating barriers and divisions between individuals and communities. Some may feel important because of their position or achievements, while others may feel insignificant or unworthy of the same respect and dignity.

Yet in Galatians 3:28, the Apostle Paul boldly declares: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

This doesn't mean that our differences disappear. God created each person with unique gifts, cultures, languages, personalities, and experiences. Diversity is part of God's good creation. However, these differences no longer determine our ultimate identity or worth. Our most important identity is that we're children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Within the Church, we encounter people from many different backgrounds. Some are wealthy, while others struggle financially. Some have received higher education, while others have had limited opportunities. Some are young, and others are old. Yet when we stand before the cross, we all share the same need for God's grace, and we all receive the same gift of salvation through Christ.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples as they were gathered together in one place. They were different people with different stories and personalities, yet they were united by the same Lord. The Holy Spirit continues this work today, gathering people from every nation, culture, and social background into one family of God.

As Christians in Cambodia, where social distinctions and cultural expectations can sometimes separate people, we're called to live differently. We're invited to see one another not through the lens of status, education, ethnicity, or social standing, but through the lens of Christ's love. In Him, we belong to one another because we first belong to Him.

Let us therefore live in the gift of this unity. May we not allow our differences to become walls that divide us, but opportunities to reflect the richness of God's Kingdom. Our unity isn't founded on being alike; it's founded on our shared belonging to Jesus Christ, who has made us one through faith.

- Rev. Touch KeovsreyLiak, Bishop, Lutheran Church in Cambodia

Reflect: Which differences between people do you find hardest to look beyond? How does your shared identity in Christ shape your view of others?

Pray: that God will strengthen the unity of the Lutheran Church in Cambodia, helping believers to welcome and value one another as members of one family in Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to break down barriers of social status, education, ethnicity, age, and economic position, and to help the church be a living witness to God's love, grace, and acceptance.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Romans 12:4-5

What troublesome but exciting times! How frightened the disciples must have been after Jesus' death at the cross, then the news brought by the women that he is risen from death and now some of them were witnessing Christ's ascension to heaven. It must have felt like a rollercoaster, with steep ups and downs, with changing moods and emotions, with despair and hope taking turns.

How understandable that on the day of Pentecost they were all gathered in one place. They were seeking the safe community and the comforting companionship of each other. As close friends they wanted to be together, because who knows what's to be expected next. And how right they were. In the book of Acts 2, we read: '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.' What a frightening experience this must have been? And this wasn't even enough: 'Divided tongues as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.' They suddenly and unexpectedly saw and felt the Holy Spirit like fire resting on each one of them and filling the whole place where they were gathering. And what they experienced next was the Holy Spirit enabling them to understand each other, no matter which language they were speaking. It caused considerable amazement among those gathered who asked, 'What does this mean?' But of course, the sneering of some others was inevitable as well.

But let's ask why understanding each other despite different languages was the gift the Holy Spirit gave the believers gathered in the very first place? This unity isn't something we create ourselves, but a gift of Christ, who has made us one through His death and resurrection, and who continues to gather us by His Spirit.

We know that good relationships grow and thrive with good communication. Listening to each other helps understanding, and understanding the other one helps in overcoming arguments. This is important for every community in the world, and it's important for gaining peace among people. As people whom the Holy Spirit has already brought into one body, listening to one another helps us live out this unity. As we seek to understand one another's perspectives, our community grows in unity. People are different, as are their life experiences and often also their opinions. But this shouldn't divide us as Christian sisters and brothers in this world. The Holy Spirit came among us so that we may understand and see each other with Christ's love, despite all differences. What a wonderful gift has been given to us. Let us treasure it and not waste it, so that our community may grow and live and thrive. Amen

- Dr. Gabriele Hoerschelmann, Director, Mission EineWelt, Germany

Reflect: Is there someone you need to listen to more carefully? How might greater understanding strengthen your relationships?

Pray: That Mission EineWelt will be continually guided by the Holy Spirit, so that through Christ they foster unity, understanding, and loving fellowship across all cultures and communities.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. Romans 15:5-7

My grandfather was one of the early evangelists in the Erap area in the Nawaeb District of the Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. He was sent alone on a mission to the Kasingen cannibal tribe. He travelled for two days. On the second day, he could see the people from a mountaintop. He said that he felt weak and afraid when he saw the people. He prayed to God and sang a song in the Kate language. The lyrics of the song depict him asking God to keep an eye on him while he walked to the village. He made it to the village. Today we're part of that village and family. My mother's relatives still speak their language and have land and food gardens in the community. We're still part of the people as family.

The people are united by the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ reconciled sinners to God and to one another, creating freedom and unity among His people. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were strengthened in faith and enabled to proclaim the Gospel, through which God gathered congregations of believers. As the apostles proclaimed the message of the cross, God continued to gather and grow His Church.

By God's grace the growing congregations have one purpose and that's to stay united while sharing and caring for each other. By that God has received glory. In Christ, we've first been welcomed and received, and so we're called to welcome one another in that same grace.

As we celebrate Pentecost, we might ask: 'What really defines our purpose and unity as congregations within Christ's Church?'

I don't have the answers to all the questions raised however what I do know is that the message of the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus is true. And the Holy Spirit sustained the early evangelists with hope and endurance to share the same truth that liberated and united over 800 different tribes in Papua New Guinea.

- Bonnie Keoka, Secretary, Lutheran Development Service, Papua New Guinea

Reflect: Christ has welcomed you in grace. How can you extend that same welcome to someone else?

Pray: for Lutheran Development Service, that the Holy Spirit will empower their work of service, care, and development as a witness to Christ's love.

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

It seems that loneliness is becoming more pervasive in our modern lives, which is somewhat surprising considering the enormous rise in the connectedness we have with advancing technologies. In the Church this issue may be somewhat lessened, but we're not immune: there are many who are lonely.

Through baptism and faith in Christ, God has made us His children and members of His household. We're sons and daughters and therefore brothers and sisters who in the times when it was being described, conferred a far stronger relationship than it has in our modern-day society. Siblings were ultimately responsible for one another's well-being (not necessarily your spouse) e.g. Lazarus's sister's call on Jesus to intervene (John 11: 1-3). The sibling relationship was pivotal. The strongest social relationship was with the male blood-line family. You always belonged to that family. Outside of the Gospels, brother/sister is mentioned more than 140 times, considerably more than any other relationship. Such emphasis must cause us to respond to members of our church communities and recognise them as brothers and sisters in God's family and take on our corresponding responsibility.

In our culture, however, the importance of this spiritual family can sometimes be overshadowed by our focus on the nuclear family. Marriage and family are good gifts from God, yet when family becomes the primary lens through which we experience church, those without close family connections can easily feel isolated. So, who are the lonely in our church? Who are those who possibly don't have 'family' and must work hard to belong, such as the widower, the single person, the divorcee, or the newcomer? Jesus had an affinity for seeking out these 'lonely' people (e.g. Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-7), identifying their need and ministering to them.

This isn't to say that our families are unimportant. We have God-given responsibilities to nurture, care for, and love one another in marriage and family. Yet these earthly relationships belong to this present age and won't continue in the same form in eternity (Matthew 22:30). Through God's grace and the saving work of Jesus Christ, however, we've been adopted into God's family and made His children through faith. This is the family that endures forever. We need not be lonely, because even now God gathers us as members of His eternal family, where we receive His gifts and grow together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

- Eric Wilson, Stamp Receiver, Stamps for Mission

Reflect: Who in your church or community may feel isolated or disconnected? How might God use you to help them experience the belonging of His family?

Pray: that God will bless the generosity of those who donate, collect, sort, and sell stamps, and that the funds raised from Stamps for Mission will strengthen mission as this ministry continues to be a joyful expression of God's people working together to share Christ's love.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Philippians 2:1-2

A general definition of unity is being together or at one with someone or something, i.e. in harmony. What is harmony then? Generally, a pleasing, balanced arrangement of parts, or a state of agreement and peaceful coexistence.

In our trips to Papua New Guinea (PNG), our leader and mentor Pastor Len Tscharke would always press on us (those that felt the call to visit and connect), the need to assure who we came across that we were all worshipping the same God and used the same creeds and teachings as the missionaries had brought to them. When we worshipped with them in the Highlands, we were in sync. When we've had visitors from there visiting us in Adelaide, they immediately felt comfortable during worship here. They could see that we hadn't moved on to something different that they didn't now have. We were united and in harmony in our shared worship, beliefs and faith. This unity isn't only something we experience, but a gift given through Jesus Christ, who has made us one through His death and resurrection. In Philippians 2, we're reminded that this unity is shaped by Christ Himself, who humbled Himself and served others in love.

In all our trip preparations, we always acknowledged God was in charge of whatever happened and we were just His humble servants on the ground, always trying to listen for guiding words of instruction, or wisdom in a situation. So many times, we had experiences that were clearly not in our control or plans, but in reflection of the outcomes, we could see God's plan clearly unfolding, just often not how we were expecting. People often talk about 'God Moments'. We've experienced many of those over the years.

After 20 years of partnership with Schools at Asaroka, we have a comfortable relationship with the local people. They know we don't come to tell them what they need to do, but to visit them, encourage them in what they're doing and worship and pray together. Be Barnabas (the encourager) to them. Importantly, to assure them that they aren't forgotten by their Lutheran brothers and sisters in Australia. We're united with them and have a very harmonious relationship.

Every time we visit PNG, they regularly sing a very touching song called 'Unity and Harmony' – and very enthusiastically at that! The first few lines are as follows: 'In unity and harmony, Lord build our lives, that we might be a dwelling place, for the world to see. Reflection of your Glory'.

They're beautiful words and can relate to the Church in any country in the world, but also all Churches of the world together in Unity.

- Daniel Dutschke, member, Golden Grove Lutheran Church, SA

Reflect: How have other Christians encouraged you in your faith? How can you encourage unity and build up others in Christ?

Pray: for the partnership between Golden Grove Lutheran Church and Asaroka Lutheran Secondary School, that God will keep drawing their lives together in shared faith, so that even across distance they grow in trust and speak courage into one another's journeys.

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples gathered in one place with hope. They came carrying different experiences, questions, and fears. They didn't yet fully understand what God would do next. But they remained together, not because every difference had been resolved or every uncertainty removed, but because Christ had called them, and they waited in trust. It was within this gathered community that the Holy Spirit was poured out.

When people from many nations heard the good news in their own languages, Pentecost revealed something important about the work of the Holy Spirit. Difference wasn't erased. Instead, amid diversity, God formed a people held together in hope.

Often, communities don't weaken because of one major event, but gradually through weariness, distraction, or patience wearing thin. In a world that can often feel divided and tired, Paul's words to the Thessalonian church remain relevant.

Paul urges the community to honour those who labour among them and to hold them in love because of their work. In every church and community, there are people who serve faithfully, often without recognition. When service is appreciated and people care for one another, peace has room to grow.

Paul also encourages believers to support the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone. God sustains communities through His people, who encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and walk alongside those who are struggling. A word of encouragement can help someone continue when strength begins to fail. Patience creates space for healing, growth, and hope.

Even in moments of hurt or disagreement, Paul reminds the church not to repay wrong with wrong, but always seek what is good for one another. Unity often grows not through dramatic moments, but through acts of care faithfully repeated over time. Paul encourages believers to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances. Prayer is how God's people bring their burdens, gratitude, and hope before the One who never stops working, even when the road feels long, trusting that He sustains His people in faith.

At Pentecost, we're reminded that the Holy Spirit not only gathers God's people but also renews and sends them. Whenever we encourage one another, practise patience, pray faithfully, and seek peace, we're living out the unity that God has already given through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. And through simple, repeated acts of love, the Holy Spirit continues to shape communities into signs of hope for the world.

- Rev. Berman Maeda Situmorang, Director, The National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in Indonesia (KN-LWF)

Reflect: Who may need encouragement, patience, or support today? How might God work through you to care for them?

Pray: that the member churches of the National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation in Indonesia will encourage one another and work together in sharing the hope of the Gospel.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:14–17

We know that we're children of God. In baptism we became God's children, and we remain so into life eternal. How many times in the Bible do we hear the words 'do not fear'? These were the words the angels spoke to the shepherds when they proclaimed Jesus' birth. Sometimes when somebody tells me not to fear, I wonder what has happened.

In Romans we read that the Spirit himself joins with our spirits. When I think of the Holy Spirit, I think of Acts 2, when a strong wind filled the whole house and what seemed to be flames of fire came to rest on each of the disciples. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. We don't have flames of fire on our heads, but we too are filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Galatians we're reminded: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us... so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." Because Christ gave his life for us and took our sin upon himself, we're set free and given the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lives in us not because we deserve it, but because of what Christ has done for us.

Sometimes I think of the Spirit as a quiet voice in our hearts, urging us to help someone, to speak a kind word, or to offer a simple smile. Christ gave his life and paid the price for our sins, although we don't deserve it. Even on the cross he said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' In his darkest hour, he was thinking of others. These are words we need to remember when we're upset with someone.

How do people see us? Jesus said that people will know us by what we say and do. These things are the fruit of the Spirit living in us. Yes, sometimes we'll suffer for what we believe. But in Romans we're reminded that if we share in Christ's sufferings, we'll also share in his glory, so we need not fear, for we know that our heavenly home is waiting for us. In John 14, Jesus says, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.' He reminds his disciples, and us, that our future is secure in him. Because Christ has redeemed us and given us his Spirit, we belong to God now and forever.

So we shouldn't fear. We live as God's children, held in his grace, guided by his Spirit, and confident in the promise that our life with him will never end.

- Ruth Geitz, President, Lutheran Women of Australia

Reflect: What fear, burden, or uncertainty do you need to bring before your heavenly Father today? How does knowing you're God's child encourage you?

Pray: that the Lutheran Women of Australia will be strengthened in faith, confident in God's grace, and guided by the Spirit in their daily lives. Ask God to equip them to be witnesses of Christ's love through acts of service, compassion, encouragement, and prayer, so that others may see the fruit of the Spirit at work in them and be drawn to Jesus.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands. Revelation 7:9

This amazing vision of the seer John leaves me in awe. Here, at the throne of God, at the goal of God's story with his people, true unity in all diversity has finally become real. People from every nation, tribe, people, and language are gathered in unity before the throne of God and before the Lamb, worshipping him together. That's not uniformity, not at all, but genuine unity.

Ever since the days of the Tower of Babel mankind has tried to achieve unity. Yet it has often followed the same old recipe as the builders of Babel: 'Come, let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth.' (Genesis 11:4) Usually the results were poor or they ended in uniformity.

I've been living in Papua New Guinea for some time, a country where 10 million people speak more than 800 languages. This remarkable diversity is unfortunately often a cause for misunderstandings, conflict, and violence. We humans seem to be able to achieve either diversity or unity, but rarely both.

So what brings people together before the throne of God in this unity amid diversity? Two things stand out to me:

First the shared worship. Before the throne of God, we're no longer making a name for ourselves, but together we lift up the name of the Lord, and that unites us.

Second and perhaps even more deeply, the white robes. Although we come before His throne from countless different cultures, we all wear the same white robes. A few verses later we learn where they come from: 'They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb' (Revelation 7:14).

What truly unites people before the throne of God is the saving work of Jesus on the cross. There, our differences are no longer a cause of conflict, but a reason for joy. In this unity, which is formed by the blood of Jesus and expressed in the praise of God, our diversity becomes pure richness.

- Rev. Andreas Spingler, Lecturer, Lutheran Highlands Seminary, Ogelbeng, Papua New Guinea

Reflect: How does God's vision of people from every nation gathered around His throne shape the way you view Christian unity today?

Pray: for the students, lecturers, and staff of Lutheran Highlands Seminary as they live and learn together amid the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of Papua New Guinea. Pray the seminary is a living witness to the vision of Revelation 7, where people from every nation and language gather together in worship before the Lamb.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Acts 2:1

Before there's wind, fire, preaching, or speaking in other languages, there's a gathered people. The disciples are together because Jesus has called them and promised to send the Holy Spirit. Their unity isn't something they've achieved through hard work, agreement, or shared personalities. Only weeks earlier they'd argued about who was the greatest, doubted Jesus, fled in fear, and struggled to understand his purpose. Yet now they wait together in trust, and it's within this gathered community that the Holy Spirit is poured out.

It's worth noticing what doesn't happen in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit doesn't make everyone the same. The disciples don't suddenly speak one language, nor does the crowd lose its diversity. Instead, people hear the wonders of God proclaimed in their own languages. Difference remains, yet understanding is given. Diversity is preserved, and unity is created.

Human beings naturally gravitate towards those who are like us. People who share our experiences, preferences, and ways of thinking. Differences can feel uncomfortable, and they can easily become barriers. We're often quick to judge, slow to listen, and hesitant to recognise the gifts God gives through perspectives different from our own. Too often, what should enrich us becomes a source of division.

Pentecost reveals that true unity isn't a human achievement but a gift of God. The God who gathers us is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Within the Trinity there's perfect unity without sameness. The Father isn't the Son, the Son isn't the Spirit, and yet they are one in love, purpose, and will. As those created in God's image and redeemed by Christ, we're drawn into this communion. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus has reconciled us to God, and through the Holy Spirit he gathers, enlightens, and sustains his Church.

Because Christ has made us his people and gathered us into one body, fellow Christians aren't competitors, strangers, or threats, but brothers and sisters in faith, members of the same body, united by the same Lord and sustained by the same Holy Spirit. When unity is difficult, we can turn to our loving Heavenly Father in prayer, asking him to provide what we lack: patience to listen, humility to learn, courage to forgive, and grace to love those who are different from us.

As we trust that the Holy Spirit is at work not only in people who are like us, but also in those whose backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences differ from our own, we learn to listen more carefully, speak more graciously, and value the gifts and experiences that others bring.

The miracle of Pentecost begins with believers gathered together in one place, waiting upon God's promise. It continues whenever God's people find their unity not in being the same, but in belonging to the same Lord. We're many people with many stories, yet through Christ and by the Holy Spirit, we're one.



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