

Worship Material
Surprised by God
Materials from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 5th May

Begin with an opening prayer

God of surprises,
we come as we are but wanting to be more like Jesus.
Journey with us as we seek to be surprised by you today.
As we challenge ourselves to respond to your surprising love,
give us grace to welcome others into your kingdom.
Amen.

Read Acts 10:44-48

Bible notes

This is the climax of the story of Peter and Cornelius, aptly entitled by James Dunn in his *The Acts of Apostles*, 'The Conversion of Peter and the Acceptance of Cornelius'. Peter's surprising vision, urging him to eat all kinds of creatures, clean and unclean, is followed by an invitation from this Gentile God-fearer. When Peter finds out that he has been invited at the behest of an angel, he begins to 'truly understand that God shows no partiality', and he preaches 'peace by Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all' (10:34-36). As he speaks, Cornelius the Gentile centurion, together with his relatives and close friends, receives the Holy Spirit. Peter recognises the work of God in this outpouring 'even on the Gentiles'. He realises, as he will later explain to the church in Jerusalem, that the Spirit is telling him 'not to make a distinction between them and us' (11:12), and they are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. When Peter tells the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem what has happened, he says, 'who was I that I could hinder God?' (11:17), and hearing this they fall silent. Then they praise God who 'has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life' (11:18). God's word gradually unfolds and is increasingly accepted, by Peter's change of mind, in Cornelius' commitment, and in the renewed praises of the church in Jerusalem. Peter remembers the word of Jesus, who had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit' (11:16, see Luke 3:16 and Acts 1:5).

Prayer

A prayer of thanksgiving

We thank you, Lord, that if we are truly open to you,
you fill us with your spirit.

You surprise us with your joy and power.

We are ready to accept your challenge,
and to live our lives open to you,
with hearts full of praise and thanksgiving.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Loving God, thank you for sending Jesus to show us your love.

Help us to make new friends and comfort those who are lonely.

Show us that, although we are all different, we are all loved
by you. Surprise us with your love in this coming week.

Amen.