

# faith at home

Weekly Resources for Schools

**PHASE: PRIMARY**

**How do we Flourish Together?**

**THEME: Pentecost**



**KEY CONCEPT/MESSAGE:**

*Pentecost is the time when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and it is the liturgical celebration where the birthday of the church is commemorated. It is a time for joy and festivity, embracing the origins of the church as a diverse and multicultural family. Pentecost offers us a journey from disappointment and bewilderment to joy, boldness and an understanding of who God has made people to be. The story of Christianity is wide and deep and makes room for everybody in its telling.*

**BIBLE STORY OF THE WEEK:**

***The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost: Acts 2***



## Gathering

You may want to begin with a prayer such as the one below, which places the Holy Spirit within the three persons of the Trinity.

**We gather together...**

- **To think about the Father, who created and loves all of humanity**
- **To remember Jesus the Son, who showed love for all and sent the Holy Spirit to help people to love others**
- **To celebrate the feast of Pentecost, the birthday of the church, when the Holy Spirit came with wind and flames to empower the disciples to welcome people of all cultures and ethnicity into the church**

**Amen**

If you have three candles, you could light each one to represent Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Alternatively, as you gather, show an image of Pentecost (there are plenty of wonderful pieces of Pentecost art if you do an internet search) and pose a question:

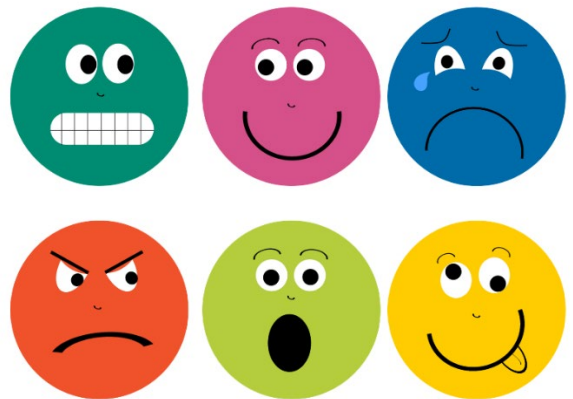
***As we gather together, what makes us feel connected? What makes us feel empowered to be who we are and do what we need to do today?***

## Engagement

Begin with a focus on feelings. How are you feeling today? Why? All of our feelings are valid and it is what we do with them and how we act because of them that really matters.

In our story today, we will see a great transformation take place in the disciples. They will go from being confused and disappointed to being full of joy, purpose and confidence. What a journey!

***I wonder if you can think of a time in your life when you went from being really confused or disappointed to feeling full of excitement?***



Pentecost is the moment in the 'Big Story of Christianity' where the story of Jesus becomes the story of the church. Jesus knew that his disciples would need some help in getting the Church off to a great start. So, he told them he would send them a 'Helper'. This Helper would not be arriving quietly! Shall we find out what happened?

A fun and interactive way of telling this exciting story is to use the Pentecost Bucket!

You will need the following things:

- A bucket
- A fan
- A candle
- Some matches

- A copy of the Lord's Prayer (in different languages if you can manage it!)
- Some phrase books in other languages
- A crown (paper will do)
- A dove (you can print/cut one out)
- A wrapped present (just wrap up anything!)
- A speech bubble (draw one on some paper)
- A map/globe
- A cut out of a cloud
- A guidebook for somewhere you have visited
- A battery
- A bottle of wine (this story prop can be enjoyed afterwards by adults!)

Put all the things in the bucket and tell children they all represent the day the Holy Spirit turned up and the disciples grew from 300 to over 3,000! The church was born! Pentecost is like the birthday of the church and it is great for us to celebrate it!

**Invite pupils to ponder what each of the items in the bucket might represent.** Take them out slowly and place them on the altar or table in front of you. Elicit some responses from the children if that feels appropriate.

Tell the story of Pentecost using the text from Acts 2 in a Bible of your choice (Bob Hartman's Rhyming Bible is a good choice, or for something more reflective you could use The Jesus Story Book Bible by Sally Lloyd-Jones, or any version you have) and make it as dramatic as you like. As stories go, this is exciting!! There is fire and a violent wind! The disciples are accused of being drunk! Many languages are spoken and the Holy Spirit turns up in the form of flames and wind. This story is full of energy so you can make your storytelling full of energy too. Use props or sound effects or actions to bring it to life. When you want to bring the tone down to reflection, you can use the 'I wonder...' technique to ask important questions to consider:

- ***I wonder how the Holy Spirit is like the wind?***
- ***I wonder why the Holy Spirit is represented in a flame?***
- ***I wonder why the first thoughts of the people they encountered were that the disciples were drunk?***
- ***I wonder what it felt like for people of different countries and cultures to hear these special words in their own language?***

Alternatively, you may want to include pupils in the telling by using the script below from 'An All-age worship service' for Pentecost from the Diocese of Gloucester:

A reading for two voices and a chorus based on Acts 2: 1 – 21

Chorus: listen, listen, listen, listen, listen, listen [getting louder]

Voice 1: It was the day of Pentecost

Voice 2: and all the followers of Jesus were in one place

Voice 1: Suddenly...

Voice 2: Suddenly... there was the sound of a rushing wind

Chorus... whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh [ getting louder]

Voice 1: a violent rushing wind from heaven Chorus: whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh! [even louder]

Voice 2: and flames of fire appeared on everyone's head

Chorus: pshwwh, pshwwh, pshwwh

Voices 1 and 2 together: and everyone began to talk in other languages –

Chorus: mutter, mutter, mutter, mutter (this could actually be words in other languages)

Voice 1: and everyone

Voice 2: could understand each other

Chorus: Marhaba! (Arabic for hello), Salve! (Latin for hello), Salam! (Farsi for hello)

Voice 1: There were lots of visitors in Jerusalem from all over the known world

Voice 2: They were amazed at what was happening and rushed up to find out more

Chorus [chanted] There were Parthians, Medeans, Mesopotamians; Judeans Cappadocians, Pontians; Asians, Phrygians; Pamphylans, Egyptians; Libyans, Romans; Cretans, Arabians; and Elamites... But none from England!

Voice 1: and everyone could hear their own language being spoken

Voice 2: it was very confusing...

Voice 1: so some said they must be drunk

[pause]

Voice 1: So, Peter stepped forward to speak to the crowd

Voice 2: it's only 9 in the morning! He said, we're not drunk

Voice 1: no – all this is happening just as the prophet Joel said

Voice 2: he said there will come a day when there will be

Chorus: Visions and prophecy

Voice 1: not just for a few

Chorus: but for men and women, sons and daughters, boys and girls

Voice 2: Even on slaves

Chorus: even on slaves!

Voice 1: and there will be signs of fire and mist and darkness and noise

Voice 2: for it is the great and glorious day of the Lord

Chorus [loudly] And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved!

Go back to the props in the bucket. Do we know more now about the reasons they are included? For each one, invite children to explain why it is in the bucket and how it connects to the story.

Invite children to reflect on whether there is anything about the story of Pentecost that surprises them? Anything that puzzles them? Encourage both questions and comments as children consider the story.

## Response

Pentecost is the day the church was born. *It is a day of celebration for all Christians around the world, from different denominations and a range of different types of churches and communities. There is a carnival atmosphere and joy is at the centre.*

For a collection of photographs showing the celebration of Pentecost and some diverse art work click [here](#).

Find Pentecost images which show the different ways that Pentecost is celebrated in different places around the world, illustrating the importance of seeing Christianity as a global faith. Christianity is often expressed differently in different cultures and the different ways Pentecost is celebrated show us how diverse the family of God is.

Some churches release doves as this is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Others set up prayer stations with candles to represent the tongues of fire. Some churches release red rose petals from the church ceiling to represent the flames of the Holy Spirit and some use banners and flags of red for joyful celebrations. Some churches release balloons and churches in Jerusalem in Israel use actual fire to celebrate. Other churches like to get outside and wave the flags of different countries to show that at Pentecost people from all nations, all languages and all skin colours were able to hear the Good News about Jesus for themselves in their own language. Some Christians make kites and fly these, thinking about the rushing wind of the Holy Spirit's arrival. Some churches set up their altar tables with red cloths and candles, some have a Pentecost Party with the whole church community and in some countries the Christian story of Pentecost gets mixed with local cultural traditions, creating some interesting processions and rituals.

In whichever ways it is celebrated, there is a great joy in the celebration of Pentecost.

***I wonder when you have felt great joy?***

***I wonder, if you wanted to celebrate the birthday of the church, what you would do?***

Christians believe an Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost:

*“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions...”*

Joel 2:28 (King James Version)

A simpler translation to use with younger pupils might be:

*“Then, after doing all those things,  
I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.  
Your old men will dream dreams,  
and your young men will see visions.”*

*New Living Translation*

Or

*“I will pour out my Spirit  
on every kind of people:  
Your sons will prophesy,  
also your daughters.  
Your old men will dream,  
your young men will see visions.”*

*The Message*

The important thing to emphasise here is **all flesh** or **all people**. Up until this point, it had been the people of Israel who were considered to be 'God's People'. Now with the coming of the Holy Spirit, all people, from all nations, were drawn into the family of God.

The beginning of the church at Pentecost was the beginning of global Christianity, a faith that stretches around the world and is expressed in many different nations, cultures and languages all around the globe. Christians believe that all people are made in God's image and that it is the beautiful diversity in our world that really illustrates who God really is as the three persons of the Trinity- fully divine yet fully unique. We are the same as humans; united in our differences and ready to celebrate our wonderful diversity!

This is a good opportunity to make use of the big frieze from the [Understanding Christianity](#) resource if you have one. Point out the colours of Creation returning to the world in the final 'Kingdom of God' panel of the frieze.

***I wonder if you feel part of God's 'Big Story'?***

***I wonder if you feel that diversity is a strength and something to be celebrated?***

## Sending

If appropriate, read the poem below, written from a Christian's perspective, to reflect on the events of Pentecost. Invite the children to listen and to reflect on the story and its meaning for them.

### **When the spirit comes**

Before the Spirit came, you were just words on a page,  
Black on white and yellowed with age.  
Simply a story of long ago,  
Of a man who had so much love to show;  
Who healed the sick and cured the lame;  
Took our guilt and bore our shame.  
It sounded so good, but it just couldn't last.  
It was not for today but locked in the past.  
Until the Spirit came.

Now the Spirit has come, you are here at my side,  
Larger than life and ready to guide;  
Making real to me all that you said  
And doing through me the things that I read.  
I am the glove that your hand has filled;  
I am the cup into which you have spilled  
All the love and the power which you promised would come,  
Right now in the present and for everyone.

Since the Spirit came.

Taken from: <https://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/product/pentecost-an-assembly-story-and-a-poem/>

Because of what happened at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is often associated with fire. Two Christian saints said very similar things about being exactly who God has made us to be and 'setting the world on fire'.

Be who you were created to be and  
you will set the world on fire~

St Catherine of Siena

Go forth and set the world on fire~

St Ignatius of Loyola

At the start of the story, the disciples were not fully being who God made them to be or yet doing what Jesus had commanded them to do. They were huddled together in an upper room. They were disorientated but they were in constant prayer. The Holy Spirit turning up reminded them who they were and empowered them to do the special job they had been given; to tell everyone about Jesus! When the Holy Spirit settled on them they believed in who they were and they took that fire outside!

**Read the two quotes above and spend a few moments eliciting ideas about what the phrase 'set the world on fire' might mean.** Allow some minutes in quiet reflection to ponder this question:



***I wonder how you might be who you were made to be and set the world on fire?***

Allow for an opportunity for the children to engage in some moments of silent prayer and contemplation, or reflection on, of this challenging question.

You may like to finish the act of collective worship by listening to a worship song about the Holy Spirit, such as the one found [here](#).

If you want to, you could now light candles on a birthday cake to really celebrate the birthday of the church. You might want to use party poppers or streamers, red rose petals, red balloons, whatever seems appropriate. Depending on COVID restrictions, if the weather is favourable, a Pentecost Picnic outside for the whole school family might also be a nice way to celebrate, or perhaps a party in classrooms. Have fun as you celebrate one of the church's most jubilant celebrations!

## SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

*(practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home together)*

### EXPERIENCES that can help us ENCOUNTER:

Thy Kingdom Come is a Church of England initiative launched by both archbishops to encourage a period of prayer between the Ascension and Pentecost. You can show pupils a short video about Thy Kingdom Come [here](#). This initiative is designed as an opportunity for parishes to engage with both children in church and children in church schools, but you will need to be selective about the activities that you send home for school families to do as some are more confessional than others. You know your school community!

Inviting Christians from different denominations and cultural backgrounds to talk to the children about how they pray and the practices they use will also provide children with a sense of Christianity as a global religion expressed in a myriad of different ways.

If you really want to share the fun and celebratory nature of Pentecost further, you will find some crafts [here](#) that can be done and used for contemplation, worship or a general sense of contentment in celebrating the birthday of the church.



## ACTIVITIES that can develop PRACTICES-HABITS:



Prayer was such an important forerunner to Pentecost. The disciples did not understand how what Jesus had promised could come to pass, but they gathered together and spent their time in prayer anyway. Often in life we can find ourselves not really understanding a situation we are in and not being able to imagine something different or better. Christians believe that prayer can help them with that. Others may have different ways to find clarity.

You can find a Family Prayer Adventure Map from Thy Kingdom Come in the resources section of the website <https://www.cpo.org.uk/thykingdomcome>, which families could do together.

Pentecost spread the message of the Good News about Jesus and the church was significantly grown by encounter with others and the forming of new relationships. 'Pray for 5' is an initiative that encourages Christians to choose five others to pray for, and is something children might want to get involved in too. It is intended to be used in conjunction with leather

bracelets that have five knots tied in them; one for each person on your list. You could create special bracelets using knotted wool or beads instead of leather cord, but if you want to purchase leather bracelets and the prayer cards you can do so [here](#). Once children have chosen five people, talk with them about the different ways they could pray for them e.g. writing prayers, saying prayers, drawing/doodling prayers, sending prayer letters/cards, etc.

## CONVERSATIONS which CONNECT COMMUNITIES

### What have I learned about Christianity as a global religion through celebrating Pentecost?

At Pentecost, people heard the Good News about Jesus in their own language. It was a marvellous thing. From the very start of the church, God intended it to be an expression of diversity and difference and Pentecost is a reminder of that. Christians around the world celebrate Pentecost in lots of different ways but they are all part of the 'big story of Christianity'. If you would like to know more about what Christianity looks like in different places around the world, BRF Online have a resource about Christian festivals celebrated around the world which could be used to help children better understand the nature of the global church. You can download it for free [here](#) after creating an account.

### When I am confused, disappointed or afraid, what help might prayer be?

The disciples had been on an emotional rollercoaster. Jesus was alive and then he was dead, he was gone and then he was back, he was gone again but promised to send a mysterious helper. It was all very challenging! So, what did they do? They gathered in prayer. Yes, they still felt confused and disappointed, but they were also connected, with God and each other, through the act of prayer. Christians believe that taking time to pray when they are feeling that way can really help. You can often begin to understand things better in the silence, new perspectives and ideas can come to you as you contemplate or reflect, and hope can begin to find its way into your heart again. When you face uncertain and difficult times, you might want to spend some time in reflection, or in quiet prayer with God.

## **What does it really mean for me to ‘set the world on fire’?**

Both St Catherine of Sienna and St Ignatius of Loyola used the phrase, ‘set the world on fire’. But what does it really mean? Do you need to be a Christian to set the world ‘on fire’?

When you ‘set a fire’ it will quickly spread if it has enough oxygen and fuel to burn. Christians believe that God has made each human to be unique, just like the disciples in the Pentecost story. Like the disciples in the story, each of us can have a job to do, a part to play in the story of human history. What do you think about this idea?

Like those who heard the Good News about Jesus in their own language, Christians also believe that each of us can receive something that makes a massive difference in our lives. The fire in the story represents the Holy Spirit and for the disciples it meant finding their purpose. Christians say that when they do things like pray, they give oxygen and fuel to the fire within them, making their identity and our purpose really glow and begin to spread. What do you think you can share with the world? What is your fire? How will you spread it?

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP – OUR APPROACH**

### **INVITATIONAL**

Everyone is welcome to take part in collective worship, as much or as little as they or their parents and carers are comfortable with. This means we use invitational language and consider carefully our choice of words and songs. Children are invited to pray but are not compelled or expected to do so; they always have a choice. We invite them to pray or reflect in whatever way they would usually as a family, if that is part of their home experience.

### **INCLUSIVE**

Acts of worship need to be inclusive of all. Therefore, we choose topics and ideas that are shared by different faiths and worldviews. When we present Christian teaching, we make it clear that this is ‘what Christians believe’, saying things like:

‘I wonder why this story might be important to Christians?’

‘The story today comes from the Bible (the holy book of Christians), which teaches that ...’

Our worship should be accessible for children and young people with a range of different backgrounds, and so we take care that activities do not require expensive resources. We also offer a variety of activities, so that children and young people with differing needs can all find something they can engage with.

### **INSPIRING**

We aim for our acts of worship to inspire those engaging with them. How might it engage their emotions, enabling a sense of peace, comfort, hope or motivation? How might it inspire them into action, into thinking differently and considering their behaviour or actions? How might it inspire them to reflect on their faith or beliefs, and on the faith or beliefs of others?