



On your marks

The season of Pentecost is a good time to explore and celebrate how the Christian faith has spread to the ends of the earth in response to Jesus' command to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19). Today there are representatives of every tribe and every language in the great congregation of those who love Jesus.

The following idea gives a taste of how the Holy Spirit enabled the praises of God to be heard in every language on the day of Pentecost

The Christian faith is the most widely spread of the world's great faiths and has proved to be remarkably adaptable. Wherever it has taken root and grown, local Christians have always gathered regularly to worship God using their own languages and elements from their indigenous cultures. This was true right back in the early days of the church, in the first century. The apostle Paul, writing to Christians in modern-day Turkey, observed, 'The good news is spreading all over the world with great success. It has spread in that same way among you, ever since the first day you learnt the truth about God's wonderful kindness' (Colossians 1:6, CEV).

Get set

One of the most important aspects of any Christian church, wherever it is in the world, is the welcome that people give to each other, and especially to outsiders.

Here are two simple activities using a selection of words for 'hello' and 'peace' from a variety of countries worldwide. The leader(s) should become familiar with some of these words before introducing them to the group or congregation.

This idea could be turned into a game, in which each greeting is written on two separate cards. All the cards are jumbled up. Individuals select one card, without showing it to anyone. They then go round greeting people with the words on their card, until they find their partner with a matching card.

A follow-up activity with this material would be to create a 'welcome' or 'peace' poster using the various words from other languages.

I wonder what the various greetings and ways to share peace tell us about what is important to the people of God around the world.

Key verse: 'From the sunrise in the east to the sunset in the west, may the name of the Lord be praised' (Psalm 113:3, NIRV).

For more resources about the worldwide Christian family, see [Where in the World?](#) (published by BRF) in which there is a section of prayers from around the world.



Go!

Make a selection of greetings in different languages from the list below. When making your choices, you might consider the connections your own congregation or group has with other countries around the world. They could include mission partners, a link diocese, relatives, or places to which people have travelled recently.

In the story of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), there was a confusion of languages that pulled the world apart. Now, as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, God is drawing people together again from across the whole world to share the blessings of being part of Christ's body.

Here are 24 words for 'hello' or 'welcome' from around the world:

1. **From Sri Lanka**

In Sinhalese, people greet each other with hands together, as in prayer, and a slight bow of the upper body. They say a word that sounds like 'Are-you-bow-an'.

2. **From Japan**

In Japanese, the greeting sounds like 'Kon-eechi-wa', accompanied by a polite bow.

3. **From Eritrea**

To greet someone, hold them by the right hand and gently pull together, touching shoulders three times. The word to use is the Arabic word for peace, pronounced 'Salaam'.

4. **From Nigeria**

There are a variety of different tribal greetings. Here are some: Kedu; No (a short 'o' sound) and Kubay-obway. Such greetings are usually accompanied by 'hand and thumb' shakes, with the other hand on the heart to emphasise sincerity, or under the elbow of the person being greeted.

5. **From Uganda**

Again there are a variety of tribal greetings: Agandi; Ku-tu-midde nyo; Kuthie

6. **From South Africa**

'Sabona' is a Zulu 'hello', usually accompanied by an ordinary handshake, then a 'thumb and hand' shake, then the ends of the fingers interlocked, the thumbs rubbing each other.

7. **From New Zealand**

'Tehi Mauria', in the Maori language, means 'I greet you' (literally, 'I salute the breath of life in you'). It is traditionally accompanied by rubbing noses.

8. **From Venezuela**

'Bendicion' (pronounced Ben-dís-ee-on) means 'a blessing, please'. The customary reply is 'Dios te bendiga' (pronounced Dee-os tay ben-dee-ga), which means 'God bless you'.

9. **From Albania**

'Mira dita' means 'good morning/day'.

10. **From Lebanon**

'Ahlan, ahlan', usually said with one hand close to your heart, means 'Greetings, peace to you'.

11. **From Egypt**

'Zal-ak' (pronounced Zeye-ak) means 'Welcome/hello'.

12. **From Nepal**

'Namaste' is used in Nepal and in various forms throughout the Indian subcontinent. It means literally 'I honour/respect you'.

13. **From East Africa**

'Jambo' is a common Swahili greeting meaning 'Hello'

14. **From China**

'Ni hao' is a phonetic interpretation of the Chinese greeting, whose roots lie in a phrase meaning 'Have you eaten yet?'

15. **From Romania**

'Domnul ajouta' means literally 'The Lord be your helper'. Romanians also use 'Buna', which is a common everyday word for 'hello'.

16. **From the Arabic-speaking world**

'Sab(ah) achir' is a phonetic interpretation of the Arabic greeting meaning 'Peace be with you'. The Arabic for 'Welcome to you' is pronounced 'Marhaban bik', with a 'breathed' 'h', as if you were breathing on a mirror to polish it.

17. **From Pakistan**

'Salaam Ji', a greeting heard particularly among Pakistani Christians, means 'God's peace with you'.

18. **From Wales**

'Sut mae' (pronounced 'Shu-my') is a greeting from South Wales.

19. **From north India**

'Sasrikal' is a phonetic interpretation of 'Welcome' from north India.

20. **From south India**

'Vanakkam' is a phonetic interpretation of 'Wwelcome' from south India.

21. **From Bangladesh**

'Sharkotom' is a phonetic interpretation of the Bengali for 'Welcome'.

22. **From Afghanistan**

'Khubistin' is a phonetic interpretation of the word for 'Welcome' from central Asia.

23. **From southern Sudan**

The first person says 'Sene' (pronounced 'senay') and the reply is 'ay' (pronounced as a long drawn-out 'a'sound). The person who began then says 'Mokino' and the reply this time is 'oh', a long drawn-out 'o' sound. It is a greeting from the Zande tribe of southern Sudan.

24. **From Zambia**

'Gogogoi' is a greeting from Zambia

As a follow-up to this activity, particularly if it is being used in a church service, you might like to 'share the peace' with each other using languages from around the world. The Christian message to the world is one of peace with God through Jesus Christ. Here are seven words for peace from different parts of the world:

1. **From Romania**

'Pace' (pronounced 'pa-chay') - along with a hug and kisses on each cheek. (For the shy, maybe 'air kisses' will do.)



2. **From India**

'Shanti', with hands in a prayer position and a simple bow.

3. **From the Middle East**

'Salaam', with a bow and one hand on the heart.

4. **From China**

'Wa', with hands folded across the chest and a deep bow.

5. **From East Africa**

'Amani', with a 'hand-thumb' handshake.

6. **From Russia**

'Mir', with a great bear hug.

7. **From Great Britain**

'Peace', with a handshake.

Use a selection of these different 'peace' greetings in different sections of the church. Soon everyone should be involved in giving or receiving a peace from around the world. There may be some happy confusion but it could give some sense of what 'speaking in tongues' sounded like at the first Pentecost.