

LED BY THE SPIRIT

A graphic illustration featuring two hands, one on the left and one on the right, reaching towards each other. The hands are rendered in a glowing white outline style. They are positioned around a large, dark blue circle that has a subtle gradient from light blue at the top to dark blue at the bottom. The background of the entire image is a gradient from light yellow at the top to dark blue at the bottom.

SEASON OF PENTECOST | 2021

**“THE SPIRIT OF GOD
BE OUR GUIDE
TO LEAD US TO PEACE
AND TO GLORY.”**

That’s from Night Prayer in He Karakia Mihinare O Aotearoa, our Anglican Prayer book. It speaks to this essential part of following Jesus: learning to hear and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit which enables us to say ‘yes’ when we often want to scream ‘no’. It is the Spirit that empowers us with the capability to enact lasting transformation. And finally, it is the Spirit who leads us.

In John 16:13, Jesus says that “... the Spirit of truth will lead you into all truth.” To follow Jesus is to be led by His Spirit. And yet

for many of us, this brings up a lot of questions. Questions like, “How will I know if the Spirit is speaking to me?”, “What does that voice sound like?”, and “How should I respond?”

This Seasonal Guide begins on the Sunday of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was first revealed to the early Church. We’ve asked friends from Re-New Communities and our wider Anglican Movement to share their stories of being led by the Spirit to help us all understand what a life being ‘led’ might look like.



LED TO PRAY

Bishop Eleanor Sanderson
(Community of the Transfiguration, Kelburn)

When I first became a Christian, I knew intuitively that we were called to pray for people and the world. That pattern of daily intercession flowed easily for me in my first season of saying yes to Jesus. A cup of tea and a daily quiet time was the highlight of every day.

Later, particularly when I started to serve in leadership roles in the church, I started to experience a different way of praying. In honesty it was more appropriately called worrying, until I figured

out how the Holy Spirit was teaching me!

Different people would just come to mind, often with a real persistency. My immediate reaction when someone came to mind like that, was that I had done something wrong. I would immediately think that I hadn't been in contact with them enough, or that I had failed them in some way. One time, an older lady that I had journeyed with in her faith, was strongly on my heart for three

LED TO PRAY

days. On the fourth day I had a phone call to say that she had just died. That woke me up. I began to understand that Jesus was inviting me to join him in his continuous prayers for his people. It was the Holy Spirit prompting me, not a voice of condemnation. My own self-consciousness and anxieties were robbing me from that invitation to pray with love for the people Jesus loves.

What keeps me going in this journey is the knowledge of how powerful it is for me when I receive a text or a message to say, “I’m just letting you know that God has put you on my heart this week and that I am praying for you.” I can’t tell you

the number of times that that has happened when I have been in situations where I really needed prayer cover.

It really is a beautiful gift to join with Jesus in this network of prayerful upholding within the whole Body of Christ. Through this journey of responding to the Holy Spirit I am learning to pray from a place of love and peace, because this is always the place from which Jesus prays.

“Therefore Jesus is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.” Hebrews 7:25

QUESTIONS

01 What stood out to you about this story of being led by the Holy Spirit?

02 Have you experienced something similar to this story, or heard of others who have?

03 Spend a couple of minutes in silence / listening to God. How do you think the Holy Spirit might be leading you today?



LED TO SERVE

Gracemarie Kelly
(St Augustine's, Petone)

Two years ago, I had settled in New Zealand and had a job that paid the bills. I found myself in a community of people who were like minded, loved Jesus and lived lives that reflected that in an intentional way, which sometimes came at a great personal cost.

My “plan” had been to return to Ireland and study, and to my own surprise my heart started to change. I found myself conflicted and had a growing restlessness. Around this time I started having conversations about where God

was leading me to serve, and I felt challenged to go outside my comfort zone.

I prayed persistently, trying to trust God, though it felt foggy and uncertain. I found myself on this path that God had paved, bumping into people and accepting an invitation to serve with youth. I came up against roadblocks, and I was ready to give up, as despite believing that God was leading me in this direction, on a practical level it wasn't working out. I couldn't

LED TO SERVE

get the time off work to be able to serve in church, and my job was what allowed me to be in New Zealand. What I thought God was saying wasn't making sense anymore. Confused and angry, I cried out to God, literally shouting at Him (sorry neighbours). "What is going on?" God responded "what do you want Gracemarie?" I told God I wanted to work for the church, I wanted to answer the call, I wanted to pick up my cross and follow Jesus where he was leading me. I asked for what to me was spirit led but felt impossible. I felt God saying "trust Me".

In a matter of weeks my life took a turn. I went from applying for one visa to another, from

a job that was soul destroying but paid the bills to working for a church and having to trust in God's provision. I expected to wait for three months to hear about my visa and it came through in two weeks. I knew it was God speaking to me because the impossible became possible. In my experience, as I have surrendered and been open and honest to God, the Spirit has led me through bible verses, inner promptings, conversations, God's people and circumstances.

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LED TO HEAL

Rev. Scottie Reeve
(Brooklyn Anglican Parish)

Before I joined Blueprint, almost 17 years ago, I was part of a Vineyard Church. Vineyard churches have an amazing commitment to the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The gift of this community was learning to hear the Holy Spirit and respond to her promptings.

I remember one night during worship. Strangely, my neck and head began to ache subtly in a way that wasn't normal for me. Initially, I ignored this as a health complaint, but over a few minutes

a thought settled in my mind: "I think this pain might belong to someone else." I had seen people at church invite people to receive specific healings before, and I couldn't shake the idea that what I was experiencing might be the Holy Spirit speaking to me. It makes sense now that I think about it; that God doesn't just speak to our hearts or our minds, but also to our bodies.

I nervously went up to the front of the church and asked, "does someone have a chronic condition

LED TO HEAL

of neck and head pain?” A young woman responded who had come to church for the first time in her life. I prayed alongside one of the leaders and the pain left her. She gave her life to Jesus that night.

Over the last two decades I've kept experiencing this, and I keep asking people if they need healing for specific things. Sometimes I'm right, and sometimes I get it hilariously wrong. But the more I step out in trust, the more often I find that my sense of what the Holy Spirit is doing is accurate. Although I don't feel like I have learned a formula or a pattern that I could explain, it's like my soul has learned what the voice of the Spirit sounds like. Every time I try - whether I'm right or not - I get a little more familiar with her voice.

I've had to put my pride aside and not be afraid to look foolish. Because even though it can be pretty humbling when I get it wrong, the Holy Spirit has brought enormous freedom to people when I hear him accurately. There are people following Jesus today who wouldn't be, people walking without health conditions who might have carried them for life, and even children born to parents who believed they couldn't have them. Just as the way to freedom was through Christ's death on the cross, the way to freedom in the Holy Spirit is often through the death of our pride and fear.

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LED TO SURRENDER

Alex Powell
(Brooklyn Anglican Parish)

When I ponder the act of surrender, I am met with both fear and courage simultaneously. As I reflect on the spaces and opportunities that the Spirit of God has led me to over the past ten years, I have usually felt out of my depth. Like scrambling in the dark and making things up on the spot. God has often led me to surrender my ideals and seek his guidance and will for my life instead.

My first full time job required me to move my life to the Kapiti

Coast with less than two weeks notice. Despite what felt like chaos I said “yes” to the leading of the Spirit. Then there was the time I said “yes” to being a youth intern at a new church, only to find out that the youth pastor would soon be finishing. I said “no” to tertiary study initially, and then I eventually said “yes”. In the last few years I have said “yes” to the leading of the Spirit into spaces and opportunities that have been as equally chaotic as they have been full of God’s grace and sweet fruit. A few years

LED TO SURRENDER

ago I sensed the Spirit leading me to serve Karori young people through working at the local youth centre. More recently I have had a sense of the spirit leading me to serve the Brooklyn community through the most recent Re-New initiative, Two Todman.

As I have sensed the Spirit of God leading me to surrender control and step into spaces of leadership, I have embarked on the uncomfortable journey of pioneering new spaces for God to work, both in and through me. To surrender my all means becoming familiar with the voices of both fear and courage. The voice of fear sounds like “but what if I actually heard God

wrong?” and “what if God doesn’t show up?”. While the voice of courage reminds me that God long ago prepared good works for me (Eph 2:10) and that God is faithful to complete what he starts (Phil. 1:6). It is through some of my favourite song lyrics that I hear the spirit leading, for as long as I am here on this earth the Lord God must be up to something in me.

“Make me your vessel, make me an offering, make me whatever you want me to be. I came here with nothing, but all that you have given me, Jesus bring new wine out of me.”
New Wine - Hillsong

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LED TO REPENTANCE

Lauryn Hedley
(Lyall Bay Community Church)

A life with God means abundant life – a relationship with God, freedom from sin, and the Spirit alive and at work in me. And yet...I still find myself a slave to sin in so many ways. In particular, for several years since my youth I struggled with a form of sexual addiction which began with erotic fiction.

I knew in the beginning it was wrong. I knew it could offer me no life. I kept my struggle a secret, determined not to tell anyone – I was certain that I

would have to take this shameful secret to the grave. For so long I prayed that God would make this desire go away but it remained.

Something changed one evening as I was praying: I heard God speak to me. He said, ‘this is why you need my grace.’ I think I understood grace then for the very first time. I’ve grown up always believing that God loved me, but I now knew that God truly accepted me. I didn’t need to make myself ‘good’ - Jesus has done that for me. I wasn't yet

LED TO REPENTANCE

free, but God was not holding my sin against me.

Three years ago I experienced conviction from the Spirit who said ‘are you ready to face this?’ It was a question, not a command – God was offering the opportunity for healing, should I be willing to walk it with him. I was sick of living in shame and desperately wanted to be free. Knowing that God loved me and had grace for me gave me the courage to confess and to receive counselling and prayer. God has given us the tool of confession which frees us from shame, brings sin into the light, and sets in motion the process of healing. We have

support from others, people to pray for us and help when we need it.

This is repentance – turning your back on what was and walking in the opposite direction, doing whatever it takes to be free. As I embarked on this journey of repentance and healing, shame was crushed as friends embraced me and accepted me. I learnt better ways to cope with the hurt and anxiety in my life, and experienced peace with myself, with God and with others in a way I could not have imagined before.

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LED TO COURAGE

Rev. Paul Fletcher
(St Peter's Gonville, Whanganui)

Often, I've found the Holy Spirit invites us to courageous decisions that seem nonsensical to what we see around us.

A few years ago we came into an incredibly hard season of life. A cluster of painful events all came at once and we were deep in grief. We were fostering two young people at the time when one of them, only 12, was taken from us and put into juvenile prison. A very close family relation had a mental breakdown that brought with it extreme uncertainty and sadness. Added

to this was that a member of our missional community suffered an irreversible head injury which would change the life of her family and our team forever. Among it all, a social enterprise business we had been working on for years – was in the process of ending which was a difficult decision to face. And finally, the pain of not being able to have kids over the years – felt particularly raw at this time.

We were devastated on so many fronts, and we felt like we had nothing to give. That's why we

LED TO COURAGE

were surprised when the Holy Spirit seemed to be inviting us into yet another impossible situation. As we prayed we heard God's truth about our identity as his children, and yet we also heard him asking us back to courage and faithfulness to the work he had called us to. We had the sense that we needed to move into a Women's Refuge home to help some of our close friends (our team mates who had suffered the brain injury) to support women in crisis. It seemed like the absolute opposite of what we should be doing. Our culture told us that this was the time to hide away, recuperate, and recover. And yet, the Spirit was calling us

into a new adventure. In our own weakness, we were being asked to give even more.

Strangely, our healing came through the healing of others. Our wounds were tended by others who were struggling and suffering around the dinner table with us each night.

The Holy Spirit is the comforter and counsellor, but he is also the strengthener, healer and equipper that often takes us in our frailty and calls us to give what we can, even when it feels like there's nothing left to give.

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LED TO TRUST

Jessica Adams
(Blueprint Church and The Free Store)

“If you live in life-union with me and if my words live powerfully within you—then you can ask whatever you desire and it will be done. When your lives bear abundant fruit, you demonstrate that you are my mature disciples who glorify my Father!” - John 15:7-8

The more I’ve leaned into trusting the voice of the Spirit, the more life has unfolded into different expressions of serving Jesus and is more abundant because of it.

Two years ago, I left a full-time media job because my spirit felt

a deep restlessness that I couldn’t ignore. I was captivated by a life all-in for Jesus. I sensed the Holy Spirit highlighting the discontent that was growing within me and prompting me to do something about it. So I left my job, and with no solid plans, I trusted that if God was inviting me to orient my life around Jesus, he would provide a way.

I believe God continues to transform my heart and my hopes to become more aligned with his. As I am moved by God’s love for this neighbourhood, my life

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has evolved to reflect it. For me, learning to hear God's voice often feels like conviction that becomes clearer over time. In wrestling with this, I feel empowered by the Holy Spirit to make choices that honour Jesus, even if they're hard. Looking at my journey, I can see these decisions lead to more freedom and more fullness of life. They've created space for God's healing and refining.

Trusting God is an ongoing posture. It looks like praise and prayer, and choosing to believe that He will make a way for us and for others. As we choose to abide in God and listen to the eager prompting of the Spirit, we

learn about God's holy discontent with brokenness and sin in the world. When we trust that God knows us and always invites us deeper, we can partner with God one step at a time, and our lives become transformed to overflow beyond ourselves. Trust ultimately leads to a life that glorifies Jesus

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LED TO FOLLOW

Zoë and Joseph Hing-Windsor
(Urban Vision Mt Roskill, Auckland)

Recently, we said “yes” to the Holy Spirit’s call to move our lives to India to live alongside some of the most forgotten people in the world. We don’t know when or if we’ll come back, we just know that Jesus is calling.

For us and our journey with Jesus so far, listening to the Holy Spirit has been very ordinary and very unglamorous. For both of us, we have not yet been woken in the night to an angelic voice or had huge visions of the Holy Spirit’s work. Although this may be a

way that the Holy Spirit speaks to you, it just hasn’t been this way for us (so far).

What we have noticed however, is that God has been slowly building in us - moment by moment, decision by decision, and conversation by conversation - a desire and compulsion to join in with the challenging, beautiful, and redemptive work that the Spirit is already doing in India. In each of these different times over the years, we have been comforted by a common uncanny sense of

LED TO FOLLOW

peace. A kind of peace that you can't quite explain, that surpasses all understanding. In each of these moments, decisions, and conversations we have noticed that being open and actively seeking to listen to the Spirit had been key reasons for why we were in those spaces in the first place.

We do believe that listening to the Holy Spirit is an active process. We need to be active listeners. This means both listening to others, and to where the Spirit is moving and stepping into spaces that put us in the flow of what the Spirit is already doing. This may leave us a bit vulnerable and maybe even a bit out of our depth. But this is the best place for us, as we are drawn to lean on and be led by the Spirit.

For us, the invitation to follow the Holy Spirit's leading to India has meant going deeper with our friends in our community here in Puketāpapa Mt Roskill. We felt the need to be actively seeking the Spirit's will for us and our community in the season that we feel called to now. For us, the invitation and opportunity from God is to continue in a season of discernment where we are now, knowing that the invitation to the next season will come with many challenges and sacrifices, especially our whānau. We are without a doubt aware of the enormity of the place we find ourselves in, but we have a deep and abiding faith in the work of the Spirit and in God's redemptive and restorative mission for the world.

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